"YOU NEVER UNDO THAT PROMISE TO YOURSELF": IDENTITIES AND AGENCY IN AN ANTI-BIAS, INTERACTIVE THEATRICAL TROUPE

A Dissertation in Curriculum and Instruction

by

Sharlene E. Gilman

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The dissertation of Sharlene Elinor Gilman was reviewed and approved* by the following:

Patrick Shannon  
Professor of Education  
Dissertation Adviser  
Chair of Committee

Gail Boldt  
Associate Professor of Education  
Affiliate Faculty Women's Studies

Yvonne Gaudelius  
Assistant Vice President & Associate Dean of Undergraduate Education  
Professor of Art Education & Women's Studies

Jamie Myers  
Professor of Education  
Language, Culture, and Society

Glendon W. Blume  
Professor of Education  
Graduate Program Coordinator for Curriculum and Instruction

* Signatures are on file in the Graduate School
ABSTRACT

Identity, self, or voice are not fixed once-and-for-all, not static achievements, but are always in play, in process of becoming, in being achieved, broken, slipping apart, and being reconstructed as several and multiple – sometimes coherent and sometimes in contradiction. Butler (2005) drawing from Foucault's techniques of the self and Levinas' encounter, argues that as we try to make ourselves intelligible or recognizable to one another, we come to interrogate our and another's norms and conduct, and cultivate responsibility for one another. In interrogating assumptions of belief and action and their disruptions of habitual thinking, Dewey (1922/1952) suggested that, to make decisions more conscious, we engage in "dramatic rehearsal," finding choices in imagining and finding alternatives.

This study of a high school, anti-bias and anti-bullying theatrical improvisation troupe, the Tolerance Troupe from Selinsgrove, Pennsylvania is both reflective and empirical. It intended to examine arts-based activism in play and in practice, set against social aggression in the school climate. It first establishes the need for anti-bias work in the schools, and then examines the ethical pedagogical work of an exceptional African-American teacher, the founder and mentor of the Tolerance Troupe to address it. Second, it looks at the students' Troupe experience as it shapes student-actors and Troupe alumni's stances and self-making through a community of practice, shaping identities, choices, and discourses. Last, it seeks to reveal ways this theatrical experience teaches and how and what its student-actors learn. I suggest that student awareness deepens from improvisation and practice at identification with multiple roles, as the actors create opportunities to see the constructedness of bias, of identities, and of rationalizations associated with these narratives and behaviors, turning theatrical play into an avenue of agency and hope.
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PROLOGUE: On the Bus

Mr. Edwards, the Tolerance Troupe, and I are riding back to Selinsgrove on the big yellow bus, an hour and a half each way through the green, rolling, Pennsylvania countryside in May. The Troupe and Edwards have just completed three performances for a high school assembly more than an hour's drive north, and everyone in the Troupe is quiet, tired. In a burst of energy, Edwards and the students sing along to a pop song they know that comes on the radio, and Edwards jokes around, dramatizing the lyrics, moving down the bus aisle, singing along with Troupe members who stay in their seats as he sways down the aisle. Everyone laughs and then grows quiet again. A few students are studying for a quiz they will take when they get back to Selinsgrove Area High; some are listening through earbuds to their private preferences in music, and most Troupe members are dozing; it's been a long day, and an intense one.

The Tolerance Troupe travels where a school or organization asks them to. This high school that contracted this day's performances reported having interracial and ethnic fighting. The district, school site, or community organization lets mentor and originator of the Troupe, Edwards, know what issues will be most relevant to their student body or public audience, which skits would be the most helpful, the most effective to stir up thinking. The needs that the Troupe sets out to address are locally generated, but many of the topics represent common points of aggression and conflict in schools and communities. Generally, the Troupe acts out two separate skits as a set; at this rural school, they perform the ethnic intimidation skit and the homophobia skit, three times repeated with slightly different iterations for different ages of assemblies.

The ethnic intimidation skit has special bite this week. Edwards prepped the Troupe at rehearsal when the first verdict of the Ramirez trial was announced. Out of the four all-American high school football players from Shenandoah, Pennsylvania who were charged with
the stomping-to-death of Luis Ramirez, only two students were charged in the assault and murder. On May 1, 2009, the two players charged with third degree murder and ethnic intimidation were acquitted, and convicted instead of misdemeanor simple assault (Urbina, 2009). The verdict came two days before rehearsal for Benton.

Shenandoah High School is located in coal country, about forty-five miles from the borough of Selinsgrove. Residents of Shenandoah, who were quoted in the both local news accounts and in The New York Times report, disavow that the murder was a hate crime but only a street fight gone wrong, four against one, replete with racist slurs. Ramirez was here in central Pennsylvania as an undocumented worker. One community supporter of the three football players charged with beating Ramirez, interviewed on WNEP television news, asked rhetorically, "If he hadn't been here, would he have died? Would any of this had happened if he hadn't been here?" (November 13, 2008). Her views are consistent with at least a sizeable, vocal minority in the state and in the "neighborhood", including Selinsgrove's so to speak, and certainly in Schuylkill County, due east.

During rehearsal for this traveling performance, Edwards started skit practice much like he starts his English classes at Selinsgrove High School, with current events, a fact or quote for the day, or a controversy in the news. This year, much of Edwards' "reading the world" begins with updates on the Ramirez case. "Have you heard about the verdict in the Ramirez case at Shenandoah?" he asks the student actors gathered in the hallway. The student actors assemble outside of the locked auditorium and theatre, in the foyer where Tolerance Troupe rehearsals take place. He sits in the foyer hall, and today is addressing them sitting under the trophy case. About half of the students had heard something about the case, and half had not. He describes the basic facts of the case from the first round of litigation, resolved by judgment of the local, all-
white jury, -- how one accused football player had volunteered to be a federal witness against
two players identified as aggressors in the fatal attack, but the jury did not find the stomping-to-
death as a hate crime or even as manslaughter. He tells the students that the Ramirez case has
been on CNN and been given national attention. The verdict, he says was "Simple assault. A
slap on the wrist." The jurors found that just because words were said like, "You spic," and so
on, that the jury did not find Ramirez's fatal attack as hate crime, says Edwards. Then he speaks
softly, almost to himself since the teens here are far too young to be familiar with Walter
Cronkite's tag-line, intoning, "And that's the way it is, in America [...]"

He looks up again to the line of waiting student actors, shifting into the business of
creating and directing the afternoon's skits. Speaking of the upcoming engagement, he resumes,
"So basically, we are to be doing skits on 'acceptance and diversity' -- and somehow we will
work this situation in." The requesting district contacted Edwards and asked that the Troupe
address "acceptance and diversity," issues that concern their school, issues that, in fact, should
concern every school.

Every student standing around this narrow hallway where the Troupe rehearses for their
skits will remember and may be changed by their participation in the Tolerance Troupe. They
may not remember this rehearsal, and perhaps not even the trip up north to this school, or even
the Ramirez case, but they will remember what Edwards does in opening up the reading of the
world that will shape at least some of their trajectory of choices in years to come, to speak up or
act against complicity in some injustice. As one alumni of the Tolerance Troupe said to me,
after you commit to the Tolerance Troupe, awareness of injustice and the imperative to do
something to fight injustice becomes a way of living: "you never undo that promise to yourself."
Her comment reflects much of what I heard from alumni and current students and speaks to the
enduring commitment that these students take from the experience of doing anti-bias drama with Edwards as their mentor, founder, and director of the Tolerance Troupe.

A project like this one, to look at the arts-based activism of an exceptional teacher, to examine the ways these student actors see their worlds, their identities and choices, and express their values by taking a look at the discourses they use, having been part of the experience of the Tolerance Troupe, can be approached on so many levels that attempting an analysis of such a complex phenomena of representation and re-production, layered like the Troupe's, is like looking at "a photograph of a painting of a shadow of a statue of a man" ("Cinema", 1968). Here is why the layers of codification and re-production make looking at the work of the Troupe on its members difficult to filter through.

The adolescents acting in the Troupe take on roles that represent and exaggerate targets and perpetrators of bullying of one kind of another in order to perform for an audience of (mostly) peers or community members at large. The taking on of speaking roles and acting for others is the most obvious layer of performance. The subtext of their performance, of course, is that their intentions are to exaggerate and intensify stereotyping in order to make a point about the injustice of social aggression and victimization, acting as another, self-conscious acts of "acting." In fact, the Troupe deliberately employs stereotypes to show the unfairness of stereotyping, and this acting as is problematic. These students have joined the Tolerance Troupe united by certain ideals and values which champion diversity and non-violence, and these values constitute the subtext of the outwardly expressed messages of the dramatic skits as they are enacted.

Added to the layers of re-presentation, acting for and acting as, is another layer of performativity, the acting of self, an acknowledgment that individuals, embedded in socio-
historical contexts "act" a sense of self-identity through discourses of presentation, through choices of words and concepts available to us, including expressions through body stance, dress, tastes, and behaviors. The paradox of any person born into the context of his or her historical and cultural moment becomes both a subject as agentic actor, and subject as in subject-to historical, cultural, and discursive categories, taking on yet another "role" performed as self-identification embedded in the matrix of gender, race, ethnicity, age, class, and so on.

So looking at "the photograph of the painting of the shadow of the statue of a man" that is any interpretation of the work of the Tolerance Troupe, its mentor and actors, it is helpful to call upon the ideas of Foucault (1988) who acknowledges that subjects may exercise agency by unsettling hegemonic meanings, un-making fixed inequalities in rethinking and finding alternative practices of self, "following lines of fragility in the present" in order to "grasp why and how that-which-is might no longer be that-which-is" (as cited in Kritzman, 1988, p. 37.) In addition, the work of Judith Butler on performativity offered a lens to reflect on identity discourse construction, un-making, and re-making, and helped me identify ways that Edwards and current and former members of the Troupe express their agency, define the meanings of the terms I heard repeatedly in interviews, and theorize how Troupe members see alternatives to assumptive categories of identity and transformation through action.

Because the work of the Tolerance Troupe expresses their mission as one of action and activism against oppression, I draw from the work of Paulo Freire (1993) and particularly from the work of his contemporary, Augusto Boal (1977), who utilized improvisational, interactive drama as rehearsal for social action. Because the work of drama is also a modality of art in oral performance and in identity construction I also call on Mikhail Bakhtin (1992/1981) and his concepts of authoring, dialogism, and heteroglossia, and his concept of the "carnivalesque"
which applies easily to an improvised theatrical event. In describing the ritualistic qualities and conventions of theatre, I also draw from anthropologist Victor Turner (1992) and performance theorist Richard Schectner (2002). Judith Butler's work (1999) on the discursive nature of identity and linguist James Gee (2004) shed light on the power of discourses and situated learning, respectively, that the Troupe members and alumni recognize as reproducing and as transforming relations of telling, teaching, and learning, participating within the community and in the work of the Tolerance Troupe. Lastly, L. S. Vygotsky (1978) illuminates the way that outward social practice may give an adolescent a language for conception, the inner developing sense of self and values that students engaged in this work articulate, selves and values that they may not fully vocalize or realize until they grow older.

But first, for my own conception, I needed to find a metaphor to see the complexity of these processes, and fit what I saw into a narrative I could tell. The construal of meaning for me needed a kind of figurative map, reflecting the embodied work of human actors in representative and imagined play and, in general, to give a form to the action of human beings creating their subjectivities and meanings. There is an emotional literacy in play as well, which doubly reinforces the work of the body-mind connection seeking language (Gibbs, 2005; Lakoff and Johnson, 1999; Kovecses, 2006). I needed a holistic yet figurative image as a schema for this project. At first, because of the traditional theatrical emphasis on mimesis, I thought of mirrors and screens. While a mirror reflects what is external to it, it may also distort because of the quality of the materials from which a mirror is made. By contrast, the screen portrays what is cast on it, a chimera of light, taking an inner projection into outward shape or shadow. I decided to alternate, to throw my focus, from outward to inward because of the importance that context gives our understanding of both figure or ground. For example, what would Edward's work
mean without an understanding of local demographics? And on a larger scale, as to purpose, how would the local environment appear if it were not situated similarly into the national climate of harassment and issues of bullying in schools, the very issue that the Troupe was formed to address? How could the choices of the alumnae of the Troupe be significant without placing them next to the observations of teens now engaged in the work that has been integrated into the personal pasts of those maturing young adults?

Therefore, as useable conceptual metaphor, I thought of nesting dolls, how one doll contains others and may be contained by others of larger scale. But because the phenomena of the Tolerance Troupe and its mentor are living and multi-dimensional, I am beginning to see not interlocking carvings of inert wood but of living trees, and by extension, the forest as a whole, both a local and also national ecology. I do trace growth, but to begin, I must enter the woods. Indeed, a few participants spoke of their anti-bias acting using the growing metaphor, "planting a seed," but I will not trace their metaphors in detail in this document. Instead, I move from the outer to inner levels of approach, and throw focus between figure and field or ground, to examine the trees and the forest, to distinguish more finely between them and hopefully not confuse one for the other.

Playbill: Acts and Scenes

In the overview to the project, I felt the need to establish the larger national context of school climate as "the setting" of this explication, the field as schooling as a totalizing institution for young people and identity construction as performed, communicated, defined or resisted by youth's social worlds. Act One, therefore, begins traditionally, including the establishing of "the lay of the land," a topographical description of the project, introducing the "cast of characters,"
including me as narrator, and description of site, participants, and method of collection and analysis.

Following this introduction to "cast", "setting", and "plot" I address the figure most in focus and standing out from the ground, Harvey Edwards, mentor-performer and pedagogue, without whom the Troupe would not exist. His work can be connected to Freire's work of problem-posing inquiry, fostering agency in students and in the contexts of community education, in the classroom as well as in his theatrical work's relationship to Boal's Forum Theater. There are also surprisingly relevant characteristics in his approach which fit with characteristics of African-American emancipatory pedagogy identified by Foster (1997), Ladson Billings (1994), and others.

Act Two begins with the Freshman Performance, the annual, first-and-only performance given by the Troupe for its own student body at Selinsgrove Area High School. A look in detail at this performance in "Scene 1" underscores the role of student involvement, Edwards' pedagogical approach, and the importance of district support in creating safe community in schools. The chapter ends with "Scene 2", a discussion of ritual and meta-work of theatrical play in the setting of school.

Act Three delves into the local and lived demographics of the Troupe and what it means to be a part of it. In its organization and operation, the Troupe constitutes a pluralistic community of practice, engaged in what Lave and Wenger (1991) call "legitimate peripheral participation," learning and teaching each other how to be part of the Troupe, growing in involvement and complexity. The processes of interviews, auditions, and shared authorship of scripting and of acting in shifting role positions create an ongoing integration of membership.
Interactivity affords opportunities to express agency and enact other ways of being and of seeing themselves, including seeing their less-than-ideal beliefs and behaviors.

The Entr'acte serves as a way into deeper woods, serving as an introduction to a discussion of identities in Act Four and Five. It acts as a bridge to address Hall's "suture" of the psychic and discursive in forging identity, and as a way of unfolding narratives in particular looks at those persistent yet "floating signifiers" of race and gender or sexuality, including sexual expression, in ways that the political is joined with deep personal knowledge for Troupe members.

Act Four approaches the core of personal knowledge of self and power, seen through differences and of multiplicities. Scene 1 focuses on narrative responses of students and alumni of color or perceptible difference, while Scene 2 looks at narratives of Anglo or "mainstream" students as they address race and racism, "one of those 'elephant in the room' topics." Doing so, Anglo students address 'hidden' diversities like physical appearance, diversity within the family, and economic class. Scene 3 of Act Four cuts across race, looking at the expression of teen girls' sexuality, an area of judgment and perennial bias addressed by Troupe skits since its inception. Gender and sexual expression remain salient for young women interviewed at all ages.

In interactive theatre, actors perform in roles as "others." Such performance demands the most from young people as they question themselves. Reviewing their experiences and narrating their values, they speak of a multiplicity of positionings in beliefs and lived action, in roles they have embodied, and as they see them in others' experiences and actions. Act Five, considers this simultaneous "doubleness" of self and other when playing a role, which creates a third space of hybridity between biography and the "sociological imagination," which, as Denzin (2006) explains, creates a space that promotes critical self reflection and consciousness-raising.
Interactive theatre is two-way street; students and alumni speculate how it seems to be seen as "other" and what it is like to "see" multiplicities in beliefs, in conflict, in self and "not-self", on stage and off and address multiple view-taking and multiplicity of difference as productive.

Act Six addresses teaching and learning, the "lessons" of the Troupe as alumni and current students see it, as transformative, lifelong learning. For alumni, education retains its primacy, as do international or intercultural interests, and ongoing leadership; younger students emphasize enacted, interactive pedagogy which facilitates reiterative speech as thinking out loud. Finally, I interpret how self-authoring through interactive performance serves as "practicing for real life."

Act Seven queries the limitations of the Troupe in terms of scope, methods, and discourses including those of "tolerance" and "making a difference," which constitute three Scenes. Notably, to begin Act Seven, I sought to find the inspiration for and origins of the Troupe; in seeking, I discovered the story of a parallel troupe of student actors which challenged and was undermined by a very different school district. Scope, methods, and tolerance discourses of the SAHS Troupe constitute the scenes of this act, what those discourses mean to Troupe students and alumni, and the Act on limitations and constraints concludes with Boal's parable of "the Political Master Swimmer."

Finally, Act Eight brings to conclusion thoughts on the use of drama – in educational practice, as authoring, and as imaginative play as a symbolic tool to facilitate thinking and to heighten awareness of the constructedness of difference, of identities, and of what it takes to negotiate them. The conclusion moves to discuss accountability, in Scene 1, for individual action, and Scene 2, to texts that call for wider need to act, including a coda in two songs.
Introducing the Tolerance Troupe: Overview

The Tolerance Troupe of Selinsgrove Area High School, Selinsgrove, Pennsylvania, is the result of the anti-bias work of English teacher, Harvey Edwards. For a decade and a half, Edwards has created an improvisational theatrical forum through which student actors approach sensitive topics like racism, homophobia, peer pressure, substance abuse, teen pregnancy, bullying, and assault, performing vignettes for youth and adults in performance. Dialogue for the skits is improvised and roughly memorized, not written. With no set text, every performance is different; each enacts a conflict over issues that schools or community organizations request the Troupe to perform and wish to address for its audiences. Audiences may be comprised of spectators of very different ages and interests; thus, each audience will alter the Troupe's choice of language and focus of the skit, and influence the vitally important, interactive question-and-answer period that follows each skit performance.

Students use everyday slang appropriate to its audience, with the exception of replacing scatological profanity with innuendo, but expressions of slurs and the denigration of outsiders remain unsanitized. The actors' roles represent stock characters: a protagonist, an antagonist, their allies, peers in the middle, and indifferent bystanders. Assignment of the roles changes among Troupe members so that each student plays different parts, sympathetic or aggressive; the roles are flipped when two skits are played in one performance. In that way, students cannot be identified as taking on only a “bad” antagonist or “good” protagonist role in a variety of scenarios, and often there are as many positions and reasons for their positions as there are the number of actors arrayed on stage. In the course of building dramatic confrontation between protagonist-target and antagonist, Edwards freezes the action; the actors remain in character. When the skit is over, the most important part of the performance has just begun.
The audience is encouraged to ask questions of the motives and assumptions behind the words and actions of the characters. Edwards asks the audience to witness what just happened and analyze how potentially violent or damaging scenarios begin, what assumptions they are based on, how actions exacerbate and escalate tension, and what might be done to avoid acting out of a scenario of discrimination or hate, or silently assenting to one by refusing to intervene.

**Youth identities and acting for justice**

Mandell and Wolf (2003) and Ressler (2002) have written on the practical uses of creating problem solving dramas with high school students; Baer and Glasgow (2008) write of using process-drama in conjunction with adolescent literature which features bullying conflict. Other scholars (Kufteinec, 2003; Cohen-Cruz, 2005; Haedicke & Nellhaus, 2001) have written accounts of community-based performance with adults, yet no study has been documented through conversations with secondary school actors and their mentor currently involved in theatrical anti-bias work; nor has any study been done that concentrated on anti-bias drama’s role in co-constructing youth identities as part of its arts-based paradigm. No study has been done that queries how young actors and their mentor see themselves as subjects and agents of change, or has queried the impact of theatre for social justice on its practitioners, how embodying dramatized events contributes to a construction of identity as students position themselves relative to their social worlds. Second, there has not been any study done that examines theatrical, spoken performance creating discourses of identity and ethical action as they have impacted alumni of a youth troupe, how this involvement has affected adolescents' views of their values and motivated their choices as young adults growing into their mid-to later-twenties. I intended to explore the mentor, student, and alumni worlds of the Tolerance Troupe to uncover these domains.
The Cast of Characters:

Students and alumni

At the time of this writing, the Tolerance Troupe at Selinsgrove Area High School has been in operation in for fifteen years. In the course of a multiple year study, I interviewed members, observed, and videotaped rehearsals and performances involving sixteen of the most active student participants out of the twenty or more who were the most active members of the Tolerance Troupe. Although many more are on the Troupe's "rolls" as members, student actors do not always participate sufficiently to maintain their standing; to remain as active members of the Troupe, students must commit to participating in half of that year's performances. Therefore, less committed volunteer members tend to fall to the wayside, and there is expected attrition as students find other interests or impediments to participation as they originally intended. Those students aged 14-to-18 interviewed here were the most consistently active participants in Troupe performances for the school years studied. Note that in this document, I have obscured many dates from field notes and personal communication to protect the identities of my participants.

I have been fortunate, also, to be in touch with alumni of the Tolerance Troupe. Of the sixty eight persons or more who have played some part in the Troupe since its inception in 1994, I have corresponded with and interviewed seventeen young adult alumni between the ages of 18-to-29. These alumni have begun, completed, or continue studying in college, building careers, and creating and sustaining new families. In their own words, they offered insights about themselves, about work with the Troupe and their work in the world, the learning and knowledge they have constructed before, during, and beyond their time in the Tolerance Troupe.
Harvey Edwards: Director, founder, mentor, activist – briefly introduced:

The Tolerance Troupe of Selinsgrove Area High School of Selinsgrove, Pennsylvania would not exist without the activism of English teacher Harvey Edwards as founder, mentor, and director. I first noticed the Tolerance Troupe and Edwards at a Troupe performance in 2006 at an area student leadership conference and then read of Edwards’ nomination and finish as a semi-finalist for the 2006 Pennsylvania Teacher of the Year in an editorial in the local newspaper, praising his work. Edwards finished as finalist for Teacher of the Year in 2007.

Edwards has won numerous accolades and awards for his work with youth and the community, among them: the Barbara Sobel Memorial Award on the Teen Pregnancy Prevention Task Force (2001); nominee for Disney's American Teacher Award (2002); the Virginia Travis Award for Social Justice (2006); the Rotary Club of Selinsgrove's Distinguished Service Award (2008); the Citizenship Award from Bucknell University Alumni Association (2009). Edwards teaches English and Humanities and has been a classroom teacher for 26 years when this study was done, 21 of them at Selinsgrove Area High School. Long active as district and state Advisor for the PA Association of Student Councils, Edwards is Advisor for Selinsgrove High's Student Council and its chapter of Youth in Philanthropy. He is Group Leader for Education First, facilitating international travel experiences for high school students in a rural county where crossing county lines on a weekend excursion is still a novelty for many area adults. He has been on the boards of both the Black Alumni Association and Alumni Association of Bucknell University, served as co-Instructor for the Capital Area Writing Project, Harrisburg (2004-2010), and on the Board of Directors for Bloomsburg Theatre Ensemble (2006 to 2010). A former basketball player for his alma mater, Bucknell, Edwards helped initiate the game of Ultimate Frisbee as a team member of Bucknell's Ultimate Frisbee World Club.
Champions in the 90s; he was also an inductee into the Ultimate Frisbee Hall of Fame in 2007. He is also African-American, and the only African American male teacher in this overwhelmingly white, rural-suburban district.

Yet for his long experience and prominence, Edwards' story of how he became a teacher and anti-bias activist has not been documented, nor has the ways he has seen himself as a veteran teacher after two and a half decades as mentor, including 14 years as director of the Tolerance Troupe when this study began. Nor has the story been recorded of how the Troupe came about in this rural but increasingly suburban school district. In "Act One" that follows this Overview to the study, I recount in greater detail Edwards' journey to teacher and activist, and look at some thematic tropes of his pedagogical approach, providing a theoretical lens for its understanding.

The narrator

Finally, to begin any story, begin with "I." Who any researcher "is" -- in terms of her experience, her standpoints, and her concerns -- obviously has everything to do with the choice of study, her history, her social location, her values, and interpretive frame. Since at times I will be going back to make references to the ways my standpoints and thought processes interpret the responses of my participants and co-researchers, I insert myself as part of the cast of characters, as narrator.

I have often stayed just at a distance, in the wings in my relationship to the theater. Theater was my older sister's passion, and from the beginning, as younger sibling, I was enlisted to be cast and crew for her imaginings: I reluctantly acted in home productions and tableau while my sister commandeered mother, grandmother, and our great aunt to watch and to clap at one acts in the alcove under the stairs that served as stage and proscenium, a sheet strung across a string for curtains for my and my sister's curtain calls. At five years old, I played the role of little
sister compliantly, and parts that my sister gave me, uncomfortably. I did not understand her plots and words, but I did love imagining and grew into an avid reader of stories and plays.

By middle school, I directed similarly reluctant peers in a scene from "Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf" for an English class project. In high school, by sixteen, I believed that I had found my stance of what it means to be human and make meaning for my life, reading Sartre and Camus. I wanted to write, not to perform, but finding that Theater of the Absurd best expressed both my adolescent angst and playfulness, I took up reading Beckett, Ionesco, Pinter, and critics like Martin Esslin (1961) for pleasure. I wrote imitative plays.

As for performing, I grew into the kind of drama geek who liked to hide in full sight. In high school in 1968 while the Vietnam War dragged on, I performed in drag as a soldier without dialogue in *Johnny Got His Gun*. That ensemble traveled to a competition of one-acts, and I, dressed in camouflage, with my plastic rifle and face paint, was hiding gender and hiding my discomfort with gender at the same time, years before I acknowledged my sexuality. It was a political play, a timely expression of anti-war convictions. I was growing into an adolescent who could not be detached from my time, from my wider culture, or from my ideals and beliefs. How could I be? My male friends, high school seniors, worried about being classified 1A in the draft. In 1968, amid the riots and assassinations, the dismantling of legal segregation in my Southwestern town and state-wide, my high school life was punctuated by more than one cafeteria brawl with shouts of, "Fight! Fight! A nigger and a white!"

As Coles (1986) has documented the influence of political struggle on the very young, similarly, there was no separation of politics from understandings of power, of racial from cultural or historical conflict, no separation between local and national conditions from the social and personal lives of adolescents, ones I knew, and the adolescent I was. Adults may dismiss the
intensely personal and political lives of adolescents, but teenagers know differently. We come of age and enter a world which begins in our families and our peer relationships but expands externally to include crises of war and peace, of justice and injustice, affluence and privation, of fears and striving, frequently internalized issues of conformity, of independence and interdependence. The tasks of adolescence and maturity involve who we are, how we see ourselves, how we are seen by others, and what we take of value; these are existential questions and quests.

Despite what one may hear forty years later, there is still no divide from politics, cultural norms, contestations, no separations between these and the lives of teenagers. Adolescents' concerns are legitimate questions of ontology and epistemology: I still believe that adolescents attempt to figure out just what it is they believe about being alive and what it means to be human living in the midst of other beings, even while they recognize themselves located in relatively determinate interstices of gender, economic class, race and ethnicity, and sexuality. They are actively trying to create meaningful views of themselves and the world.

As for living through what the overwhelming majority of my interview participants experienced, there were periods of time also when I became a target of bullying and harassment. Being a target of a bully – or bullying another --is one of the most personal experiences of power or powerlessness at school. I'm still not sure why I was targeted by two particular individuals. I know that I did not fit well into the hierarchy of middle school popularity, that particular coin of social capital traded in the world of schooling. Early on, I retreated into interiority, into pretend-and-imagine, as an omnivorous reader which served my own brand of agency in my imagination and in my writing, and these pursuits, not incidentally, were rewarded academically. Through the arts, theatre, and writing, I learned to author an affirmative, meaningful view of myself and
my world. I continued to work a little more in theatre as a high school student although I preferred to concentrate on writing and remained back stage, setting up props and painting scenery for the annual musical. In summers, I worked a few shows in community dinner theatre, running the soundboard and lights. But I did listen intently to the characters’ dialogue, and avid for my own sense of authorship, claimed authority to speak through personae and performance. I continued to write poems, stories, and plays. After college, an original play of mine was produced in 1977; for two nights’ run, I felt the giddy satisfaction of authorship, standing in the back of a make-shift theatre, a darkened common-purpose room, arms folded, smiling as a small audience of the curious sat in folding chairs and laughed aloud at my lines. Another original piece, choreographed, followed; offstage I read a prose-poem that a dancer embodied and interpreted in motion. Authorship comes with the body whole, and comes within its social and relational surround of bodies, selves, and others: a community necessarily comes along with any public performance.

Collaboration, imagination, embodiment, and the construction of meaning through interpretation -- of the experiences I have come to trust as transformative are personal experiences of creative activity and authorship, including authoring a self. I can feel and know what it has meant to my sense of self to imagine, hear, and speak a view of life from an Other, a "Not-Me." This "Not-Me" is an imagined fiction since we cannot be other than the situated, local, self-beings born and experiencing a life in interstices of particulars -- family, gender, race, social class and more. Intimate with the creation of performing selves of "Not-Me" is "Me," our own contextualization in time and place, in a social and cultural world from which all performances of self derive their meaning. And I still do not forget the lessons of the "hidden curriculum" of schooling, of who and what is socially valued in the dominant culture and in local
communities which schools magnify in microcosm. Therefore, time and place, our "setting" crucially enters here.

**Setting: Site, participants, and method**

**Time and Place: Location, location, location:**

The town of Selinsgrove and the surrounding townships that serve the Selinsgrove Area School District are small in population, with approximately 20,000 individuals (Selinsgrove Area High School, "About Us," 2010), having grown from 15,000 individuals (U.S. Census, 2000) in the last ten years, reflecting the changing composition of the district. Locating both current members of the Tolerance Troupe at the high school and former members was relatively easy. Semi-structured interviews were conducted for an hour and a half with each participant, focused on approximately twenty questions, the majority of them open-ended and listed in the appendix to this document. Interviews were held either in study rooms in the Blough-Weis Library on the campus of Susquehanna University or at the Kind Cafe, a local coffeehouse in downtown Selinsgrove. Voice files of the interviews were transcribed into texts by Audrey Eroh, Academic Assistant at Susquehanna University. I checked transcripts for accuracy against the voice files and sent copies of transcripts to participants for member checking.

As for locating former participants, Edwards provided a list of Troupe alumni, and as a resident of Selinsgrove, I already knew of two adults whose children, now in their twenties, had participated in the Troupe while attending high school; however, only one alumna responded through this contact. Nevertheless, it was easy to locate the families of many former Troupe members in this small community. Through email address and phone-number searches, I made introductory contacts. In addition to using phone-number searches and email, I enrolled in Facebook and began to contact alumni through their home-pages on the social networking site.
The most enthusiastic of these alumni contacted others since several alumni are still in touch with former members who are also friends. "Snowballing" led to interviews with or texts from 19 alumni of the Tolerance Troupe. Three of these alumni sent written texts answering my twenty questions because they were geographically unavailable, ranging from an expatriate ESL teacher in Seoul, South Korea to a naval officer stationed at Bremerton Naval Base in Washington State. Fourteen alumni members interviewed individually with me spanning a two year period; two participants met together since the interview was held over a Thanksgiving break, and these two friends insisted on meeting each other to socialize at the cafe as well. The coding of this interview had to be pared down substantially so that each individual narrated her own experiences, and so that all given responses to her friend's conversation were assiduously minimized or eliminated. I believe I preserved the integrity and internal validity of her individual narrative in coding of the transcript as it was reduced to eliminate the couple's interactions and "performing" for one another, no more than can be said that participants "perform" for any interviewer.

Fourteen current members of the active Tolerance Troupe were interviewed individually over an academic year at Selinsgrove Area High School. As I mentioned, to be held in good standing with the Tolerance Troupe, student actors need to commit to act in half the performances during the year; the students I interviewed participated in more than half of that year's performances, and could be considered the most active members of the troupe. Like the two alumnae who interviewed together, two current student actors met together with me also at the cafe for interview, raising the total of interviews to sixteen, but again, I had to truncate this transcript for coding, retaining each independent narrative and eliminating responses which could be construed as responding to the second individual present. I was aware that in
examining their responses, these two participants would also be performing with and for each other, and with-and-for me, and that I needed to be rigorous in filtering out interactions with one another and attempt to represent only self-contained narrative report and recreation of remembered personal experiences and assertions to then reduce and code. With this caveat in handling two, two-person interviews, I preserved and coded as much of these interviews I could for self-report and eliminated as much interactive conversation as possible. Another response to interview questions came through email from a student who I saw audition and who was accepted into the Troupe, yet quit unexpectedly that year. One student interview was recorded but lost, unfortunately because of recorder malfunction.

I ended the study with 36 raw transcripts or texts in all for Troupe students and alumni. Out of respect for my participants, I paid most attention to what they said and how they said it, and did not focus on omissions, hesitations, or repairs unless they wished to stress an idea by rephrasing or changing direction in doing so. I approached their self-reports by looking at the ways the student actors and alumni represented themselves, especially in statements like "I believe," or "I think." I attended to how they spoke of their preferences and self-knowledge through recounting and reconstructing experiences in memory, and noticed how they spoke of their identities, whether in process or as fixed, and where their personal concerns met larger social concerns of bias and belief change. I expected to see places where discourses of change would be taken as simplifying and reductive or created as those that encompassed conflict, confluence, contrasts, contradiction, and complexity, as "both-and". Additionally, I wanted to know to what degree "making a difference" and "tolerance" as discourses and as operational concepts were used, understood, recognized, and performed by the student actors and alumni. Methodologically, I first extracted relevant text and then categorized the extracts, using

Following Peshkin (2001), I looked for patterns in discursive positions of identity in terms of race, gender, size, and class, or political position as they emerged in informal speech in our interviews and in question and answer periods improvised with an audience, and for patterns in structured speech like the speech practiced and used in formal, theatrical performance. I wanted to watch for emergent metaphors, in expressions of professed belief and expressions of value, in irony or in silences until repeated saturation of the data. Specifically, I intended to listen to what young people entering early adulthood said about using theatrical performance and imagination as social-political action and as pedagogy. I wanted to hear what they said about actions they have taken, expressing their knowledge of others and identity choices made available to them lived through the community of the Troupe in their teens and in years beyond that affected them, effects they say the Troupe's work had on a meaningful sense of self and their current or future actions. And Edwards' and the Troupe's work only realizes its meaning in the context of school climate, the hidden curriculum of student social typing and contested identities.

**Plot: School climate and playing out the hidden curriculum of identities**

In assessing a survey of territory, "the lay of the land", we start with a wide-angle view that pulls back to encompass the larger context "setting" of our study. Setting describes time and place; plot sets characters in motion, navigating events in the setting. Ours setting here is American schooling and school climate, an ecology of place and condition simultaneously national and local. Schooling represents one of those nearly totalizing institutions for the young in which "identity" is as much defined by othering as it is by assertion, identities performed, communicated, and defined by exclusions of "Not Me" at multiple intersections of social and
cultural worlds taken for granted. Categorical exclusivity abounds: Nerds and Hicks are never assumed to share interests. Preppies dominate student council while Jocks congregate in the weightlifting room; Stoners and Skaters have little to do with the cheerleaders or football players, ethnic or racial groups self-segregate (Tatum, 1997); girls are held to a separate and unequal standard of sexual behavior (Piper, 1994; Tolman, 2002). Groups and individuals identified as members of these groups get named, pigeon-holed, naturalized, and "fixed" by type in secondary school; middle and high school become microcosms of systems of socially developed, mostly-shared cultural meanings maintained by inclusion and exclusion. These labels affect adolescents' self-perceptions (Kinney, 1993). Membership-in-standing is signified, socially enforced, and maintained by delineations that include choice of dress and possessions, gender-typical behavior, attractiveness and weight, modes of speech, perceived popularity, even by congregating in certain areas of the school building or grounds, and so on. Memberships are perpetuated by dynamics of status and power. On a local level, the Tolerance Troupe operates in such a nexus of shared and conflicting social typing. In this environment, adolescents, including young actors of the Troupe, intensely observe others and assess themselves and their community.

Social Typing, cliques, and consequences

Social typing can escalate into ostracism, harassment, or physical aggression. A three – year study of 1,000 students from eight different schools by Shakeshaft et al (1997), found peer harassment in every school, at every socio-economic level, usually expressed as verbal assault. The National Mental Health Association (2002) survey of 760 adolescents found peer harassment widespread, particularly against students who are overweight, dress differently or un-stylishly, or are perceived to be gay or lesbian. In particular, 90 per cent of gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender teens report verbal harassment or physical assault in schools (Harris
Interactive & GLSEN, 2005); furthermore, the percentage is comparable for sexual harassment of adolescent girls in school at 83% (Lee, Croninger, Linn, and Chen, 1996). Inasmuch as adults think of a school as a place of learning for young people, what is being learned is not about academics at all, which have little immediate relevance to the lives of adolescents. What is being lived is being learned, social processes which forge self-perceptions and construct views of status, privilege, or opprobrium in the educational setting. The real geography as students experience it is the social climate of schooling. As one participant explained, "Cliques are real. Cliques are so defining. You don’t even talk to people who aren’t in your group and not only do you not talk to them but you pick apart their group because your group has to be better than their group because you’re in it" (Helena).

In their study of youth social cliques, Adler and Adler (1995) conclude that the socializing experience of who is in and who is outside of social cliques teaches youth adult-sized lessons in societal dynamics of power and manipulation, "the kind of in-group/out-group differentiation that can lead to prejudice and discrimination" (p. 21). Status is intimately interconnected to these social typifications and their related identity practices. Studies such as those by Croghan et al. (2006) confirm that being accepted comes with a high price tag in both ways: signifying identity means consumption of stylish goods to keep up, and failing to do so means paying the social cost of ostracism; Murray Milner’s study of adolescent peer culture, *Freaks, Geeks, and Cool Kids* (2006) explains that the emphasis on consumption and standing takes the place of more expansive, political or economic power in adult worlds, asserting the limited power that adolescents can have, and argues furthermore, that shaping their social worlds, often in resistance to adult criteria, serves the needs of the school and of adult power structures in general. Schooling keeps young people occupied and separated for most the work
week and out of the job market, kept as an inexpensive form of part-time labor, and as ready customers for marketers who are the quickest to reproduce popular trends that appeal to the young and the disposable income they are quick to spend. The role that bullying plays in the contest of intergroup status, writes Milner, is only the vertical play for achieving status available within a system which cannot be expanded, one with only so much status to be gained. If there are winners, he writes, there must be losers.

Social typing constitutes a kind of school culture, a structure or hierarchy, of reward and disadvantage requiring maintenance through affiliation, exclusion, and sometimes through violence. The U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) report on school violence, a joint project between the Office of Justice Programs and the National Center for Education Statistics (2007), found that in the 2003-04 school year, 81% of public schools experienced at least one incident of violence on site. A more current national study conducted by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration and released in August, 2010, found that one-third of adolescents participated in any of three violent behaviors over the past year, including "a serious fight at school or at work; [...] group-against-group fighting; and [...] attacking others with serious intent to hurt them" ("Violent Behaviors" p. 1).

The DOJ 2007 report, "Indicators of School Crime and Safety," identifies bullying a key indicator of violence-related behaviors including "carrying weapons, fighting, and sustaining injuries from fighting" (Nansel et al, 2003 cited in "Indicators", p. 34). In Indicators of School Crime and Safety: 2007, 28% of students reported being bullied in the last six months when the data was collected in 2005, and 53% of these students reporting had experienced bullying more than once in that six month period. Eight percent of students reported being bullied on an almost daily basis. Bullying was defined here as being made fun of; being the subject of rumors; being
pushed, shoved, tripped, or spit upon; being threatened with harm; pressured into doing things the target did not want to do; being excluded; or intentionally having one's property destroyed. Of those who reported being bullied, 79% were attacked inside the school building and 28% were bullied on school grounds, and approximately a quarter of targets of bullying sustained some physical injury from the encounter. The "Indicators" report found also that the younger the student, the more likely he or she was to be a target of bullying: "37 percent of 6th graders, 28 percent of 9th graders, and 20 percent of 12th graders reported that they had been bullied at school" (p. 34). Worse, 2006 Hate Crime statistics from the U.S. Department of Justice record that 12.2 percent of all hate crimes occurred at schools or colleges ("FBI Releases").

**Site and Situation 1, Going Local: "Micro-Climate" by the numbers in Selinsgrove, PA**

Clearly, the work of the Tolerance Troupe is intended to improve school climate and act as ambassador to other schools and districts who invite them to perform when administrators or organizations believe that public enactment and discussion of bullying and harassment, approached through involving simulations like skits, can lead to better conflict resolution at their sites. Troupe performances serve as outreach and as public representatives for Selinsgrove Area High School and the district, winning any number of appreciative commendations. Edwards has received acknowledgment for his work with the Troupe in addition to nominations for his classroom work as Pennsylvania Teacher of the Year. The Tolerance Troupe, one of the subjects of the video documentary, *The Four Rs: Reading, 'Riting, 'Rithmetic, and Respect* (Cort, 1999), produced by the Pennsylvania Human Relations Commission's Office of Education & Community Services, has been well established and well received by the community.

The home of the Tolerance Troupe, too, occupies a position of relative security and standing as one of the better public schools and school districts in the area. Many families,
including some parents whose children participate in the Tolerance Troupe, move into the District to take advantage of the schools in Selinsgrove. Yet there are tensions and changes as the school and the area become more diverse and as economic stressors become more pronounced. Now we move to consider the local climate of Selinsgrove, a very particular neck of these woods.

Selinsgrove Area High School (SASH) and its community is a relatively homogenous one. The high school is the only high school in its district and meets the criteria for Annual Yearly Progress stipulated by NCLB. Roughly half of its students in 2007 reported their intention to continue into post-secondary education (SASH, "Accreditation"). With approximately one thousand students, it is a relatively small-sized, area school in terms of population, and enrollment numbers are slightly declining. In statistics on race and ethnicity reported by the IES National Center for Education Statistics (2009) and as gathered in 2007-2008, Selinsgrove Area High School is racially and ethnically homogenous, with only 8.5% combined of students self-identified as American Indian, African American, Hispanic, or Asian. Of this number, 3% identify as African American and 2% identify as Hispanic, well under the state average in these ethnicities at 18% and 2% respectively, based on 2002-2004 school data reported by Public School Review (2007). Census data for 2010, not yet released, would likely show slight increases in African-American and in Latino students, increases in school enrollment anecdotally reported by my participants.

But even though Selinsgrove proper can boast effective, achievement-oriented schools, the surrounding areas that comprise the district suffer pressures of under-employment and insularity. Selinsgrove borough is a college town and the home of Susquehanna University, where many in the community work, but even though the town is relatively prosperous with a
median income of $37,911 (Public School Review, 2007), this figure does not adequately represent those whose families' incomes are significantly lower, as reported in 2000. The U.S. Department of Labor (2001) reported that manufacturing in Pennsylvania faced its largest losses in Snyder County as 36% of jobs were eliminated. Families whose students attend schools in Selinsgrove work in manufacturing trades that continue to struggle, including those in packaging, cabinetry, manufactured housing, and wood milling. Others work on family farms and in retail at the local Wal-Mart, a major employer in the area. The geographical area experiencing the most growth in business is Monroe Township, which includes a portion of state highway along Routes 11 and 15 where strip mall retail has stimulated growth in service jobs. Transportation improvement includes a route to Harrisburg which makes commuting to the metropolitan area of the state capital more feasible, and therefore has stimulated suburban development.

Despite this growth, a Brookings Institution report (Alter et al) in 2003 found the region still struggling economically, with a lack of opportunities for improving wages, an aging population, and "brain drain" in loss of its young people in outmigration, and the 2007 self-study document prepared by Selinsgrove Area High School (SAHS, "Accreditation for Growth") aptly describes the population of its students and the challenges in growth for the community as a whole:

Selinsgrove is now experiencing an increase in cultural diversity, and this adjustment has generally been handled well by all parties. The strong Pennsylvania Dutch heritage will continue to be part of the local community tradition, but it is slowly losing its preeminence as people from other areas of the state move to the expanding residential community.
Economically, most families in the community are middle class, although the lower middle class is more heavily represented than the upper middle class [...] Selinsgrove does have a number of students who come from economically disadvantaged homes, an average of 26% to 28% qualify for free or reduced lunch. [...] Many of our students are absolutely outstanding in a variety of ways [...] However, our general heritage as a 'blue collar' rural community is now somewhat at odds with the emerging global emphasis on higher level thinking and advanced technological skills. As Selinsgrove moves forward, we will be pushing for greater academic and technical achievement from students across the entire spectrum of intellectual ability. (Selinsgrove Area High School, "Accreditation," 2007)

As telling as the percentage of students eligible for free or reduced student lunch are those scores measured by the PSSA for proficiency in mathematics and reading. Of students designated "Economically disadvantaged" by the Pennsylvania Department of Education (PA DOE), only 21% of those so designated scored as proficient or above. Similarly lower are the scores in PSSA Reading for students tested who are designated as economically disadvantaged, at 36% (PA DOE, "School Report Card" 2007).

As for the number of families who need assistance, the U.S. Census of 2000 indicated that 10.1% of married-couple families in the Selinsgrove area received SSI or public assistance income; 26% of families with female only heads of households were below the poverty level, and of all families, 22.7 received SSI or other public assistance income. And these figures were reported well ahead of the financial crises of 2008-09; doubtless the next census will have higher numbers to report. Like so much of Pennsylvania, the area looks toward little job growth or opportunities for economic equity even while families from outside the area move to the district.
In conclusion, the portrait of the Selinsgrove area emerges as a community which is part college town and suburb, and part rural with strong working class roots. Identified with its Pennsylvania Dutch heritage, this part of Snyder County is ethnically homogenous but struggles with racial and ethnic diversification, as more African Americans, Latinos, and other groups have moved into the area. Educational achievement levels indicate that the majority of adults in this area end their education at high school graduation. According to the 2000 U.S. Census, 40.3% of adults 25 and older are high school graduates and 24.1 percent did not make it to graduation (U.S. Census Bureau). We can see that schooling provided by the Selinsgrove Area High School may be the beginning of exposure to diversity and inclusion, as well as the end point of formal education for many individuals in the district.

**Site and Situation 2, Going Local: "Micro-Climate" by the personal-and-political**

More telling than statistics and scores are stories of verbal assault recounted by students of color who walk the streets of the small downtown or near the red brick buildings of the university campus, or have rocks thrown at them, see racist or anti-Semitic graffiti, or take note of the occasional Dixie flag flown over a house just outside of borough limits. When racially motivated incidents happen in town, residents express shock, but we will see that the assumption of rarity of these incidents or denial of them present the greatest challenge to the work of Edwards and the Tolerance Troupe. The Anglo majority retains the impression of their borough's live-and-let live ethos, but this impression is not necessarily shared by families of color. One of these was the first African American family in town to own their own home, and their reception by the community speaks of the hostility of their neighbors. Helena, one of the earliest Troupe members tells her family's story:
My grandmother and my grandfather [...] were the first African American family to own a house. People came, but the sheriff would not allow them to walk into the house when they went to move in -- their neighbors were burning crosses in their yard. This was, like in the 60’s. My mom had to sit in the back of the bus. Even when I was a child visiting my grandmother, the neighbors [...] would never allow their children to play with us. I graduated high school in 2000 -- these people lived next door to me my whole life, and we still had to sneak in order to hang out with each other. Even now [this neighbor] will not look at me, and we’re adults. When I go home, I talk to his son hanging outside of his house because I will not go in [this neighbor's] house [and] he will walk by me as if I’m not even there. (Helena)

All of these conditions -- personal stories of intersections of culture, power, and positionality, larger historical contestations over race or sexuality or immigration to name a few, and local climates of places and the players in them -- create struggles over identity, for safety, for self-expression in what I am calling "the hidden curriculum of identities." We "become" in the intersections of larger historical changes and local conditions. The area continues to struggle with change, slow to adopt diversity or adapt to the stresses both economic and social, clinging to conservative community norms of Christian religiosity, domination of Anglo-American race and ethnicity, traditional gender expectations, and heterosexuality, to name a few. In this climate the Tolerance Troupe does its problem posing by role play, by dialogue, and by imaginative transgressions. Often acting against the actors and mentor's own views and feelings, they set out to raise the consciousness of their audiences, and in the end, within a community of practice and in this praxis of play and reflection, they profoundly create themselves.
First Contact, Youth Leadership:

I encountered Harvey Edwards and the Tolerance Troupe at their performance at the "Make a Difference" youth leadership conference held at Susquehanna University in June, 2006. I had never heard of the Tolerance Troupe, and the editorial praising his work and nomination had not yet been published; for two days, I had been attending the conference as a first-time volunteer observer, gathering data on student leadership for Dr. Dana Mitra. I was not prepared to document the performance of the Tolerance Troupe, and since I wasn't scheduled to observe my group at the conference on that morning, I did not even take notes but attended only as a curious observer.

Harvey and the students came on stage quite naturally; students in the Troupe wore everyday clothing and used their actual first names in the skits. I was immediately struck by the students' composure and ability to stay in character as they enacted their scenarios of harassment which escalate into confrontation. Edwards yells "Cut!" – the stage-action is frozen, and the audience questions begin. What captured my attention, more than the skit topics, were the responses of the audience – teens identified as potential leaders attending the conference expressed serious concerns even though the skits were leavened with humor. Active teaching and learning were taking place here; risk-taking was happening here both on stage and in the audience. By their questions, the audience was trying to understand the motivations of the aggressors and actively propose ways to solve the conflicts posed in the skit. Not only was thinking being stirred up in the immediacy of performance, but the audience was also deeply involved, reflecting, sharing, and actively listening. The problems and possibilities posed were complex and no oversimplified solutions were offered. And although this group of student leaders did not mistake the actors in the presentation as actual antagonists, the skits seemed to
rivet and absorb the attention of their audience, something not easily done with fourteen to seventeen year olds at 8:30 in the morning.

After this performance, I spoke to Harvey Edwards and told him that I was impressed by the work of the Troupe and the way the skits engaged their audience, and asked if I could speak with him and attend other performances. Next, as an informal observer, I attended rehearsals and performances for two more events, including one in December, 2007, for the Community Alliance for Respect and Equality (CARE) appreciation dinner to honor Douglas and Marge Sturm, the Lewisburg couple instrumental in founding the community social justice organization.

Marge Sturm was Edwards' mentor teacher when he was a teacher intern at Bucknell University, and it was an honor for Edwards to bring the Troupe to honor his former teacher.

At this point I became aware both of the lineage of the Troupe and the influences on Edwards; the work of social justice was a lengthy thread through Edwards' career as a teacher as it was his mentor's as well. I wanted to know Edwards' story. Teachers are lifelong learners foremost; excellence is often driven by idealism wedded to pragmatism in the classroom. Sometimes lifelong too is a path deeply affected by mentors and cultural leaders also committed to social justice, by their example and their practice. "ACT ONE" that follows, will relate much of Edward's narrative and knowing.
ACT ONE: Harvey Edwards -- Teacher, Mentor, Founder, and Activist

I am climbing up the concrete stairs to Room 114, and on the stairwell walls are student-painted murals of mountain climbers climbing with me. Upstairs, I get to a narrow, sharp right turn, and surrounding passerby in the hallway is a painted, cool green jungle, animals watching through the foliage, a sun-gold Mayan temple in the background, and the caption, "It's a jungle in here!" Just around the turn is Mr. Edwards' classroom where students sit in cooperative clusters of desks in fours, and a guest's rocking chair in front of the blackboard faces the class. Guests to the classroom sit in the rocking chair, introduce themselves, say their piece, and next, accountably must answer a few questions from students as I did when I came to observe the class. Edwards' pedagogical style is interactive, theatrical, question-posing, affirming of student answers, and he is as much in control of his classroom as he is as director and mentor of the Tolerance Troupe. I begin the first "Scene" of this exploration of Edwards' story and pedagogy through his interacting with a receptive, vocal audience to create a portrait of Edwards' "Joking" or facilitating in a modified Forum Theater format to create rapport and introduce an unproblematic case for tolerance. In Scene 2, Edwards narrates his coming to teaching and to performance, his thoughts about art, activism for social justice, and play. Scene 3 of this opening Act returns to Edwards' interaction with an audience, but this time with an audience more reluctant and more resistant. It will look at "Joking" as a variation of a cultural pedagogy of caring demands and high expectations. The scene ends with Edwards' injunction to act, not to "pretend" act, but to make students "actors" by an insistence on taking action, a message taken to heart and carried forward by members of the Troupe.
ACT ONE, Scene 1: Action! Edwards *in media res*

In the crowded community room of an apartment complex, the only one to provide Section 8 affordable housing in an affluent, private-university town, Edwards takes the floor in front of his assembled actors. It is a weekday after school. The audience is a mix of genders, races, and ages although most are youths from upper-elementary age to high school, and the majority is African American or mixed race. In contrast to many school assemblies, this is an easy-to-engage, voluntary audience, eager to react and eager to talk. There are a few adults attending including those of the E. House community who have sponsored the event, announced "for all students, grades 6 and up". Edwards begins by saying that he doesn't recognize anyone in the room and asks if anyone knows him – and since they do not already know each other, they can now become friends. Then Edwards asks the youth to play a guessing game. I will use italics to indicate Edwards' vocal stress, but it is important to notice immediately that the framework of the facilitating and the skit to come is framed explicitly as a game, as play. What follows is an edited-for-space version of Edwards' introduction of himself and the Troupe, from which we learn what Edwards intends and an introduction to the subtext of his talk.

My name is Mr. Edwards, and I say that because I am an *English teacher* at Selinsgrove Area High School. I'll give you a little history – I went to Bucknell. I played *basketball for two years.* [One youth bumps fists with him, as a fellow basketball enthusiast.] Like I said, I went to Bucknell [...], so let's play a *guessing game:* Where am I *from?* Like I said, I came to school [...] at Bucknell, but *where am I from,* originally?

Once more, I've included italics to show Edwards' emphasis in his voice. The audience will address him as Mister Edwards, in his persona as educator. He repeats that he was a student athlete at Bucknell University, a basketball player – although most of the school-aged youth have
certainly been addressed over and over again by teachers, Edwards’ rarity is not only sharing a racial identity simply by his visibility, but sharing one as an athlete with a certain amount of street cred to this, adding another layer to "play". The question, asking the audience where he has come from, has special significance. Since half of the audience is made up of African-American, brown or mixed race youth, and though not all African Americans who have settled in the region have come to relatively isolated central Pennsylvania from East Coast urban centers more or less recently, many have done so. As imports from East Coast cities, they often bear the resentment of long-time valley residents as "outsiders," as some of my participants of color have also complained.

At first, there are a couple of timid responses from the audience: "Selinsgrove?" or "Here"; then more begin to speak: "Georgia." "Maryland." Edwards plays game show host. "Ding! No, thanks for playing. Where am I from?" Since there are no more guesses, Edwards encourages them to keep trying. "There is nothing wrong with being wrong. The worst thing that can happen is that you're wrong. Like I said, I came to school at Bucknell, but where am I from originally?" Although Edwards has introduced himself formally, he openly encourages a banter to establish dialogue with this audience as a game in which there is no of right or wrong answer, even when a few speak out of turn ("We'll get to you," he says, and the kids laugh.) Overcoming a fear of being wrong is addressed often in his classrooms and in performance with the Troupe; however, he does demand involvement. Asking for what seems to be an irrelevant fact about him, its relevance grows. One young person guesses "New York," and he responds:

Where am I from in New York? Brooklyn! In the house! (The audience reacts, some clapping, and another fist bump from the older basketball player up front.) So I came to school [...] at Bucknell, and when I came here I didn't speak like this – I was straight out
of Brooklyn – ‘Hey whass up, man, how you doin’?’ Okay? But I majored in English, I teach English, and I've been here longer than I've ever been anywhere else.

I lived in California for four years, in the San Francisco area. I've been to every state in the country except for five, and I've been to nine different foreign countries. And I am saying this to you because the greatest classroom in the world -- is the world. So I'm saying to all you young people, travel as much as you can, see as much of the world as you can, and learn from that experience.

So I'm originally from New York City, went to school at Bucknell, graduated, moved out to California, was out in that area for about five years, came back to this area, and was lucky enough to get a job teaching. So I've been teaching at Selinsgrove for about twenty-six years -- that's how long I've been teaching there. I teach English grades nine through twelve. I also teach a course called Humanities which is painting, sculpture, dance, theatre, movies, architecture, music, literature.

In this introduction to himself, leading to the introduction to the Troupe and its purpose, using repetition, Edwards states the take-away lesson from his question, "Where am I from?" which is to be a citizen of the world and an adept at code-switching. In the areas I have indicated by italics, Edwards has stressed his life credentials, sports, and arts credentials as well as giving praise. Whenever there is focused talk, Edwards praises the audience’s participation generously, and establishes the code switching which will play a part in his debriefing the skits and in making audiences feel comfortable to listen and to participate. One of the most experienced and best established teachers in the district, Edwards calls for this audience of low-income youth to widen their life experiences and learn from that experience without fear of being wrong, to see the world as wider than the restricted world of rural or suburban central Pennsylvania, to see
ways of communicating both with insiders and outsiders. Edwards reads the world for his audiences and actors, as we see in what follows.

He must next establish the Troupe's purpose and a crucial definition. He explains that he is here today with his acting troupe, the Tolerance Troupe, and asks, "What does the word 'tolerance' mean? What does tolerance mean?" One person volunteers one of the best definitions I have heard an audience give: "Having differences and supporting them." Edwards affirms this answer and gives the example he typically repeats in some variation in every performance:

Good. Let's use this example. If you watch football, you might have been rooting for the Pittsburg Steelers to win the Super Bowl. Raise your hands if you rooted for the Pittsburg Steelers to win the Super Bowl. Okay, put your hands down. So you know we have another team in Pennsylvania, the Philadelphia Eagles. Who rooted for the Eagles? Anyone? Okay. Anybody root for another team? What team? ("The Cardinals.")

Here's the point. If I asked everybody in the room what team they rooted for, we'd probably have eight or nine different teams here, and we could probably discuss why we think our team is better than any other, and maybe you wouldn't agree. And we probably wouldn't agree. I'm not going to convert anybody. If you're a Pittsburgh Steelers fan, you're not going to convert anybody who is an Eagles fan. But the point is, we can still respect each other. Tolerance is being able to appreciate differences without feeling like you have to try to change somebody. So that's what tolerance is. 'Troupe' (Edwards spells it out for the audience, "t-r-o-u-p-e") is just a fancy word for a group of actors. So the Tolerance Troupe is a group of student actors who put on skits, little scenes about differences between people.
And the whole point is to see if we can see and learn something from that. But the difference between what we do and typically happens in a theatre production or a movie is, you go to a movie, you sit down, or hang out with your friends, or whatever, you see it and say, 'Oh that was good' or funny or sad or whatever, and it's over. Maybe you talk a little bit about it. But with the actors who are going to be here, after they finish the skit, they are going to stay in character. So they are going to remain the people in that scene, and you become part of the performance because you get to ask those people who said or did whatever, why they did that. So for example, I'm sure that all of you in school have walked down the hallway, saw or heard something and thought, 'Why did they do that? Why did that person say that? I can't believe it.' But you never stop and ask that person. Well, this will allow you to ask those people, 'Why did you say that, why did you do that, why do you believe that?' And what we're going to do, between our talking between each other, is ways to handle that situation.

Edwards is quite clear. The first thing he does after any audience member participates is to affirm them in some way: "Good!" He then declares his intention to pose problems and use dialogue to explore questions and solutions initiated by his audiences. In this case, the audience has contributed a more expansive definition using "support" for difference, but Edwards does not expand on support for difference and returns instead to a simplified, uncomplicated discourse of "tolerance" heard many times before and after this performance. Edwards is aware that such a simple "let alone" discourse has its limitations which he revealed in our conversations as did many alumni actors, but with the Troupe's work, he intends only to raise consciousness of bullying, to stop the use of hurtful language or force or exclusion and social aggression. He intends to inhibit either coercion or conversion to another's point of view and any resort to
violence or vengeance. "An eye for an eye," he has said in more than one performance, "makes everybody blind." As such, his appeal to tolerance is a basic one. In particular, he is motivated to inspire those silent in such a scenario to speak out, to get help and find allies for the targets of violence, and he is directing this message to the adults in the room although youth in the audience and even the Troupe members are unaware of this.

After the first skit is performed at E. House, he asks how many in the audience have listened to their friends trash-talk others in the hallway and did nothing to stop it. Many raise their hands. He asks the few who took action what they did. Members of the audience answer: "I backed them up." Or "I told somebody" this was happening, or "I did nothing." He says that the students who answered were all brave to speak, particularly the young woman who said that she ignored the trashing of someone and just moved on. "Are these our only choices?" he asks. "Let's come back to that later."

We will do so in our discussion also, but in the preceding exchange we can see how Edwards supports and involves his young audiences – using playfulness, repetition, questioning, a equalizing discourse of sports, nonjudgmental affirmation, code-switching, and praise.

In performance, teaching, and community work, Edwards maintains a high profile, constantly on the move, managing the Student Council and Youth in Philanthropy clubs, and mentoring his student actors, representing the district by his activism. By his efforts, in over fourteen years of performances, the Troupe encourages audiences to become aware of the effects of both aggression and the role of silence in perpetuating stereotyping and bias-related violence. Audiences and the actors too are exploring imaginary alternatives, seeing models of behavior positive and negative, including the importance of the intervention of allies and the effects of egging on unethical behavior. "Because you [the audience] are part of the skit," as Edwards
insists, the real action takes place in dialogue between the actors and audience when the skit is
done, by speech-as-action on the part of the audience who questions and those who listen,
captivated by young people like themselves on "stage," improvising positions around the
conflicts they may have encountered in the hallways or cafeteria.

Edwards seems to actualize Freire’s “problem-posing” educator in creating dialogical
relations that involve the actors and audience in teaching each other to create more awareness of
their agency and intentions, to make of them actors –subjects who take action, calling his
audience to demand a greater degree of participation along with their insight and an exhortation
to choose more wisely. His is also a pedagogy of hope that combats despair, consistent with
Freire (2006/1992), and his activism is consistent with what McLaren and Dantley (1990), have
called, borrowing from Cornell West, the African American prophetic tradition. As a cultural
worker, Edwards encourages his audience and those who act in the Troupe to give expression to
commitments which will increase in the actors as they mature, as we will see in this document.

I wanted to see how Edwards came to teaching, how he frames his own pedagogy and
how he sees working around categorical and community norms. In what follows, Edwards talks
about his journey becoming a teacher in this rural, predominantly Anglo community with its
German heritage, his motivations and intentions in teaching by using drama, and his view of the
roles he also must “perform” as a teacher, as an African American, community leader and
activist, and as a representative of his district. In our three formal interviews, two of them lasting
over an hour and a half, and from many more informal talks and observations of Edwards at
work -- teaching, in rehearsal, and interacting with students, audiences, and with the community
over three years, from the pilot through the formal study period, three characteristics emerged:
1.) the use of personal and exemplar narratives that characterize his explanations and make his communication with others effective and immediately accessible;

2.) theatricality and the arts as integral to his praxis in performing and voicing, using humor, then switching to the voice of a "warm demander," exhorting students to engage themselves and question their habitual reactions. His questioning of students appears to take the form of call-and-response in reverse, affirming student responses and thus affirming students in their becoming as subjects. His theatrical approach, with humor and warmth, is paired with wise use of his authority, and as such his approach is consistent as a cultural pedagogue from a vital tradition.

3.) Edwards' pedagogy supports student growth by the persistence of his questioning and high expectations that students must engage. He takes action as well; his beliefs and his strategies insist that spectators become participants, taking action in intolerable situations. Edwards practices intervention by requiring of himself and of others, conscious, ethical interaction. Again, in what follows, dates of interviews as personal correspondence with Edwards have been obscured to insure greater student-participants' confidentiality.

ACT ONE, Scene 2: Edwards' Narrative and Exemplars

Edwards' use of personal and exemplar narratives renders his communication effective, relatable and accessible. Sitting in one of the study rooms in the Blough-Weis Library at Susquehanna University, Edwards recalls the incidents that radicalized him, coming of age in Brooklyn in the late 60s and early 1970s. He knows the dangerous consequences of assumptions and racist violence:

I remember coming home and found my cousin -- he was about three years older than me, so he must have been seventeen -- and he had ice on his face. His face was caved in. He
had six teeth missing in front. Someone had hit him in the mouth with a baseball bat for no reason than being in the wrong neighborhood with his Latina girlfriend.

In two separate incidents, Edwards found himself in the wrong place at the wrong time, staring down the barrel of a policeman's service revolver. Walking-at-night-while-Black can be fatal. One evening, waiting to greet his sister returning from work, and another time, just walking down the street, bending down and putting a soda cup on the sidewalk, his simple bodily presence and a police-radioed description of "African-American" of a suspect at large was enough to make Edwards twice a target in the sights of a white officer's. Because of these racialized blanket assumptions, Edwards mentions in passing that he joined the Black Panther Party when he was seventeen, and he was maced at a protest outside of a police station. "Simply living my life made it easy to be an activist."

But at the same time, the borough was a microcosm of a bigger, more connected world. Public housing was more diverse in the sixties and early seventies, he said. Although he grew up in the projects, "vertical slave ships," as he remembers someone called them, families there shared in a sense of community. Drugs were also less of a problem in the projects at that time: "I knew the people, and the people knew me." Not only did the residents of his Brooklyn neighborhood enjoy more solidarity, but his high school "was like the United Nations" diverse with many ethnicities and languages. But Edwards cautions that simply being around diversity is insufficient to have any impact on attitude or understanding; instead, there must be meaningful interaction: "You have to reach out. You have to connect with one another. If your circuit is limited to only people who look and think like you do, other people may as well be invisible."

Edwards provides balancing narratives as well, positive anecdotes about an unexpected police escort to see his mother at the hospital, concluding that, "It depends on who wears the
uniform." He recounts positive experiences when hitchhiking with a white female friend, cross country, to work at a reservation school in Arizona. It is extremely important to Edwards that he not be defined or that he define others by race, and that is as much the message of the Troupe; these kinds of stories pointedly make that distinction.

Drama and teachers who used drama in their classrooms played a significant role in his experience of schooling. Edwards speaks warmly of three teachers, one of whom, in a "theatre class of sorts", elicited a seldom-explored side of his personality in a monologue he created and demonstrated in class, which enabled him to reach inside himself and find emotions and introspection at his core that he did not usually show to others. He spoke of how transformative that exercise was for him, and how others around him changed their perception of him; instead of appearing like a carefree jock, he expressed a quiet, almost nostalgic sensitivity which changed the reactions of his classmates to him outside the classroom. Another teacher was "a Shakespeare buff" who inspired him "to love the Bard" -- it also didn't hurt that this teacher brought in real fencing foils to duel in class. A third teacher became a close friend and one who involved him as an actor in musicals, in chorus, in summer theatre, and in off-Broadway productions; this teacher kept alive Edwards' love of theatre beyond graduation. As Edwards and later as the alumni spoke of their mentors including Edwards, one reoccurring feature persists: how lineages of teaching are internalized as examples of excellence and passed on to students who become teachers in their own right; we see this in the responses of the Troupe alumni in coming chapters who enter teaching or counseling.

The lineage of inspired teaching continued for Edwards. After high school graduation, he was recruited to Bucknell University on an athletic scholarship and completed the teacher education program. He began his internship in 1978, working with mentor teacher Marge Sturm,
later to be a founder with her husband of the Community Alliance for Respect and Equality (CARE), an local advocacy group housed in the Lewisburg Community Center which fundraises and organizes both protests like "Stop the Hate" rallies and celebrations like the Martin Luther King Day community dinner and celebration. I was in attendance at the performance of the Troupe in December, 2007 intended to honor the Sturms for their work in the community, and heard Edwards thank her for inspiring his own anti-bias activism.

After graduation, Edwards married an Anglo-American woman and started a family in the area where interracial couples are still rare. He took his first teaching position in a middle school in M-burg, PA, a smaller, rural town, more remote and less racially or ethnically diverse than either Lewisburg or Selinsgrove. One anecdote from his time there speaks to Edwards' resilience, resolve, and reserves of humor:

In October, in the Halloween season, the kids typically soap windows. And I came into my classroom, and my window had been soaped. But instead of erratic marks, there was a word scrawled on the window. So I went to the principal and said, 'You need to see this' [...] He was visibly shaken, and he said, 'this will be off the window immediately,' And when he left, I looked in and read N-I-G-E-R. Niger. They called me a river. They called me a country. And I jokingly said to myself, 'I'm going to stay here until they can spell 'nigger' correctly.' And I stayed there five years.

Clearly, as an African-American, Edwards was presented with problems to negotiate as a young man and as a teacher, and he has done so in ways which kept him proactively engaged and without over-generalizing to return the hostility and suspicion which cast him as a dehumanized other. Speaking of this middle school teaching experience, Edwards says, "I think I made a difference in the lives of many students who possibly, for the first time in their lives, ever came
in contact with a black person, an African-American person, in intimate ways in terms of learning and exchanging information and knowledge." Other figures who inspired him "on the world stage" are Dr. King and Malcolm X:

By all means necessary means one might have to take up arms to fight for what is right.

But I stop short of violence to bring about the kind of justice that I think needs to be brought up or the kinds of issues that need to be brought up.

Instead, Edwards readily demonstrates and expects respect in his classes. As I observed in his classroom, he greets students enthusiastically at the beginning of each period, treating individuals with dignity and humor. There is a deep seriousness of method intended behind the playfulness.

For example, in reading the world, Edwards starts each class reviewing with a student "scribe" who records what was done in the previous class. Recordkeeping by a student keeps each member of the class current with what happened the day before, and students get applause and extra credit for taking notes as scribe. The reading of the notes imparts a kind of continuity and focus. Each day also starts with a challenging quote which Edwards asks students to read aloud and decode while assisting in the decoding and aiding in its interpretation. During my first observation, on his chalkboard was a challenging quotation from Octavio Paz: "Technology is not an image of the world, but a way of looking at reality." With such challenging quotations, Edwards asks that students stretch their thinking to interpret the claim or quotation. Along with each daily quotation is a daily "FYI" also on the board, such as, "As first Latino astronaut, Frank Chang-Diaz flew on his first Shuttle mission in 1986, and has completed how many missions to date? Ellen Ochoa, first Latina astronaut, flew on her first mission in what year?" Extra credit is given also for the student who finds out the information, reporting this information back to class
the next day, which also becomes part of the record from each class scribe. These are just three ways of daily focusing student attention and asking that students find out more about the world, often by way of multicultural almanac; for example, I had conducted my classroom observation during Hispanic heritage month. Here, Edwards motivates and rewards students to read the world, to find information that reaches beyond the classroom, and attempts to contextualize with the seeking of answers to what would be a bland, additive multiculturalism. All through the year, Edwards' icons are posted on his walls: flags of many nations – this month there was the Spanish and Mexican flag -- and permanent icons too: the Rainbow flag, posters of Jackie Robinson rounding a base, poster photographs of Picasso, Miles Davis, Gandhi, Caesar Chavez, and a lithograph portrait of Shakespeare.

**All the World's a Stage, and Art is Loving the World**

The mention of the "world stage" in the context of Edwards' admiration of Shakespeare and of dual approaches to social justice of Martin Luther King and Malcolm X points us from narrative and exemplars and a wider cultural pedagogy, to teaching as performance in general (Pineau, 1994; Ellsworth, 1997) and specifically to the theatrical style of pedagogy developed by Edwards:

> Art really can be the most powerful way to teach. And if we use the word art in the broader sense, then as a teacher, I am an artist in front of my students performing -- so teaching is a performing art, and how you present that can make all the difference. If I stand before them and just simply lecture and drone on, then I’m probably going to deaden them and dull them rather than excite them. But if I really put myself in the role of the teacher as performer -- and not just a simple performer who wants applause but wants to engage the audience, wants them to be part of the performance -- then it
becomes the interactive kind of art that makes all the difference. It is hands-on with the mind. It's hands-on with the individuals as opposed to just simply a passive activity.

Edwards told me of an example of using involving performance to teach point of view in literature. He had asked a student-confederate to enter in the middle of the class period and interrupt class to dispute about his grade and to stage an altercation between them. Both Edwards and the actor-confederate, in the middle of the ruckus of raised voices, would leave the room, slamming the door. After several stunned seconds, Edwards re-entered the class, thanked his student actor, and then asked the students to recall and recount exactly what they saw, their conflicting views of the incident:

I said, 'Ladies and gentlemen a round of applause for our little scene here. So people were kind of shocked and I said, 'What did you see? I want you to write down what you noticed.' And all the students wrote down different perspectives. And it ranged from some students who were immediately engaged the minute he came into the room and heard all of the dialogue, to students who didn’t see anything until I ran out after him because they weren’t paying attention, or they didn’t think it was important. And so I said, 'So whose point of view is most reliable?'

To observation Edwards adds the task of functional writing, a quick write, writing to remember, to add to the impact of the performance for his students, challenging them to observe and reconstruct an experience, a good example of Edwards' "hands-on with the mind":

All of a sudden they all realized, 'Ah, we understand how significant point-of-view is.

So that is how powerful teaching can be when it’s taken to the level of art, and that’s why art instructs and can instruct powerfully. If you ask a student to paint what he feels, then you’ve engaged the student hands-on. If you ask a student to read or write and then read
what he or she thinks, then you’ve engaged them and that’s art. That’s literature. That’s performance. And that’s why art teaches.

Edwards continues to connect the importance and effectiveness of teaching through art to love, to experience in the richness of imagination and the way art may inspire and satisfy one’s potential for living:

[Art teaches] Love -- to love them, because we can’t live long enough to understand a modicum of what this whole world is about. The more we take in through the arts, the more we’ll know. I’ll never get to every place in the world that I want to go which is every place in the world. I want to be on all 7 continents. I want to see every single thing great and small. I’ll never get there. I want to go to the bottom of the ocean. I want to go to Mt. Everest. I’ll never be able to do those things. I want to go to the moon. I’ll never get there. So what’s the next best thing? Looking at them, understanding them through the arts. Seeing a beautiful picture of a seascape. Reading about even science fiction of a trip to the moon, or Mars, or what have you -- so through the arts at least vicariously you can come closer to fulfilling some of the dreams and goals that you might not be able to fulfill in the short life spans that we have, no matter how long we live.

Many educators will not speak the word, love, but Edwards and courageous educators like Paulo Freire, Maxine Greene, and Parker Palmer do so. Alumni will speak of Edwards’ passion for teaching and for teaching social justice. Of the power of love, writes Freire in the Foreword to Teachers as Cultural Workers:

We must dare in the full sense of the word, to speak of love without the fear of being called ridiculous, mawkish, or unscientific, if not anti scientific. We must dare in order to say scientifically, and not as mere blah-blah-blah, that we study, we learn, we teach,
we know with our entire body. We do all of these things with feeling, with emotion, with wishes, with fear, with doubts, with passion, and also with critical reasoning. However, we never study, learn, teach or know with the last only. We must dare so as never to dichotomize cognition and emotion. (p. xviii)

Theatrical, performance pedagogy is an embodied pedagogy in which cognition and emotion are grounded into one with another. Pineau (2005) updates thoughts on teaching as performance, insisting that stepping out from behind the desk engages both teacher and learner in a process and acknowledges that learning "occurs in and through the bodies of students, cast members, and informants." When teachers or researchers enter a mode of performance and welcome learners to enter along with them, they all join together "in that uncertain, magical space of personal and communal transformation" (p. 36). Transformation comes from interactivity, "incit[ing] communication through intervention" and shifting "the role of spectator to participant" holistically (Garoian, 1999, p. 49).

Entering into the play interactively or entering into the game is an approach Edwards utilizes on stage and in the classroom. He makes exits and re-entrances, saying, "Let's try that again" when a student response seems lacking. Edwards keeps a service bell on his desk to ring when a student offers a guess or an answer. If the answer is wrong, it is rung once, or when the answer is correct, it is rewarded with the jackpot of multiple ringings. His play with gender is remembered and mentioned by younger participants: when he asks students to read a Shakespeare play, for example, he mixes the gender of parts, having males read female roles, explaining that men played women's parts in Shakespeare's day, and so assigns males the female roles. In the next reading, he reverses gender roles of parts, assigning young women in the class to "play" the male roles. Edwards makes extensive use of dialogue and his voice too in reading
an assigned story aloud to class, although he stops to query the narrative modeling a reader's process, to ask students to anticipate what may happen, or to discuss the meaning of the title or select word choices in the story. He asks them to summarize what has already happened in the story, and students appear to enjoy reading along while he reads aloud. In the class I observed, students encouraged him to please continue since his voice animates every text; I did observe the students actively following along while he read. Not everyone enjoys Edwards' theatrical style, however: commented one participant I interviewed, a teacher in an adjoining classroom ironically told a class that when students take his class, his students get Mr. Edwards' class also (Emma). But Edwards' classroom continues as a space for active engagement and performance, even on a rainy Monday morning during my observation.

Charles Garoian (1999) mentioned previously, writes of ways in which progressive educators Freire and Giroux are connected to performance theorists Boal, Schechner, and Turner, as critical theorists who endeavor to transform "the artist/teacher or spectator/student from the object to the subject of cultural history" requiring liberatory forms of action (p. 57). Edwards, in his concern for social justice, his reliance on improvisation, on intervention, and on a praxis that draws from embodiment in contexts theatrical, cultural, and phenomenological, takes his place in that class of teacher-leaders and of cultural workers engaged in critical, symbolic practice (Simon, 1992).

ACT ONE, Scene 3: Edwards' "Joker" As Cultural Pedagogue

In Boal's Theater of the Oppressed (1977) the facilitator is called the "Joker." The Joker is ideally a neighbor and contemporary of the spectators, writes Boal. Boal asserts that having a Joker enables the fable-aspect of theatrical action to be followed and believed simultaneously with an analysis of the action, its meaning addressed by the Joker and by the spectactors,
spectators turned actors or subjects addressing the drama. The second advantage of having a Joker as facilitator is that the drama can be of any genre or style and still be accessible to the audience's understanding and active participation in a "trial" of actions and ideas presented before the audience, as if it were a jury. The Joker is enjoined to act as a dynamic, Socratic questioner "by means of questions, by means of doubts, she or he must help spectators to gather their thoughts, to prepare their actions" (Boal, 1992/2006, p. 262). In the following example, as Edwards tries to generate courage in a reluctant audience to query the actors after a skit, we see Edwards question and affirm the audience responses while leading them to connect the words they use to the real people injured by them. He also uses "trickster" humor in his "joking" to warm up the audience (switching his cue for rehearsing their participation from "Cut!" to "Chop!" or "Slice!" to test the audience, to their delighted, confused laughter) and also lets them in on the structure and intent of their becoming an active part of the performance. Even Edwards' use of word-play in code-switching and joking could be construed as a kind of signifying, which DeCastro-Ambrosetti (2003) defines, based on the work of Carol Lee, as "the verbal art of using dual meanings, innuendo, and the play upon the sounds and meanings of words" (p. 31). Edwards' call and response wordplay as trickster or joker also draws from cultural sources.

Therefore, Edwards uses a modified Forum Theater approach advocated by Boal, but he also draws both his pedagogical and theatrical approach from deeper springs of history and culture. With his commitment to social justice praxis, Edwards affirms what Delpit and Perry (1998) identified as African centered principles: "righteousness, truth, honesty, propriety, harmony, order, and reciprocity" (as cited in Lynn, 1999, p. 608). Given the overwhelmingly homogenous Anglo student population of the high school, this approach is not limited to students
of color; Edwards has generalized these qualities into an inclusive, liberatory pedagogy for all his students that emphasizes the use of dialogue, an ethic of caring and one of personal accountability, qualities that Ladson-Billings (1995) found were essential to knowledge claims of a culturally relevant pedagogy that bridges successful communication between teachers and students. Previously in *The Dream Keepers*, Ladson-Billings had also defined cultural pedagogy broadly as "an approach to teaching and learning that empowers students intellectually, socially, emotionally, and politically by using cultural references to impart knowledge, skills, and attitudes" (1994, p. 18). Edwards uses the Ramirez case, the suicide of Carl Joseph Walker-Hoover, and the domestic violence case of pop stars Rhianna and Chris Brown, employing political and cultural references to illustrate the take home lessons of the Tolerance Troupe; Edwards' Freirian pedagogy of reading the world is done with a moral compass.

Specifically, I had been interested in identifying the influence biculturalism in Edwards' theatrical approach as well as in his insistence on the teaching of ethical action. What I found in Foster's survey of research on African-American culturally relevant pedagogy (2001) in Banks and Banks' *Handbook of Research on Multicultural Education*, is evidence given in first-person through anecdotal narratives of memorable teachers using story-telling and acting out roles, using drama in class, in voicing and employing rhythms for learning, and in call-and-response -- all ways that effective African American teachers engaged students. In defining call-and-response, Foster (2002, July) extended Smitherman's definition, as "a type of interaction between speaker and listener(s) in which statements (the "calls") are emphasized by expressions ("responses") from listeners, in which responses can be expressed linguistically, musically, verbally, non-verbally, or in dance" (para. 5). Foster's expanded definition would include gestures and pantomimes like those sometimes used by Edwards in his interactions, as well as
verbal question-and-answering that characterize Edwards' parrying with the audience.

Smitherman identifies the purpose of call and response as serving the functions of affirming or agreeing with the speaker, repeating what the speaker said, or urging the speaker on (as cited in Foster, 2002, July, para. 3).

Edwards does bring elements of African American cultural pedagogy into his classroom and in Troupe performances, but as James Banks points out (1993), if one accepts that knowledge is created and communicated to others, such knowledge bears implicit cultural assumptions, frames of references, perspectives, and biases that come with it, influencing ways that knowledge is constructed (p. 5). In ways that African-American pedagogical style shares certain common characteristics, presence of these characteristics alone do not constitute a stereotype of a pedagogical style, but it does reflect some of the home, community, and culture, as part of one's identity that any teacher of any background would bring into any classroom. Those characteristics in this case, intended to motivate students, include pedagogies that are "more direct in their questioning, more exacting in their requirements, or more expressive in their style" (as cited in Ladson-Billings, p. 17) that African American educators bring as distinctive repertoires into the classroom.

In a synthesis of a Boalian, Socratic, and an African-American cultural model, Edwards affirms the audience's responses in a reverse of call and response; then he adds to the audience's comments, moving the ideas into closer connection. Edwards makes even reluctant youth in the audience into subjects in the performance that follows.

**Reversing the call: to rally action from inaction**

Edwards' plan of action as facilitator does not always progress smoothly. In one out of town performance for the sophomore class, students do not answer his rhetorical question; "Can
anybody tell me what tolerance is?" This rural, almost all-white group of silent students creates a sharp contrast against the audience observed at E. House. No one in this assembly engages; no one responds. In the face of that silence, Edwards throws away a harsh joke. He asks the observing teachers leaning against the gym wall if these are sophomores. The teachers affirm that most of the audience is about fifteen years old. "I'd flunk 'em," he says. "I'd flunk 'em all," if they can't define the word tolerance by the time they are fifteen. He is sharp in his retort at their silence, and his judgment and expectations made clear. Again, answering his own question, Edwards launches into his simplest example guaranteed for a response: "How many here rooted for Steelers to win the Super Bowl? Raise your hands!" and "How many people wanted the Eagles to do it?" students answering with raised hands and shouts of "Ooh! Yeah!" Again he motivates students' most accessible if over-simplified expressions about conflict over minor affiliations and differences, like affirming preferences for sports teams.

After seeing the skit, the energy in this audience shifts, and so does Edwards' approach in eliciting involvement. Calling "Cut!" and after the audience's clapping, in debriefing the skit about homophobia, the sophomore class remains reluctant, so Edwards reassures them that they do not have to say anything, but only raise their hands. No one is singled out; no individual has to take the spotlight: the collective response will serve. Animatedly, he asks the student audience sitting on the gym floor and leaning against the wall, "How many people have heard somebody say, 'That's gay!' Raise your hand." When almost every hand goes up, Edwards then says, "Okay, I got a question. What is meant by that statement? Anyone, raise your hand."

A female student answers, "They're using gay to mean it's lame."

"That's so lame!" Edwards repeats the condemnation, forcefully. "What else can it mean?"
A male voice calls out, "It's stupid!"

I have added italics below for Edwards' vocal stress. Edwards repeats again, ""That's so gay, that's stupid!" Anything else? How about, 'I hate that!' Does that fit? Is that it?" He checks for agreement with the audience, and while some remain silent, some appear to assent by nods of their heads, still reluctant. Then he runs all the descriptors together: ""That's so gay, that's so lame, it's so stupid, I hate that!"" He reiterates their answers in a kind of reverse call and response and then summarizes their answers.

Next, he supplies a particular context, and applies it as an example to a student in the audience, a young man leaning against the wall that he has picked out as being agreeable and likely to participate. Again, Edwards says, since no member of the audience is asking questions of the actors, and since he is a teacher and used to asking questions, Edwards says that he will continue his questioning. He picks a boy out of the crowd who is leaning against the gym wall, "A man right here...What color is that shirt?"

"Black," says the student.

"The collar is. I like the color. Have you heard people say, 'That's gay'? Okay, you ready? 'That shirt is so gay!' What do you say?" Edwards swings his arms in a flutter and says with a lilt in his voice, "Yes, it IS!"

There is laughter at Edwards' feigned high, vocal timber as a 'homosexual' voice and wrist action, which makes the performance problematic for me -- the inherent difficulty of exaggeration and parody, the difficulty in using stereotyping even to fight stereotyping, adding another distortion around the most corrosive and hurtful distortions and misuses even in an object lesson like this one, just in the way that Edwards' "saying something black" by surprise
(Emma) grabs the attention of his student audiences, violating classroom and "White" norms by this respected and unconventional English teacher.

"Have you heard that? Did you do anything?" This is Edwards' message, to solicit ideas of what is to be done.

One hand goes up. "It's discrimination," says one student.

"What's wrong -- After all, it's just a word, right?"

Another hand goes up. "No it's not," says the student.

He pinches his shirt between thumb and finger. "Like no, a shirt is not gay. I like that shirt." And to the student who made the comment, he points, approving, "And I like that.

"I'd be offended," says another student, "because my aunt's gay. And there are gay students in school."

Edwards feigns shock, "Whoa, you mean there are gay students in this school? He gestures, scratching his head in mock thoughtfulness, "Hmmm....you mean that there are people constantly saying things like, 'That's gay! Look at that, that's so stupid! I hate that, it's gay!' Oh! Hold it! But there are gay going to your school while there are people saying that." He tries again to get the audience to interact with the actors in the skit. "So do you have any questions for the people up there?" The sophomores remain quiet, so he asks the actors down the line questions on the audience's behalf about gay people in their high school: Are there gay people in their school? What do they feel about them?

The answers by the actors, staying in character, all acknowledge that gay people do attend their school, and asked how they feel about gay people in their school, the actors' comments evoke murmurs and then shock in the otherwise reluctant audience, including one by a Troupe actor who opines that homosexuals should be treated the way Jews were treated in Nazi
Germany, that they should burn in hell. The audience is unaware of the irony that the young actor improvising those lines and staying in character, is the only "out" gay actor in the Troupe and in school, one who has borne the brunt of the very remarks he is reproducing as his own nemesis. The offense is meant to rouse students who are afraid to speak, and especially those afraid to intervene in real, not simulated, situations like those the Troupe performs. Hearing the opinions of the actors in character, now the audience begins to ask questions and dialogue with the actors begins. Clearly, peer interaction opened up dialogue with this sophomore audience.

By the end of the question and answer period, Edward again takes the floor to sum up, using his authority and voice as sermonic, passionate demander that the audience become aware that, while they use words like "that's gay," the person next to them could be deeply offended and even be putting someone's life in danger. Edwards next "reads the world" to these students, silent and hard to motivate to speak by using a report of the suicide that last month of 11-year old, Carl Joseph Walker-Hoover, a charter-school student who had been hounded and harassed as being gay, and whose mother weekly had pleaded for the school to intervene in the bullying of her son (GLSEN 2009, April 9). Edwards includes emphasis on peer bullying along with a critique of administrative neglect:

Every day he's going to school, being called gay: 'You walk like a girl, you must be a girl,' being called a faggot. His mother went to the administration and said, 'You've got to do something. My son is being bullied; he's getting picked on every day.' They looked the other way. The mother comes home, and in the hall, dangling from an extension cord, is her son who hanged himself.

You folks have outlived him. You folks have outlived him. Because every day he went to school, people had something to say to him and bullied him to the point that he
said, 'I can't take it any more.' [...] What we are trying to say is that *words are powerful*. 

'I didn't mean it, I was just joking.' We know people use that cop-out all the time. *But what you say, you are responsible for.* And you need to think in those terms, because not everybody in this room is the same. That's the beautiful thing about this room. That's the beautiful thing about this group. Because if everybody in this room was the same, it would be a pretty boring place. It would be pretty boring.

Reaching the end of the assembly period, he asks that the audience applaud the Troupe as they then debrief from their roles and introduce themselves. Today's conclusion is the Troupe's last performance this year, and Edwards ends more wistfully than in other performances I saw. But his last message is not just an appeal for difference and letting be; it is a realistic and compassionate command for young people to be aware of their speech and actions, and of their power to help or to harm. It is also a message directed to adults to pay attention, to do something to avert another tragedy. As characteristic of a "warm demander" (Ware, 2006), Edwards' approach qualifies as authority figure, disciplinarian, caregiver, and pedagogue.

Later, in a follow-up interview, Edwards would say that as authority figures, teachers can choose to do the right thing or do the cowardly thing, and the students will witness it and take their cue from the adult. It is easier, he said, to squash a behavior the first time because it is harder to ignore it time after time. "It's like parenting. If you are being consistent, then they can't get away." Interestingly, Foster (2001) reports that the practices of effective African American teachers resembles the authoritative parenting style that integrates acceptance with holding to high standards, and frequently teachers express their connection to students in terms or metaphors of family kinship and solidarity (p. 575) as well as focusing holistically on developing personal values, motivation, and leadership in their students, and not just cognitive or
academic, technocratic, standardized skills. Furthermore, McLaren and Dantley (1990) utilize the ideas of Cornell West in pointing out that leaders in what West identified as the African American prophetic tradition – "a deep-seated moralism, an inescapable opportunism [for survival], and an aggressive pessimism" (p. 39), that is, expecting and preparing for the worst as countermeasures, can offer traditional schooling a hopeful alternative. Minted while struggling against despair and oppression, the prophetic tradition is called a cultural mainstay in inspiring African American leadership; McLaren and Dantley, claim that this prophetic tradition may potentially "move educational leadership from the sterile, passionless practice of antiseptic administration to a vigorous and impassioned mobilization for greater democracy, equality, and community" (p. 40). Certainly, Edwards intends such a movement toward inclusion, voice, and non-violent vigilance in community by his work with the Tolerance Troupe.

I asked Edwards where his imperative to teach with a moral sense comes from, and he acknowledged his upbringing by his parents who were part of the great Migration of African Americans from the South to New York; religious faith played a greater part in his mother's beliefs and less so in his father's. He raised his sons in the Catholic tradition, but although he remains questioning, his belief system is rooted in taking action:

I don't know what is beyond this life, but I do know what is in this life, so I'm going to do as much as I can in this life with no hopes or ideals about what might happen thereafter. I'm not doing what I'm doing in hopes that I get to heaven. What I'm simply doing is what I can do as a human being right now, in this existence. That's what I'm doing.
Taking action in the now, to relieve suffering and confronting oppression and silent collusion is Edwards' message in every Troupe performance, to heighten awareness. Edwards' message to all his students: "I try to say to them every day to live consciously. Be here now."

Engaged and seemingly tireless, I have seen Edwards drop what he was doing to intervene in an intolerable situation in the community as well as in the hallways; for example, immediately leaving the E. House performance with the Troupe, a girl perhaps no more that ten years old came forward to confide in him that two boys in the complex were harassing her. He thanked the girl for confiding in an adult. He stopped the van, got out and spoke with the two boys, also about the same age, who had been attending the performance also. He asked if they hadn't just seen an example of consequences of unwanted behavior and told them their harassment of the girl was unacceptable. Another example of Edwards' intervention last school year recurred in my interviews with participants. Troupe members overheard of a battering relationship in school; once he was notified, Edwards brought in the counseling staff who alerted a parent, and the abusive relationship terminated (Antonia & Trina). Said another alumna, "He doesn't let things go unnoticed," (Larkin); she had appreciated his intervention after she had been made a target for violence in high school for an interracial relationship when no other teacher would intervene.

Edwards holds the Troupe to high expectations for their off-stage behavior. Troupe members who do not take action to resolve issues of bullying, racism, or social aggression must abide by the code of "walking the walk"; should they become targets or perpetrators of social aggression, they must get other help to solve their problems or retire from the Troupe. When a classmate brought a complaint about a hostile friendship clique of a Troupe member, said this participant:
[Edwards] came to me -- [...] he's like, you know, 'You're supposed to be an example. You're supposed to be setting an example at the school to take a stand against this sort of thing' and she was really upset. [...] I had to go to my friends and say, 'You need to stop" and then I got in a fight with my friends for sticking up for her. It really affected me when he [Edwards] took me in his room by myself and he was really upset, and was, like 'I shouldn't hear your name in this.' That one particular time the Troupe stuck with me. [...] The fact that I was associated with such a problem wasn't okay with Mr. Edwards.

(Caroline)

Edwards' corrective action is always accompanied by involvement and warmth as well. Several participants mentioned Edwards' remembering to complement them on accomplishments like being accepted into district band or asking them how things were at home. One said that, remarkably, when Edwards asked you how you were, he actually wanted to know.

And for students of color, Edwards' importance cannot be underestimated. Two alumnae were pointed and specific:

There were times when he felt like one of the very few voices of reason that existed in high school. I don't know that I would have made it without him. He was an amazing example of how a teacher is available to their students both academically and personally.

(Tracy)

He was doing what we wanted to do, what I wanted to become. He was living it. It was very comforting to know I could talk to this man because he knew what it was like. He knows what it is like to be the only African American. He can give me this advice and I can take that advice because he knows. It's not just somebody reading from a book. He has the life experience we can draw upon. [...] How can you just exist? How do you not
give up, and seeing him not giving up made it so much easier for us not to give up, for me not to give up. Because he did it -- and I'm going to do it because he did it. I know it can be done. (Helena)

Both of these alumnae attest that their high school experience would not have been a successful one without Edwards' active involvement and his example.

Although he teaches, as all teachers do, by presence and behavior, what concerns Edwards now is teaching processes of thinking more than content, though he spoke in our interviews that possessing thorough content knowledge is the first requirement of teachers. But as he has become more experienced, he has altered his priorities. Said Edwards:

What we need to be teaching are skills such as critical thinking and problem solving, so now I'm not so worried about having all the answers. I am much more concerned with them asking good questions. So 'Q' is the letter that I like to banter around a lot in my classroom -- more important than the answers, ask questions. Ask questions. And my students know if I can't answer the question -- and many cases I don’t want to answer the question -- I will send them in pursuit of the answer. So that is where I see my teaching changing the most, that I’m not caught up on knowing everything as much as getting them to think, getting them to question, getting them to engage their minds in some kind of rigorous work so that they have some skills that can benefit them outside the classroom and in their real lives. Because if they can problem solve, then whatever they are doing later on, that’s going to be helpful to them. If they can analyze and think critically, and synthesize information that they get from here and from here, and put it together and complete the picture of what’s going on, then they’re going to have a better
opportunity in their lives to advance themselves and to make positive contributions to society.


Delpit laments how educational leaders have lost sight developing students' integrity, expressiveness, ingenuity, persistence, and kindness in a trade for higher test scores, using testing that emphasizes deficiencies of students of color and reinforces programmatic, test-driven instruction. She reviews a time when, because of segregation and struggle for equity, African Americans inculcated the value of education on its own merits in order to assert oneself and claim one's humanity, to work for the betterment of one's whole people, and not for an extrinsic reward, since careers were so restricted for African Americans. Delpit realizes that after Civil Rights were gained, the messages of education to African American changed. She calls for educators to bring out the excellence of students by the kind of teaching which recognizes their "inherent intellectual capability, humanity, and spiritual character [...and] learn who our children are – their lived culture, their interests, and their intellectual, political, and historical legacies" (p. 20). As an example of this kind of teaching, Delpit applauds the classroom of an exceptional African American teacher who creates "intentional communities" that demand rigor and purposeful involvement in intellectual work while caring for and nurturing students as whole beings. Edwards' concerns, his approach to teaching and mentoring, his "walking the walk" as an example brings to all his students an activist, culturally informed pedagogy and moral sense.

Edwards remains the most prominent figure in the landscape of this expression of theatrical, anti-bias activism as teacher, mentor, and founder of the Tolerance Troupe. He is
pivotal, moving between adults and the teens, between actors and his audiences. By the way of
the Tolerance Troupe, in addition to his classroom, Edwards has created a long-running,
intentional community of teaching and learning. This opening act has looked at Edwards as
facilitator and teacher, and his work with the audience for the Troupe's work and his work with
his students. It is to the structure and nature of this community of teaching and learning for the
Troupe's student actors we turn to in Act Three. In the intervening section, as preparation
however, in Act Two we introduce the freshman performance. Freshman performance is the first
look at the Troupe that many local students see, is their first exposure to Edwards' pedagogy and
often is the first exposure that aspiring student actors get to the Tolerance Troupe as well as the
first performance for many members of the Troupe. Act Two also sets up a frame for
interpretation for the ritual "work" of "play", and returns to that sense of community crucial for
an administration to endorse by deeds as well as by talk.
ACT TWO: Performing Selves in a Ritual of Shock, in Ritual Time

Act Two takes a detailed look at the annual and sole performance given by the Troupe at Selinsgrove Area High School, (SAHS) -- the freshman performance, represented in what follows as transcribed from audio-taping. Scene 1 of the second Act focuses on the content and performance itself, including the question-and-answer, improvised portion of the skit. The analysis examines ways the actors involve themselves in the skits, including stinging memories of the violations of others and of their better selves that they carried to school with them from elementary and middle school years, driving home the importance of performance for the freshman class. Scene 2 looks at ways these skits "work" including the violating of norms, and the use of shock and the power of its language; such "play" works in ritual space and time. Finally, in Scene 3, the principal of SAHS concludes freshman performance with final words, returning to the rules of the game in his school, his endorsement of the Troupe's work, and emphasizing the need for administrators to maintain an empowering school culture. This Act addresses how the Troupe appears it is "acting for others" from the overt messages delivered to its first, annual audience.

ACT TWO, Scene 1: Freshmen on Notice

On an early September morning, the whole freshman class makes its way to the auditorium of Selinsgrove Area High. Edwards gestures for them to sit in the center section so they do not spread out too widely in the seats in the left, right sections, or too far from the stage in the back section, and encouraging them to sit toward the front. "Come on down," he says, "the water's fine." One student asks him if he has one of the hot language arts classrooms on the western-facing, upper floor of the building. Edwards quips, "All the language arts classrooms are hot...but mine is smokin'!"
As they file in, the students pass, curious about the members of the Troupe gathered in front of the stage, and a few students comment on the line of older students waiting at the front. Edwards aside to the freshmen, "Don't mistreat the seniors... be nice to them. They need help."

"Freshman class," announces Edwards, "I want to make this statement: your reputation precedes you. Does anybody know what that means?" One student speaks from the back, but inaudible to me, and I assume, to many of the gathered freshman class rearranging their seats and talking with their neighbors, is hard to hear. As part of his classroom skill, Edwards will affirm and then repeat each student comment: "Yes, I want to amplify that: the reputation you had coming from the middle school was that you were a great bunch of kids." He compliments the freshmen on their civil way of coming into the auditorium and taking their seats. "Your reputation preceded you. You lived up to those expectations, okay? I just wanted to say that to you. I really compliment you on how you came in here. What we're going to do is to give you a very simple presentation of a group that is special to Selinsgrove. We are the only people who have this. It's called the Tolerance Troupe, and it's a group of students that go around to different schools, community organizations, colleges, and conferences, and we present presentations on different issues. [...] Every year for the last five years, our first presentation is to the freshmen here, for two reasons. One, we want you to understand how the high school works. And two, we want some of you to audition for the Tolerance Troupe."

Above, Edwards praises the audience's behavior as a cohort, a bit of collective capital that emphasizes expectations, living up to reputations which may be so contested, dearly maintained, and so liable to rumor in middle school. Next, he introduces the Troupe and the Troupe's reputation. Third, although he does not mention it, there are additional reasons that the Tolerance Troupe begins the academic year performing only once for Selinsgrove Area High
School. Alumni and Edwards mentioned to me that this is the Troupe's only performance for the high school so that throughout the rest of the year, students will come to know members of the Troupe as individuals inside the school, and not as fixed somehow in these opening roles. Alumni and current actors in the Troupe also explain that performing for sophomore-through senior class-students rather than for just incoming freshmen would make the skits less real for the audience. Peers in the audience would already know the Troupe actors personally and socially, and it would be doubly hard for the actors to take on their roles and do a credible job of staying in character for questions from the audience.

We can see Edwards put the audience at ease in his standard introduction, while firmly establishing the terms of interaction, taken from the transcript of the freshman performance:

"I want to explain to you what it is we do. The Tolerance Troupe is a group of students, [grade] nine through twelve, who put on skits. And a skit is just a simple little portion of a play that shows a situation that is very realistic. Now I'm sure all of you have been to some kind of a play, and typically, you sit in your seats and the performance goes on, and you clap sometimes, and you laugh some times, and then the play is over. And you might talk to your friend as you leave, say, "I enjoyed that," or "I didn't really understand that," or whatever, and it's done.

"But the Tolerance Troupe is different because you are part of the performance. What I mean is that they are going to put on a situation that really exists, and after the skit is over, I will say, 'Cut!' And you are going to become a part of the performance," he gestures out to the freshmen and then turns to the Troupe, "because they are going to stay in character. They are going to remain the people that you saw in the skit. And it becomes your turn to ask them questions about why they did what they did, so that we can try to come to an understanding about how you can deal with situations differently."
Again, I have used italics to note vocal stress, but also to signal the point of the Troupe's work as it is represented, to question motive and seek alternatives to conflict. Notice how Edwards reiterates the reality of what the students will see. He repeats "real" and "realistic," and emphasizes in a tone so serious that the boundary between the performance and the audience is permeable and designed for their participation. Then in the audience's "rehearsal" of their role, it is time to turn again to humor as trickster, in the way Boal (1977) designates the moderator as "The Joker" -- "a neighbor and contemporary of the spectator" who stands apart from the actors and is designed to help "the performance develop on two different and complementary levels: that of the fable (which can use all the imaginative resources of the theatre), and that of the 'lecture,' in which the Joker becomes an exegete" (p. 175). Here is Edwards involving himself in his informality as neighbor and contemporary of the audience and with a joke, reversing their expectations, and as a trickster, catching them off guard:

Edwards bends toward the audience, "So when the skit is over, I'm going to say, 'Cut!'" and that is going be your cue to clap. And since you are part of the performance, I'm going to have to rehearse you. So I'm going to say, 'Cut!' and see how you do. Okay, practice makes perfect. Ready? Cut!"

The audience claps, but not strongly enough for Edwards' warm up. "Ready? Here we go again. Cut!" They clap, louder. "That's better. Okay, one more time: Chop!" Some clap and some do not, the switch and confusion creating laughter. Edwards gestures with a bent elbow: "That's a chop. This is a cut..." and then makes his fingers into moving scissors. "We'll try it again: Slice!" There is more laughter as his hands in the air make a knife-slicing motion. "Okay, practice makes perfect: Cut!" The laughing and applause is strong now. "Fantastic!
With the audience laughing and ready for entertainment, they are attentive and disarmed. I noted that I watched the ninth grade file in, laughing, excited, talking to each other in a din of high voices, eager to be out of their classrooms, more than a hundred to perhaps a 150 fourteen or fifteen year olds. They are told that they will be watching a performance, and the expectation of an assembly is one of comic relief, of costumes, distractions, and probably of tiresome, edifying homilies they have heard before that compensate for sitting obediently in a school assembly. They have already gotten what was meant as humor in this warm-up. The rest of the laughter will be the anxious kind.

If they have not yet seen the Tolerance Troupe in action, the initial pleasure of being out of the classroom turns to shock, and expectations of amusement turn to rapt attention. It was remarkable to see an auditorium of approximately 150 ninth graders quietly strain to hear what was playing out on the stage. The Troupe's warm-up itself is a ploy of reversal, and the violation of taboos of silence is not lost on the Troupe members. Now the Troupe await their cue standing near the edge of the auditorium stage, dressed in ordinary clothes, and calling each other by their own first names, lending a naturalness to their address to each other.

Edwards gives his last instruction to the assembly. "And listen, so once you stop applauding, what I want you to do is raise your hand, and you're going to direct your questions to one of the actors and you can say, 'You with the brown shirt on, why did you say that? Did you really mean that?' And then they're going to stay in character and when it's all done, we're going to talk about -- how can these situations be handled differently. Because in the end, what we want to do make sure we can all get along.

"You know, this school is a great place to go to school. Raise your hand if you feel a little more freedom in high school."
A smattering of students raise their hands, but not too many. Edwards continues: "We'll do it another way. Raise your hand if you want to go back to middle school." One student spoke up that he would go back to middle school, but his is the only voice and as the only contrarian, gets no traction. Edwards turns toward the cast on stage. "All right, everybody ready?" He backs up and gestures to the Troupe, raising his "chop" hand and moving it into point position. "Actors take your places!" He completes the final set up for the freshman audience. "Let me explain something to you right now."

"Let us imagine—We have to use our imaginations here—let us imagine that this is a wall in the locker room separating the girls' locker room from the guys' locker room. Let's also imagine that gym class is ended, people are in the locker room, changing, having their conversations that typically happen and you are actually overhearing this.

"And remember, when I give you that cue, you are going to applaud and then if you have a question for any of the actors, raise your hand, and I will either amplify the question or help us all be able to hear it in terms of getting to this skit & getting this job done."

Notice how, after stressing the reality of the conflict situation previous, now the imagination is stressed in four repetitions, invoking the illusion of theatre "as fable" and this imagining is paired with assertion of a heightened sense of the real, what is typical, what is "actually" overheard. The spectator may still assume the comfort of bystanding, and need not to commit to anything or to self-reveal, although these things do happen in the question and response period. It's also an interesting choice of words, of "getting this job done" because of time constraints, one class period of roughly forty-two minutes. "Getting the job done" means that work is being done here, and not mere play. Similar to Boal's assertion that his theatre should be more similar to interventions, to testimony, judgments, or to court-room trial, the
utilitarianism of "work to do" reflects Brecht's injunction of using art as a tool to shape reality, and not merely to reflect it. And Sutton-Smith (1997) might locate such a "work" ethic of play into the rhetoric of power that would, out of a contest between teams or social groups, ultimately reinforce a sense of popular virtue (Huizinga, 1949/1999) that would "unite rather than divide them" (cited in Sutton-Smith, p. 75).

The skit dialogue follows, as do the audience's questions and characters' answers. I have used actor names when those names are used in the text of the skit, since the characters use actual given names of the actors. Otherwise, I label the character's speech with the roles the characters inhabit when un-named in the skit.

The audience has been prepared, and Edwards gives the Troupe their cue: "Ready? Action!"

*Female Friend:* "So, Gracie, yesterday in school, I saw you with a bruise on your eye. And there are some rumors going around that Raj hits you. Is it true?"

*Gracie/Protagonist:* "What? Raj would never hit me --He loves me."

*Antagonist:* "But Gracie, I saw Raj hit you before. What are you doing that made him want to hit you?"

*Gracie:* "I'm not doing anything. He just has a temper problem. Anyway, it's no big deal."

*Female Friend:* No big deal? Right... A little temper problem now can totally change into something really big. If you get hurt, you could get hurt, *bad.*

*Female Antagonist:* "I think if you stop doing the stupid things you're doing that makes him hit you, then you'll be absolutely fine."

*Gracie:* (breaks down, anxious) "I don't know what to do!"
Jeanette/Indifferent #1: "I guess if you are so stupid enough to be with him, then you should get hit."

Female Friend: "Jeanette, I don't think this is any of your business."

Jeanette: "Yeah, it is, because you're spreading all your information in a public place like this locker-room, right Ileana?"

Ileana/Indifferent #2: "What? Oh, I don't really care about what goes on between you two. I don't even know Raj."

Female Friend: (to Gracie) "I can't believe you're saying this. There is no such thing as 'tough love.' Hitting isn't tough love – It's either love or no love, right Jeanette?" (Ally looks to Jeanette and Ileana)

Jeanette: "That's what I mean. That's not love to me. If you're dumb enough to stay with Raj, then you deserve one another. You're dumb enough to get hit."

Female Antagonist: "Whatever. Let's leave..."

(Girls freeze, turn inward as if in silent conversation, and boys animate)

Male Friend: "Raj, are you still dating Gracie?"

Raj/Aggressor: "Yeah."

Ally of Protagonist/Dylan: "Well, I saw her walking to school last week with a black eye. What's up with that?"

Raj: "Uh, that's actually none of your business."

Ally of Aggressor: "Yeah, you better mind your own business. Raj can do anything he wants. It's his girl."

Dylan: "Wait...you gave her that bruise?"

Raj: "I wasn't aware that we were playing 20 questions. You guys need to lay off."
Indifferent Male: So what? Maybe she got out of line. You know that girl is annoying.

Raj: "Yeah, so what? We were just watching TV peacefully, and you know Gracie, she had to say something stupid, so I slapped the 'ho.'" [The word is held a moment, nervous audience laughter]

Dylan: "Are you crazy, Raj? What if she presses charges against you? Do you want to go to Juvi?"

Raj: "Are you crazy, Dylan? I'm the only thing she has in her life. She loves me. She's not going to press charges. And if she tells anyone, I'll just hit her again."

Drew: "Yeah, see the way she clings on Raj? She needs him."

Ally of Drew: "That still doesn't make it right. Didn't your parents tell you not to hit girls? What if you had a sister – would you hit her, too?"

Indifferent Male: "I hit my sister..." (Audience laughter)

Raj: "All I'm saying is, if you two don't lay off, you're going to have a black eye, the both of you."

Edwards, loudly: "CUT!" (Audience clapping)

The most important part of any Tolerance Troupe performance follows, the question and answer or response period. At this point in the performance the actors work the hardest, to stay in character and to begin reflecting, even if their answers seem to come glibly. Drew and others report that this part of the skit is the most challenging and most significant, when the audience engages the performers:

[They] ask you questions for your particular views on the subject. That's where you have to start thinking differently about other people, where again the tolerance comes in. You have got to understand the people for who they are, and you have got to understand what
their life is like, so if you portray an avid Christian you have to start thinking the way a Christian would think. [...] You get asked questions on the fly. You’re prepared for some -- you’re unprepared for some others. If you’re portrayed as a racist, you would expect somebody to ask you "Why do you feel this way?" And then other people would ask you, "All right, what if you were black and everybody else in the world was white and we all felt this way about you?" Then that’s where you have really got to start thinking about what your character would say, what they feel, if ignorance would come into the picture, 'Oh that would never happen,' -- but you have got to start thinking about what that person would think and feel about that particular question. It’s a lot more improv. (Drew)

As the actors focus on their characters, Edwards allows enough time for audience reactions, including pauses for words like "ho" in the skit, and in the question and response session, timed for shock, laughter, and applause. Before relaying questions, Edwards explains that he will be repeating their questions so all can hear, again echoing and affirming the subject positions of the questioners:

"Do you have any questions for any of these people?" An audience member raises her hand to ask, and Edwards again reinforces the format for questions and answers: "Now, I want to make sure everybody can hear the questions before they answer. I'm going to amplify. She asked, "Why did you hit your girlfriend? That doesn't seem right."

*Raj:* "Well, it may not seem right to you, but it does to me. She said something stupid, so I hit her. She deserved it."

The audience questions again, and Edwards repeats: "What would you do if she hit you back?"
"She probably wouldn't come to school in the next morning because she wouldn't be alive." (Loud audience reaction: "Eeww," "Ooh," nervous giggles)

Edwards, repeating: "What did she say that was so stupid that you hit her?"

Raj: "We were watching something with college guys, and she said that one of them was hot, and I'm the only man she needs to be looking at, so I hit her."

Edwards, repeating: "Do you look at any other girls? Good question, that's only fair. Do you look at any other girls?"

Raj: "Yeah, but I'm more important than her, so I can look at whoever I want to."

(Heightened commotion, more giggles from the audience.)

"Why do you assume you are more important than her?"

Raj: "It's not an assumption: it's a fact." (Lots of laughter)

(Audience question to Gracie) "Why do you let him treat you like you have lesser value than he has?"

Gracie: He's my boyfriend. How am I supposed to retaliate? He's stronger than me. If I tell anybody, he'll just hit me again. And sometimes he treats me really nice, and he really does love me."

Edwards repeating: "Have you thought about going to a police officer, a counselor, or teacher, parent, or somebody?"

Gracie: Not really. My boyfriend is special to me. I wouldn't want to hurt him in any way."

Edwards gives an opening gesture to other Troupe members on stage. "Now I want to ask you all a question and find out how the rest of you feel. How do you feel about the situation she's in?"
Female Antagonist: "She's obviously not satisfying him." (Laughter from audience)

Female Friend: "I don't think it's about satisfying her boyfriend. It's not right if someone cares about you to treat them like that. What he's doing is totally wrong, but I don't know what to do about it."

Jeanette/Indifferent #1: I think she is just stupid. ("Oohs," laughter from audience) She don't like getting hit; I know it don't feel good...I don't know why she is still staying with him. There are plenty of other boys out there.

Edwards: What about you? How do you feel about their situation?

Ileana/Indifferent #2: "Oh. I don't really care. I don't see – why would I care if it's not happening to me?"

Edwards is now motioning to the boys' side: "What do you feel about what's obvious in this relationship: he hits his girlfriend."

Indifferent Male: I hit my sister, so why discriminate? I learned in my past that if the slipper fits, hit her with it. (Louder laughter)

Edwards, asking Justin: "What about you?"

Justin: I don't think its right. I've always thought it's been morally wrong to hit girls.

Dylan: I think he's being an idiot to be completely honest. For him to think he is going to keep hitting her and she's not going to do anything,— a human being can only take so much."

Drew: "I probably wouldn't hit my girl friend. But I think it's between them to work it out."

Edwards, to Gracie: "Why do you think its okay for him to hurt you but you won't hurt him? I mean, if he hits you, shouldn't you hit him back?"
"He's bigger than me; I can't fight back. I love him and he loves me. And there are times that he's not right --but it's not usual."

"Why do you think he loves you and he keeps hurting you?"

"When he does hurt me, he says he's really sorry, and it's my turn to forgive him."

Edwards: "Now I'm going to stop the questions here and take a quick survey by a show of hands. Just raise your hand: you don't have to answer a thing. How many of you know somebody who has been in a relationship where the person who has been dating has hit?

"Okay, put your hands down. That's about half the group here. Let me pause and go back to something that you say: If somebody is hitting you and hurting you, as you pointed out, you need to get some help. Who can you go to? You should at least be able to go to your parents, a counselor, or teacher or someone you trust. Because bottom line is, both of those people are in trouble. Why? Because one day it will go too far, and he will seriously injure her, if not kill her. It happens all the time...with adults! If you stop and read the newspaper, you'll find out: some guy, angry with his wife, kills her. But here's the other side people don't think about, especially you guys. When you go to sleep, you are a weak as a newborn baby. So she decides 'I've had had enough,' and he goes to sleep, she can do the same thing to him and he'll never wake up. This is a never-ending cycle; neither one of them are going to help each other in this situation. There needs to be some outside help. And there is always outside help: a counselor, teacher, or parent. There is always someone you can go to. And if you are afraid for somebody who's getting hurt, then you go get help for that person. You don't have to solve that problem – find somebody who can help."

Two tropes will repeat in other performances that I witness. First, Edwards will refer to current events, articles or editorials in the news. In every performance, Edwards will "read the
world" with his students; Edwards will mention a headline or an issue in the popular press that many students will be familiar with. Later this year, doing a similar skit, Edwards will use the domestic violence incident between the singer Rhianna and Chris Brown to make his point.

Second, Edwards will always poll the audience. He will make use of issues that surface at the top of a community's concerns, including both incidents in and out of school, such as partner abuse among middle and high school students.

The problem is painfully significant for these freshmen coming out of middle school; a survey of recent, national statistics on domestic violence compiled by the American Bar Association Commission on Domestic Violence (2010) reports that approximately one in five female high school students reports being physically and/or sexually abused by a dating partner, and in a study of eighth and ninth graders, 25 percent indicated that they had been victims of dating violence, including eight percent who disclosed being sexually abused. Given that the victims of dating violence are nearly exclusively female, it interests me that Edwards reframes the problem of relationship assault in terms of men's safety and as self interest ("you guys" used as gender specific), although, as pointed out by Kurt Lewin (1946), in "Action Research and Minority Problems," "so-called minority problems are in fact majority problems" of structural privilege (as cited in Stoudt, 2009). Women may constitute a majority in numbers, yet male privilege perpetrates abuse. Still with mixed feelings of estrangement and encouragement, I witness Edwards specifically address the young men in the room who may be normalizing abusive behavior.

Question and answer has come to a close. Edwards needs to debrief the audience and the actors as they introduce themselves, give their names, their place in school, and how many years they have been in the Tolerance Troupe. In this particular performance, the actors have been in
the Troupe for two years, with two seniors having been in the Troupe for four years running, ever since they watched their first freshman performance and auditioned to become part of the Troupe. Edwards again complements the audience: "Ladies and gentlemen, again you have lived up to your reputation. Give yourselves a round of applause!" Everyone claps.

Then to break ritual, theatrical time, Edwards, hoots like a train whistle. "WHOOOO! You know what that means? That means they are no longer in character. We are no longer doing a skit. That means they can come sit down at the edge of the stage and introduce themselves. I want you to meet some of the people in the Tolerance Troupe. These are not all of the people, but I want you to meet them, know what their names are, and how long they've been in the Troupe." The actors sit, dangling their legs on the edge of the stage, and introduce themselves, down the line. The announcement that causes the most audience reaction is Raj's declaration that, not only does he not hit girls, but he doesn't even date girls. His coming-out breaks a taboo that many middle school students and some high school administrations would not wish to address, even in skits: the inclusion of, or sometimes even the acknowledgement of the presence of GLBT students as part of its student body.

Edwards makes a pitch for joining the Troupe; the audition process will take place in a few weeks from this performance. "A few minor details... We really never advertise, our reputation is such that throughout the state, people are aware of us." The next appeal is one to family, again consistent with Foster (2001) and the creation of intentional community (Delpit, 2003) – a practice not just for students of color but for involving and connecting all youth:

"What I want to say to you in this program is to let you know that, folks, this is your second home. This is your second home. This is our house. We take care of our own in our house. We want to take care of you. We want you to do the right thing, we want you to dress
appropriately, pass your classes, get out of here, get great jobs, pay income taxes, so we can retire." Only a few in the audience chuckle, understanding an adult joke at the young's burden of their elders, but interestingly, this jest too involves collectivity. "Okay, good -- some of you are laughing. The point I mean is, you should be safe here -- you should feel comfortable here, and you should feel like there is someone you can go to here. And as I said, if some of you care to be part of the Tolerance Troupe if you think this is part of your thing, but you can't just talk the talk, you have to walk the walk.

"Do you have any questions in general before Mr. Messmore [Principal of Selinsgrove Area High School] has some final comments at the end?"

As a final question, another student asks if Gracie herself has ever been in an abusive situation, again expressing confusion between the staged character and the student actor. Gracie the student says no, that she has not been in that situation, but if she were, she would go for help. "And if it was serious, we would have to get counseling. And if he wouldn't, I would just break it off." The actor again asserts, against skit type, what she would do, and not what her character portrays as learned helplessness; Gracie models an agentic choice of behavior and enlisting allies that would refuse her abuse.

Freshman performance may not have been the first time that several local students have seen the Tolerance Troupe; in fact, more than half of the participants I interviewed had joined the Troupe after seeing the Troupe perform at their middle school, leaving them with a profound impression of the Troupe's mission. In fact, intermediate and middle school is the most crucial time for that first impression and dealing with bullying. Tatum (1997) has noted that racial grouping begins by or before the sixth or seventh grade as young adolescents begin to question what it means to be a member of a racial or ethnic group, at a time when these identities are
given heightened salience by what others think and say about these groups (p. 52). Adler and Adler (2003) confirm that the pressures of peer power begin in pre-adolescent school years in which relatively autonomous peer culture "contains member's distillations of society's expectations" (p. 5).

As we look at the experience of Troupe members in the coming Acts, early memories continue to stand out as a time of crisis and cruelty, from later elementary grades to middle school for current members and alumni. Seven comments below from seven different participants are representative of early recollections of bias and conflict in late elementary and middle school years, experienced and recounted by Troupe members:

My parents were married in India and then they came here. Selinsgrove is a very homogenous town, so I guess I struggled with that a little bit. [...] I loved my friends and I felt they couldn’t relate to why my parents are the way they are. It was really funny. I know for sure, in Bosnia, they wear this thing called a labian. It was this little cloth that you wrap around. And I remember my little friends would come around, and it was just so awkward. My little friends would say "What is your dad wearing?" It’s just like a cultural thing, and I always wanted that, people who could understand. (Antonia)

I have these slivers of memory from elementary school during parent-teacher conferences, my performance in class being spoken so poorly of, to my mother. My teachers during this time, especially first through third grade, had no problems whatsoever in visibly showing contempt at my mother because of how they viewed her as another single parent, welfare mom. My mother is the most punctual person I know. When I was in kindergarten, she would walk me to school and often drop me off about
twenty minutes before class started. One day the teacher came up to her and said, “This isn’t a babysitting service,” implying a certain air of laziness on my mother’s part because she wanted me to be on time! (Tracy)

My mother is gay, and the kids at the bus stop would say some mean things about her. I think at that age, I didn’t even really understand, I didn’t really get what they were trying to say […] I didn’t know how to respond -- I think I didn’t really try to respond, I think I just tried to ignore it. (Justin)

This was like 4th or 5th grade, and [a classmate] went up to her and said, "Get out of here, you f_g nigger." And I pushed him away and said, "You can’t do that," and then people started defending him rather than defending the girl. (Theo)

I remember when they [adopted South Asian cousins] would come to visit I would play with them and go places with them and one time I took them to a sports event when I was in middle school, and this kid who was like a bully in my middle school asked me who these people were. […] I said they were my cousins, and he made jokes for like an hour and a half at the game beside me about how they couldn’t possibly be my cousins, and made them feel horrible until we had to leave. (Caroline)

I will admit I was more hesitant in middle school with the racist comments I was less likely to say something […] I can remember a lot of incidences like that. I remember even better I guess a good example I remember in middle school, seventh grade, I had a navy sweatshirt on. One of my friends said… and I forget exactly how he made it up but it was
basically that I was a nigger and I was so offended it brought tears to my eyes. That’s probably the biggest incident where I stuck up for myself that really sticks in my head where I had a real tough time with it. [...] I still think about it. (Alex)

There was the leader girl, and we were always competing for her affections. It was really frustrating, and at one point, the four girls singled me out and went some place without me -- it was to a dance. And in seventh grade dances were a big thing. It was really upsetting to me, so I asked the girl I was partnered with in my pre-calc class if I could sit with her at lunch, and we’ve been best buddies ever since. There was a lot of peer pressure especially in that kooky group when everybody wanted to worship that one girl. I feel horrible for doing that now. I wasted part of my life idolizing another human being. (Sharon)

Just as Adler and Adler (2003) and Tatum (1997) point to intermediate grades and middle school as a heightened time of peer conflict, Milner's study (2006) of class and status pressures in high school draws testimonies from participants who mention transitional freshman year in high school as especially crucial. Writes Milner, "First and second year students have low status relative to other students, and so collectively these lower grades have less status to go around. This makes competition for status especially intense" (p. 95).

One participant mentions freshman year particularly as that time when "status roles are so uncertain," so it becomes painfully important who is in view eating with whom during lunch, and the shake-up of middle school systems and reconfiguration during the first year of high school maintains its importance for years. The following statements from Troupe members describe
their freshman experience. Ariel continued, "People do often say and do really hurtful things, and sadly in a lot of places, it’s part of the culture of high school."

Other students commented on hidden betrayals or longing admiration to be with the cool kids in their freshman year:

[I remember] a guy who I regarded as my friend in middle school, but it was my freshman year in high school, and I realized he was saying things behind my back. Half way through my freshman year, I was still saying "Hi," to him in the morning, and didn’t have any idea he was doing that. (Justin)

Girls talking behind other person’s back, being very exclusive and feeling left out of groups -- I went through that in middle school and elementary school and even high school. [...] I went to school with the same people for 12 years essentially and so there was a group who was the stereotypical popular group at school. They were a lot of athletes or heads of sports teams, and they got leading roles in plays, and they were having parties. And they were kind of the central group who everyone would consider the popular group, so it wasn’t necessarily what they were doing it was just who you were associating with. It was a particular group of people who seemed to always get the attention. It’s kind of tough to say, that’s just the way it was for so long I didn’t really think about it. I didn’t really think what made these people special. They all lived in the same neighborhood, and they were the first people to start having the parties and start drinking, and that was kind of the cool thing to do when you are in high school. (Julie)

The pleasures of being a teenager in cool company are not to be under-estimated.

Similarly, another important characteristic of experiencing the Troupe as actor or as spectator is
pleasure, affiliation, and humor. Several participants mention how cool it was to see the Troupe in performance for the first time, and from the first contact the freshmen have with Edwards, we see him use informality of address in his sense of humor ("smokin'!") and in his appeal for the freshman class, as they file into the auditorium, to "be kind to the seniors", conveying a topsy-turvy sense of high school hierarchy, a grant of power towards freshmen, those physically least developed, youngest, and least powerful, at the bottom in terms of school distinction or social clout.

ACT TWO, Scene 2: Theatre Play as Meta-Work

In this second scene of the Act Two, we return to freshman performance to unpack more of what has taken place in this first performance of the year. We need to begin with performance itself. The mode of drama is a meta-commentary on power, which, in Victor Turner's view (1982), is a way to mediate conflict, "an interpretative re-enactment of experience," social dramas separated out as a leisure activity (p. 104). As anthropologist of ritual and theatre, Turner writes, "Theatre is perhaps the most forceful, active, if you like, genre of cultural performance" and is serious business. Turner uses Durkheim to affirm that rather than being light entertainment, ritual and play in earlier, traditional cultures were intrinsic to the work of the whole community: invoking fertility of humans, crops, animals, and of life-giving rains, used to formally initiate and transform boys and girls into men and women, and commoners into leaders. Theatrical ritual was initially an activity that Turner calls liminal, taking place in the threshold between worlds of the profane and sacred, the two worlds involved in sacred communication with one another. In industrial and post-industrial culture, the utilitarian replacement of communal, sacred work by private, economic labor resulted in a binary that splits the world of work from that of leisure, and play including performance was relegated to frivolous, free,
recreational activity. Thus, no longer sacred but as entertainment, an art of secular ritual, theatre was rendered suspect, regarded with ambivalence by Calvinist enforcers of social norms as not liberating and creative, but as corruptive, chaotic, and engaged in by unsavory actors and entertainers. Nevertheless, the tie to the sacred in theatre persisted in what Turner called "liminoid," voluntary activity that serves similar functions to old communitarian rituals. Deeply indebted to Turner, Richard Schechner (2002) describes performance as being caught in "the creative tensions of the binary [of] efficacy-entertainment. [...] Efficacy and entertainment are not opposites, but 'dancing partners,' each depending on and in continuous active relationship to the other" (p. 71).

Additionally, perhaps as part of this "dance", performance can be taken as no simple "mirror" to a unitary reality. Instead, writes Turner, performative and narrative, storying genres can be taken as:

- a hall of mirrors, or better, magic mirrors (plane, concave, convex, cylinder, saddle, or matrix mirrors to borrow metaphors from the study of reflecting surfaces) in which social problems, issues, and crises [...] are reflected as diverse images transformed, evaluated, or diagnosed in works typical of each genre, then shifted to another genre better able to scrutinize certain of their aspects, until many facets of the problem have been illuminated and made accessible to conscious remedial action. In this hall of mirrors the reflections are multiple, some magnifying, some diminishing, some distorting the faces that peer into them, but in such a way as to provoke not merely thought, but also powerful feelings and the will to modify everyday matters in the minds of the gazers. (p. 104-05)

In order to provoke thought and feeling, the ceremonial space and time for performative action must be cast. The rituals of performance such as forms of address as simple as "Ladies
and gentlemen," the presence of actors inhabiting "others" as characters or roles, some raised or set-apart area or stage, the hand movements of Edwards as he facilitates, and even his cues of "Cut!" or "Ready...Action!" reconstruct ritualistic structures of performance of the skit as both sacred and ludic. Furthermore, the three-part structure of the assembly and skit as a whole follow the pattern of separation of time (assembly time, out of school-day-class-time), the action of the actors in character aggressing, clowning, or subverting norms; question and answer period in which characters are continued in time with the audience, and finally, reaggregation or rejoining and "cooling" of behavior in post-performance. The terms used here are taken from Turner's diagram of the ritual process as it relates to the liminal, the liminoid, and theatre (as cited in Schechner, 2002, p. 61).

Western theatrical, performance-play has long been tied to celebration and festival from the worship of Dionysus to the mystery and liturgical plays of the early Christian church. As the medieval Western church grew in power, it drove folk humor and festival apart from its liturgy. Bakhtin (1965/1968) explains that celebrations were semi-legitimized because the energy of celebration and excess needed to be acknowledged by the Church: "This is why we permit folly on certain days so that we may later return with greater zeal to the service of God" reads an apology for the Feast of Fools circulated by the Paris School of Theology in 1444, "so that the foolishness, which is our second nature and seems to be inherent in man might freely spend itself at least once a year" (as cited in Bakhtin, 1965/1968, p. 75). The rest of official Church ideology was characterized by seriousness and asceticism, writes Bakhtin, and it is not hard to see the emphasis on seriousness and high purpose, once the province of religion and feudal responsibility, transfer to the seriousness of the classroom. Yet school play and student assembly drinks from this old cultural stream of carnival: time out of somber study, time for association
and enjoyment, and time out of the mundane space of the classroom. Troupe members are aware that the celebratory, special occasion of an assembly that gives way to shock and awe of the Tolerance Troupe performances, designed to provoke reaction. Like the metaphor of the photograph of the shadow of the statue of a man, there is a doubled doubleness: first, an assembly set apart creates a "time out" into liminoid space and time intended to heighten perception and emotion. More remarkable, such a space and time is legitimized inside the school day, and second, the actors stay in character while holding in and holding back their own values and convictions as they play their roles, seeking to provoke reactions from the audience. The following excerpts represent responses from current members and alumni. An alumna, Lori, notes the expectations that come with the ritual of performance as it is known in school-day assemblies:

You see theater and stuff, and it’s magical or different, or out there, this was like, "Wow, this is going on every day. I can see this happening in our school" [...] that connection you feel to it.

It’s a hard concept at first because people think when they are going to see a play or skit they think of fun musicals with costumes and fun, magical things, and props and stuff. And then we come up there and we’re using the *n word* and calling each other *whores* and *sluts*. (Lori)

Another alumnus remarks on the shock value of violated expectations of a usual school performance assembly and the surprise of the Tolerance Troupe, in which words of aggression are taken out of ordinary spoken context and put on display. These comments recall the comment, "I slapped the 'ho," that the freshmen heard that day in performance. This is and is not
ordinary teen talk, but to hear it spoken and projected aloud from the school stage is another matter entirely:

I think it’s very in your face. The Tolerance Troupe usually doesn’t hold back.

Depending on the age group of kids we are using we do use strong language because that’s exactly what happens in real situations, and usually the bully in the skits is very aggressive and so because it’s almost kind of shocking at times. There have been times when you hear people when we have used derogatory terms and people go "Aaahhh!"

But you know it’s kind of weird that people are so shocked because I feel that’s what people are encountering all the time, but it’s being put on display and being very in your face. (Julie)

Other participants pointed to the power and usefulness of shock in the skits. Ariel maintains that the Troupe had to keep a balance between provocation for its usefulness and on the content being discussed:

You want to provoke the people in the audience to ask questions. You do want to rile them up a bit, inflammatory enough to get a discussion going, but you don’t want to be so inflammatory that you’re just saying terrible outrageous things that it gets focused on what you’re saying since the focus is really on the discussion. So you have to learn to say things that you’re just provoking enough but not so much that it takes away from the actual topic. (Ariel)

An alumnus emphasizes how important it was to grab the attention of students who were, in fact, aware of these issues although the schools shied away from dealing with them. Addressing these issues was avoided or repressed, so shock was necessary to rouse student voices to speak:
When you’re not ready for something that taboo comes on your plate, it sticks with you. People aren’t ready the shock feature, and I think the shock is what really got our foot in the door. Where people go, 'Whoa, what is this? What is going on?' People on stage pretending to fight and screaming at each other -- and that is what really got our foot in the door, and then they just watched what we had to say.

Relief, laughter, anger, fear -- all the good ones, the juicy ones. Again the shock value -- people aren’t ready for it. If you aren’t ready for it and come unprepared for something and it is pretty emotionally intense, it will crack you. (Alex)

One of the sure fire provocations is use of the "n-word" in the skit:

One of our members was Puerto Rican, and then there was a group of white students who were members of the troupe, and they [other Troupe members] were calling him the n word. And I was like, 'Oh, my goodness, what is going on right now?' because they were actually using the n-word, and it was very powerful, and the reactions to it and the feedback from the audience was like 'Wow, this is really happening.' [...] when you see it isolated in front of your face that has a huge impact on the person. (Lori)

This alumna also recalls the power of the use of the "n word". She finds the audience's reaction curious because when the Troupe accepts an engagement, Edwards is told of that site's need, for instance, racism and name-calling was a particular problem in the school where this skit was performed:

I remember this one school in particular [...] they would tell us what the main issues were and we would base our skit on what was really going on there and this was on racism. And a lot of their students were using the n word and just comments that were completely inappropriate and it was so funny because we knew this going into it, and we knew this is
how a lot of their student body was speaking to each other, regardless if they were white or black or Puerto Rican or Hispanic -- they were all speaking to each other this way.

We did the skit. We were so surprised because it involved one of the white members calling one of our black members the *n* word, and that was hard for me too because we actually did use very vulgar language in the skit. And we would do teen pregnancy skits, and they were very in your face. (Lori)

Many participants agreed that in addition to shock, interactivity between audience and performers is the whole point of the Troupe's mission. The point is to open dialogue:

> We were vibrant, at times wild, and provocative, real. We were interactive and let people ask questions after the skits. I think the audience was always more affected because they had never seen anything like the Tolerance Troupe, and suddenly had a mirror held up to themselves. The teachers at the schools were often the most shocked because we really were tearing down walls and saying and talking about things that were completely taboo: ten years ago gay students, racism, coming from teachers directed to students. I think a lot of schools had no idea what they were getting into when they invited us to perform. We opened a dialogue and let people discuss these taboo subjects. (Lara)

Of the language used by these Troupe members and alumni in these extracts, their use of metaphors stands out. Shock becomes the embodied "in your face," "it will crack you" or "sticks" with you, or gets your "foot in the door". The skits are intended to "tear down walls." The symbolic activity is transgressive. If the characters were disturbing, and the audience got mad, it was a good day's performance. And taking in the mirror metaphor, remember that the mirror is not singular but a hall of mirrors. Recall that it distorts, "to provoke not merely
thought, but also powerful feelings and the will to modify everyday matters in the minds of the gazers" writes Turner. The objective is to stimulate action.

Oddly, spoken violation of norms and staged reproduction of aggressive actions, the reference to bodies, sexuality, sexual activity, or pregnancy in the skits fulfill a function of the carnivalesque, or grotesque realism, whose characteristic, writes Bakhtin (1965/1968), is of "degradation [...] the lowering of all that is high, spiritual, ideal, abstract; it is a transfer to the material level, to the sphere of earth and body in their indissoluble unity" (p. 20). Bakhtin's "material bodily principle" (p. 55) is linked to the bodily roots of the world and to exaggeration and laughter: there may be parodied or embarrassed, anxious laughter in this auditorium, but it is the laughter of embodied excess, of a world turned upside down like that in time of carnival, a time of suspending status when all are considered equal, and conducted in a time designated for renewal.

ACT TWO, Scene 3: Return to the Rules of the Game, the Principal's Performance

The school's principal is invited to have the last word. Mr. Messmore, who has joined the assembly in progress, has taken a spot at the front of the stage in his shirt sleeves, looking like a man between pressing engagements on the way to somewhere else he must go. Edwards asks, "Mr. Messmore, do you have anything for the good of the cause?"

Stepping forward, he rejoins Edwards' call: "Just that this is a new four years for you, and we hope it is just four years for you. (A few students laugh.) We do emphasize tolerance in this school. Everybody has a right to be here, not be hassled, not be ridiculed, and not be put down. And if that happens, we want to know about it. That's first. And then you can be educated. That's first. And I really want to applaud these guys for helping that in spreading the word in our school, and to other schools that desperately need it. I think we're in pretty good shape here, and
that is the atmosphere. Again, everyone here has the right to be here, okay? No putting down. As the football coach says to his football team, real men lift people up; they don't put people down. That's what you should do, and that's what we expect."

Messmore's statement reinforces the message of school as a community. Edwards, in his preceding speech mentions "home" twice and the school as our "house" twice as well. Messmore emphasizes freedom from harassment as a right, and safety in school coming first before academic learning can take place; this message of emotional and physical "safety first" is repeated. The school's protective authority stands: Messmore reiterates Edwards' saying that if there is harassment or abuse, "we want to know about it." Principals like Messmore must be aware that both bullies and victims do more poorly academically. Bullies are more likely to be truant, drop out and may act increasingly antisocial (Olweus, 1993; Banks, 1997), and targets of bullies suffer psychologically, medically, as well as academically (Nansel et al. 2001; Glew et al, 2005) even at the youngest ages. Targets' suffering emotionally is attributable to anxiety, depression, and injury from social aggression as well affecting academic performance. The National Education Association's (2003) National Bullying Awareness Campaign reported that the dread from threats of violence experienced by targets of aggression interferes with concentration on schoolwork, and Clarke's (2006) meta-analysis points to a need for supporting students' coping skills, reducing stress, and showing positive impact on academic performance: asserts Clarke, "active coping matters" (p. 22). The best pro-active strategy to improve school climate is to increase the connectedness that students feel to the school, (Karcher, 2004; Resnick et al, 1997) and the principal provides a focal point for setting the tone for school climate, (Dinham et al, 1995), building relationships with students at all levels to the school community. Messmore's comments address protection and an invitation to building this connection. My
interviews with alumni revealed that, a year prior to my study, there was a case of partner abuse when Edwards, the counseling staff, and the administration were all involved in addressing the case of relationship battering.

In addition, Messmore's mention of the football team is significant in a rural, sports culture which places such great store on its winning teams, of which Selinsgrove's football team is one. Significant is his mention of masculinity, "real men" acknowledging however subtly that males bully with physical violence more frequently than females (Seals & Young, 2003; Banks, 1997), and an implicit acknowledgement that young men bear the responsibility for their own aggressive behavior; that is, relational violence is not the girlfriend's problem.

I detected tension between centering authority and agency in the students and that authority reserved for the school and its representatives. Certainly, one of the functions of the Tolerance Troupe is to offer alternatives and venues for students to choose differently, to speak up, to choose a proactive solution, and younger students like middle school students and incoming freshmen need to know that their school is a positive advocate concerned with safety and school climate. Youth need not try to solve conflicts themselves when that conflict is less manageable than those they can safely address. Overall, to seek auxiliaries, to create allies is a valuable lesson in an individualistic culture and in a fairly isolated setting. There must be a balance achieved between assisting students in assuming autonomy in problem solving and in offering resources as well as adult affirmation.

As a district, Selinsgrove appears to be an exception, authorizing a united front against harassment; not every administration would make good as reliable allies for their students. Just as often in my observations of visiting Troupe performances, I have seen faculty members and administration absent themselves from performances for their student bodies, which absents
adults from listening to the voices of their student audience interacting with the Troupe. There is another reason the district is supportive of the Troupe's activity: outside performances draw support and kudos both for the Selinsgrove District and for those organizations and schools that invite them to perform, even when appearances of the Troupe may serve only as window-dressing.

These limitations in performing for others and constraints like this one will be addressed more fully in Act Seven. Simply being asked to perform, a visit from the Troupe has limited reach. The real power of an administration or teachers to actively intervene -- or ignore -- deep structural or cultural roots of bias-driven harassment or incidents of violence in schools remains in the institutions, districts, or organizations that may do little else to improve school climates or empower students, other than invite a single performance. In the words of one participant, the Troupe's work in performing for organizations and schools externally is "one and done" (Alex). Skepticism is warranted in that performance pedagogy for benefit of others may be regarded as another consumable, inauthentic gesture, done for the sake of creating a temporary "making nice" or quick fix, facilitating individual adjustment instead of institutional change. Sadly, this attitude of "one-and-done" is confirmed by Edwards. By his estimation, less than half of the schools for which the Troupe performs integrate their performances into a whole school program to prevent bullying or harassment.

It is important to note that there are and were other programs of intervention in the Selinsgrove Area School District which dealt with bullying and bias; some participants who became active in the Tolerance Troupe also participated in CASS, Creating a Safe School (2008), a mentoring program originating with the Ophelia Project, implemented in the Selinsgrove Area Middle and High schools. Thus, the district has demonstrated active concern
for mentoring, improving school climate, and reducing isolation. Their support of Edwards and the Tolerance Troupe is an extension of the institution's commitment to anti-bias work. Therefore, Messmore's public stance before his pupils is crucial to the success of Edwards' and the Troupe's effectiveness, not just in this school but in the whole of the district, and his declaration is backed by deeds at the site level in support of the Troupe's activity -- teacher release time, approval of a degree of student autonomy during class time, and use of district transportation, walking the walk of involvement with the real aims of the Tolerance Troupe, taboo topics, risky language, and all.
ACT THREE: Communities within Communities

Nesting Dolls to Living Tree, Diversity into collectivity

In Act Two, we considered the Tolerance Troupe's performance-for-others, the point of first and only encounter that many students have with the Troupe in their home high school. We have seen Edwards exhort freshmen to go for help when situations of conflict like the one in the scenario, relationship violence, go beyond the individual's resources. His parting speech to the freshmen portrays the school as their shared home-away-from-home. His message, seconded by the Principal, advances a discourse of community. "This is our house": the community of high school is bigger, less isolated than any individual student's home, one with more resources against violence and social aggression. Edwards asks for their belief and trust that problems can be solved rather than escalated, relying in the trustworthiness of teachers, administrators, and the institution. Through one of many means, school as an institution communicates its beliefs and values through its customs, structures, and processes, and this includes the Tolerance Troupe. Nevertheless, adolescent social hierarchies and old prejudices learned young still jockey for position outside the watchful eye of any institution or its stated good intentions.

In the overview to the project, I presented a brief, general look at adolescent social groups as part of whole school culture. To understand the culture and characteristics of the Troupe as a community, we return to the lived demographics of the borough and townships, not as the census or district reports them, but as students experienced them. I begin the exploration of community from more external boundaries and go inward by layer, beginning with Scene 1, "lived demographies," characterized by member and alumni reports, in their own words, of living and schooling in the area. In Scene 2 of this Act, I draw a portrait of the community of practice.
in the Troupe as a group located within its high school world and the cohesion and tensions inside the Troupe itself, including what binds them -- diversity and values that go beyond ideas of friendship. In the last Scene 3 of this Act, I describe and explain the formal processes of audition, interview, and acceptance in the student's view that forge and consolidate a unique community of teaching and learning comprising the Tolerance Troupe.

ACT THREE, Scene 1: Lived Demographies

A school dwells within its local community like nesting dolls, one within another, the school set within the larger town and within its region, including all the region's contexts, economic and ethnic contexts to start, the locality's and region's history, and their trajectories of change. These nest too, situated within a nation and its times, local, state, and national cultures in all their pluralities, all of which we share, and some of which we sometimes despair. Thus a school comprises a diminutive part of the nation in microcosm.

However, students occupy social worlds more immediate and on a more intimate scale -- of family and friends, of rivals, and romantic relationships, dosed with heavily mediated popular culture: music, videos, movies, and fashion. Formal discourses of school -- official policies, academics, sports, and clubs -- occupy their concerns alongside more immediate discourses in contact with one another, talk and slang, phoning, posting, texting, and social networking. Like nesting dolls or a better metaphor, the living rings of growth in a tree, histories and relationships, beliefs, values, and identities in their convergence leave marks and impressions, leave their "lessons" on each individual. Experience is situated at each point of convergence; interaction is a locus of learning in a "curriculum of life" that goes beyond what takes place in a content-focused, fifty-two minute sit in the secondary classroom. Experiences of all kinds in the
dynamism of activity take place in the context of plural communities: personal, cultural, historical, and political.

That learning takes place at the interaction of "objective and internal conditions," of course, is from Dewey (1938/1997). Experience interpenetrates, taken in at the individual level, the larger context interacting with the individual's personal history and reflective thoughts. The term, "curriculum of life was" coined by educationist A. W. Foshay, used in building a model for a holistic curriculum, recognizing that learning includes more than academic skills. Foshay (2000) describes the complexity of learning as taking place in an interacting field, a matrix. If what Foshay believed is so, that the purpose of education is "to bring a full sense of one's self to awareness or realization" (p. 3), self-awareness cannot arise in a vacuum, but only in relationship. To speak of the social self is to speak of beings in relationship: "It follows that to study the social self, we must be familiar with social communities, for it is our relationships with members of communities that define us as social beings" (p. 50). Foshay's matrix includes the life-long learning of both what it means to be part of a community and its reverse, what it means and feels to be isolated at the margins of a long-established community resistant to change.

**From the mainstream: **"Race – it's a big thing [...] I guess it's because we're not city."

The above comment from a Anglo-American freshman Troupe member (Leila), appears to assume that rural areas harbor more racism than do urban areas; indeed, all but one of the 28 white, "mainstream" or Anglo students Troupe members interviewed, spoke of sensitivity primarily to issues of racism because of the homogeneity of the area. Some families of color have lived in Central Susquehanna Valley for generations (Helena), but the root demographics of the area remain pre-dominantly rural and white, even while growing more racially and ethnically diverse. Although we will return to differences that these so-called "mainstream" Anglo students
mark in themselves when we explore identities, these following comments are typical of white, Anglo-American students interviewed:

Racism is a big one, just the area we are in, everybody there in rural Pennsylvania.

[Racism is] not necessarily okay for everyone there, but a lot of people will just turn a blind eye, even if they don't agree with it, because of the area [...] We would have a couple of exchange students [in high school] and another handful of African American students, and I noticed each year we got one or two more. We were slowly growing in size as far as culture, but very slowly. (Alex)

An alumna also admits that racism in this homogenous area persists as a salient issue.

One of the biggest things is race. I think most people in this area are not okay with people of any race except white, and I don't think many people will say that, but it's the way it is. (Larkin)

One founding member of the Troupe recalls that since there were so few minority students in high school at the time, minority students had to be hand-picked and recruited for the first incarnation of the Troupe. Unlike the Troupe numbers today of roughly twenty volunteers, the initial Troupe numbered seven people, made up of five white and two Hispanic students. She points out:

If you were a minority, you were like one of two. [...] I know I frequently heard racist comments about Puerto Ricans. That was a major one because there were more Puerto Ricans moving into town -- and then, it's such a sort of conservative, Christian area. I know it – I heard tons of comments, but not necessarily directed at anyone. (Olivia)

For some mainstream students, there appears a relative benefit to attending school in a college town as well: three participants moved to the district from even more homogenous, smaller, more
rural towns; two came to the high school from specifically Christian schools. To them, Selinsgrove seemed more diverse and more tolerant than schools they were used to:

I didn't go to public school in Juniata Country, but compared to the school I did go to [...] it's much more diverse here, much more. Because [Selinsgrove] it's a college town, there are so many more opportunities to see and understand diversity [...] a much bigger school, much different types of people, different points of view. (Sara)

"No one ever calls it like it is": Students who mark their difference

On the other hand, students of color and those who identify by cultural or religious difference from either the white or Christian mainstream did confront personal crises arising from blatantly racist incidents or confrontations, but these began early in elementary or middle school years. By high school, bias demonstrated directly against them was more often veiled. The quotation used in the heading above was taken from a founding member (Olivia) in recalling the words of her friend, an African American and fellow student, and meant as a criticism of the schools and of the Tolerance Troupe which he found too safe in its approach to address the severity of racism he saw and felt.

"There [are] some people that just don't get the fact that we are, in fact, human beings," says a mother of biracial children and member of one of the earliest Tolerance Troupes. She recalls harassment on the bus ride to and from school that took place in adjoining Union county, ten miles north of Selinsgrove, ironically, in a larger town that frequently prides itself on its liberality, and in a more affluent district. This student moved back to Selinsgrove where her mother's family had roots, joining the Troupe in its second year of operation:

Racism there was harsher, more prominent, less quiet – people didn't hide it very well [...]. My brother -- on the bus, they would throw BBs at him and torment him because he
was intelligent, he was attractive, and he wouldn't back down. So the bus ride from school to home was horrendous until he was old enough to drive and drive us to school.

(Helena)

Another member of the original Troupe, who had moved from New York City boroughs to town, notes that Selinsgrove was safer than growing up in the city, but she also weighed in eloquently on racism in the area. Her words are quoted extensively and should be carefully considered, since all Troupe members I spoke with agreed that racism in the area is more "on the under" than "in your face" as portrayed in the skits:

Having lived in Selinsgrove for ten years at this point, I was no stranger to the racism that exists in this area, and being able to speak out against it was an empowering thing for my teenage self. [...] Growing up in Selinsgrove has been an education in and of itself. In some ways, it was nurturing and extremely beneficial. In other ways it was handicapping and extremely detrimental. [...] When I think of what the alternative could have been, living in the projects of Brooklyn, I'm extremely grateful we moved and stayed in Selinsgrove during my formative years [...] However, what I have learned from living in Selinsgrove with respect to discrimination is that the most painful measure of it is not usually felt in the more outwardly expressed ways that we often depicted in the Tolerance Troupe.

Usually the most damaging, and the most difficult to move past, is felt on the institutional level. For me, this was in the educational system [...] In high school, it wasn't so much about particular instances as it as about mentalities. I felt that often teachers were very quick to draw conclusions about students based on their perceived notion of what a student could accomplish. [...] However, I can't specifically recall any
one instance that required me to 'stand up' for injustice in particular. In my opinion, it's normally those who are able to assimilate and camouflage in bigoted environments that are often called upon to diffuse a situation. If you can look at me and easily see that I'm an ethnic minority, you'll keep certain comments to yourself. However, if the person is white, they're liable to have certain comments or sentiments freely expressed around them. (Traci)

"At first, maybe you did want to hear the jokes..." Bias on the under

Many alumni and Troupe members admit complicity. The "on the under" mentality rings true for Troupe members and alumni, who admit that prejudice is indirect, in comments made behind another's back by friends, or absorbed from the attitudes of family. For example, an alumna admits complicity participating in mockery with her friends, "One girl [...] was Latino, and she had a bigger butt, [and] a group of girls I would hang out with would say, "Oh, here comes So-and-so and her two asses," commenting that her clique of girls with "preppyish", All-American-Girl-looks said this out of jealousy of a girl with "beautiful cocoa skin, beautiful but different" from the other girls in school (Lori). This alumna, now interning as a school counselor, continues to try to tell her grandmother that "Orientals" are carpets, not people. Another alumna mentions that her father would not let a South Asian friend into their home (Sara). The consensus among students is that unconscious racist behavior is learned at home like any other, and then reproduced in children. For many Troupe alumni and members, this kind of learning is not a matter of blame, but a combination of ignorance, denial, or culture:

I think most people in the area are not okay with any race except white, and I don't think many people will say that, but that's the way it is. Certainly not accepting of other sexual orientations, and certainly not too accepting of anything too different. And I feel badly
for saying that because it's a wonderful area with wonderful people, and I think that part of it might be backed by a lot of religious ideas about what is right and wrong. It's not so much meant to be nasty or hurtful, but it's just 'This is what is right and this is what's wrong.' (Larkin)

Less charitably, another alumna agrees that attitudes begin at home, but she sees aggressors move from attitudes of ignorance into active persecution, "They've been told at home, 'This is a scary, bad person and I don't want anything to do with them, so I'm going to make their life miserable'" (Ariel). That is what the Tolerance Troupe is dedicated to address, said Alex, an alumnus. When someone chooses to antagonize another, "the real crime of the situation is someone choosing to do something racist," and that includes complicity in keeping racism and other prejudice "on the under."

Even without overt actions, a bias like racism is naturalized, part of the local atmosphere. Students of color and those with other markers of difference mention confrontations they had in intermediate or middle school, but as young adults, discrimination is harder to detect. Jeanette, a current Troupe member has said, for example, she may not have gotten a call-back after a job interview, but she cannot say for certain if racism played a part in this. The only self-identified Jewish alumna commented that, aside from being the focus of all eyes when her class would discuss the Holocaust, she had never experienced a blatant, personal incident of anti-Semitism. However, in terms of "mixing it up", she adds that she would like to see "a little more cement" in small towns where there is so little diversity (Trina). Karen, who is bi-racial, calls herself "half a minority." She recalls that other students might have called her "'tiki-eyes' or something" when she was younger, but generally, racism in the area is palpable everywhere. "But I think people aren't as vocal about it unless they're around their friends, one of those hush-hush things." In
describing attitudes in the central valley, she reiterates a point that other members and alumni of the Troupe make, that bias in the area is a matter of isolated, rural Pennsylvania culture:

- It's not that they're not educated, and it's not that they don't know about minorities [...] They're very old fashioned. So it's not that they're not educated. They DO know, but they would be the type where they would go make a comment or make a joke about a black person or call an unmarried, pregnant girl a whore or look down at her and feel ashamed of that person. I think they're just set in their ways [...] just a little behind the rest of the world [and] the kids take on some of that (Karen).

A current Troupe member admits that the high school still harbors a lot of racism, a resurgence of that is outspoken racism because of the presidential election: "A lot of other black people in my school and I see it a lot, not necessarily from one specific person, but from a group of people [...] I think it's just what they grew up with and how they were raised" (Max).

Notably, other current Troupe members feel optimistic that the homogenous world view in the valley is changing for the better among younger people (Justin) while others, particularly alumni, contend that those whose world view is larger are precisely those who leave the area and do not return (Alex). Bearing out Alex's observation, the majority of alumni I have spoken to are, in fact, those who have traveled and chosen to study, work, and resettle outside the area, relieved to have found more diverse environments. However, these alumni also acknowledge that problems with bias remain the same, wherever they went. I will return to this theme of practice in real life also.
Perceived Trade-offs: "I think of racism as more of an issue down here, and gangs and violence is more of an issue in New York"

The quotation extracted above comes from a graduating student of color who has witnessed a senseless assault while walking down a New York street, revisiting friends in her old neighborhood (Ileana). She thought she could go back, but she can't; safety does matter, and so do opportunities available to her, even if there is racism here. There is a trade-off for students of color who move to small, rural-suburban towns like Selinsgrove. Another African American student recounts how his family apartment in New York City was burned down by their landlord for insurance money, and how a cousin was stabbed with an ice pick on the city's streets (Theo). Unlike prejudice "on the under," this kind of violence is rare in the Susquehanna Valley. Both "mainstream" and students of color or other markers of difference found and continue to find their high school a relatively safe and favorable environment. A graduating student of mixed race, a musician, changed his feelings about the area, saying that when he was younger, he was a typical teen and hated his hometown because of its lack of stimulation and diversity:

But now that I have grown up, matured, and really see what the town really is, [...] it could be better, but any place could have improvements. But as far as raising children, I think it's a great place. [...] Going to music festivals, I meet a lot of kids from really small towns that literally have not even seen a black person. (Raj)

Raj's comment echoes Edwards' remark that many of his students have never interacted meaningfully with an African-American before he encounters them in his classroom or at a Troupe performance.

Several students both diverse and mainstream Anglo in ethnicity or race agreed that, for academics and school climate, they felt fortunate to have attended SAHS. After visiting other
schools, performing with the Troupe, an alumna feels that she is fortunate to have attended a
good school, "a really safe school [...] you take that for granted if you don't realize that's not
normal everywhere (Ariel). One Troupe member's family emigrated from Haiti to New York,
and then moved to Selinsgrove because her mother was told that "school is good here, and
education is the number one priority for every child" (Jeanette), even if the area is boring
compared to the city. But urban schools are not the only schools lacking in terms of school
climate compared to SAHS; Edwards and other students mentioned going to perform at a school
in an affluent suburban district; despite the school's new building and well maintained grounds,
they found racist graffiti in the bathroom. Outside it might look good, one student told Edwards,
but inside, that school has problems.

Two commented that with an enrollment of around a thousand, SAHS was a small
enough school that there were opportunities for students to participate in their choice of clubs
and activities like student government, environmental club, forensics, choir, band, or sports. Its
small size also allowed for more fluidity in mixing among cliques and social groups, (Olivia;
Antonia). One of those groups to offer an opportunity of social fluidity that crosses race, ethnic,
and social clique borders remains the Tolerance Troupe.

**ACT THREE, Scene 2: The Troupe at school -- "I never had to have anyone stand up for
me"**

Even at their largest, the Tolerance Troupe represents between one-to-two percent of the
student body at SAHS, and they have not always received respect from some of their own
student body. Comments from older alumni who remember the formative years of the Troupe
are clear about the resentment some factions held against them as a group, and some of these
same comments surface in the remarks of a few current members.
One repeated genre of comments concerns the gendering of the Troupe's work. In terms of the Troupe's composition, one is struck first by its gender discrepancy: young women outnumber young men as actors five to one, and male actors fight the perception that participating in theatrical performance is a sign of homosexuality. As an activity, theatre is regarded as expressive, un-manly, and non-athletic, and participation by males is suspect. A significant number of participants in the Troupe are drawn from theatre kids, and these students frequently fight this stigma. Writes Milner, (2006) theatre kids or members in dramatic groups are sometimes labeled by others as "drama queers", "drama fags", or "drama freaks"(p. 68). The use of homophobic slurs indicates how the members of these groups are regarded as outcasts and objects of derision, deviating from the norms of dominant groups like jocks and preps that are assumed to abide by rigid gendered expectations.

Disparaging comments intertwine gender and race. Participants early in the Troupe's history reported how the Troupe was looked upon unfavorably by other groups:

There was a faction of students – mainly male jocks, seriously – who hated the Tolerance Troupe. The ones I remember were white football players. They thought the Tolerance Troupe was unnecessary, that racism didn't exist in our high school. Some went as far as listing Tolerance Troupe in their senior profiles in the yearbook under "Dislikes" – the same dudes who think affirmative action is unnecessary today. (Lara)

Another early Troupe member concurs:

In the beginning, we really weren't accepted widely. We did it for our school, the high school, and I think because we went to school with them -- it was difficult because they knew that none of us were really that severe. But even the minor things we picked up -- the minor racism, the minor gender stereotypes, the minor [body] size issue. (Helena)
One member of the Troupe quit early during the year of my study, and mentioned that her older brother was also forced by their father to quit the Troupe. His father told him to involve himself in sports instead. The Troupe takes a stand against homophobia; this student was also forbidden by their father from participation in the Troupe, reportedly saying, of homosexuality, that "some things should *not* be tolerated" (Lisa). An alumnus who is now a U.S. Naval officer writes how he hated the prevalent stereotypes in high school, and that he "took a lot of heat" from his male friends before getting up the courage to try out for the Tolerance Troupe, waiting two years before taking the risk (Hank).

Those not slurred by labels like "drama fag" or "drama queer" with their clear homophobic, sexual overtones may receive epithets of "nerd" or near equivalent, "dork". To qualify as a nerd, one demonstrates self-directed, non-athletic discipline and enjoyment of mental or academic work, often under the tutelage of adults, including the support and approval of teachers. The epithet like all, is intended to demean, but is neutered, anti-sexual. Adler and Adler (2003) state that the designation of "nerd" begins in intermediate grades and middle school, at puberty when young people focus shift to their peer worlds, and away from adults. It is not surprising then, for a fourteen year old freshman inductee to speak of how the Tolerance Troupe is regarded among her ninth grade peers:

[Tell] someone you're in the Tolerance Troupe, and they say, "That's so cool," and others say, "That's so *nerdy*."[...] I don't know their justification for calling it nerdy, but I guess they think they're cooler than trying to help other people. These are the kids that would send or put up pictures of their ex-girlfriend on MySpace just to be mean. I guess I don't want to call them mean, but a little immature. They don't realize that it's a good thing. I
don't even know what else to say about that: immaturity. They'll get there someday.

(Leila)

Drew, another member of the Troupe agrees that the Troupe would not attract the star football player and his clique; it would not appeal to those who "just care about their own personal views from their friends and their peers." To such people, caring about others is uncool. The Troupe is "not basically just a club where only, like preps, can join." Instead, the Troupe attracts an open person, one to whom issues of harassment, prejudice matter (Drew).

Occasionally it is the dislike of the Troupe by others that prompts some to join. An alumna, Larkin remarked that the disfavor expressed about the Troupe made her more motivated to join. "I remember seeing the Troupe perform, and I remember a lot of people having a negative reaction to them, and I think that in part made me really admire their work and want to be a part of it" (Larkin).

Perhaps one reason for that negative reaction might be that Troupe members are sometimes regarded as eyes and ears for trouble in the halls. An alumna says that she has been praised for being part of the Troupe but has also overheard students saying, "I have to be careful what I say around her because she's in the Tolerance Troupe.' [There's] a wariness around it. [...] we're not looked at as just another club, though. I know that," (Sara). Some alumni have said that students might come up to them to talk about harassment; the relationship-battering skit featured in the freshman performance of 2008 arose out of abuse reported to Tolerance Troupe members and relayed to Edwards, the administration, the counseling staff, and a parent in the previous school year (Antonia and Trina; Sara). The alarm was sounded by members of the Troupe who noticed signs of abuse. But even though becoming more vigilant to bias and
aggression is called upon to be a part of the Troupe, such expectations do not guarantee perfection in its members.

**Cohesion and tensions: "I saw some of the people that certainly became more accepting"**

Participants I spoke to were motivated by a sense of justice, idealism, or personal responsibility, and even those who tried out on a lark at first found it was a way of "emotionally speaking" (Ileana). But as with all good intentions, people are not perfect, and especially those who think themselves liberal and above prejudice should make one suspicious of patting themselves on the back, says one of the founding alumni (Olivia). Some alumni reflect that, initially, they did not always feel welcome in the Troupe. Some students in the Troupe weren't as open as they said that they were, reported some alumni, and these students held back. But being a part of and participating in this group worked upon them and it changed others.

What comes through in interviews with alumni is that although Troupe members' behavior may have not been perfect, the experience of being in the Troupe over time changed attitudes for the better. Larkin, an alumna, recalls:

> It was a kind of surprising group of people: some of the people I didn't think would be so concerned with social change [...] some of the people that were in Tolerance Troupe – it's not that they bullied people or treated them badly – they weren't the first people to stand up for someone. They maybe hung out with some people who would make a negative comment here or there. And I thought it was very interesting, that there were two sides to some of the people. I don't think it was so much a contradiction [...] You know, high school is such a hard time with a lot of influences. I think they wanted to be part of the Tolerance Troupe and didn't so much want to be laughing at some of the jokes they were hearing, and maybe over time while they were in the Tolerance Troupe, they stopped
acting that way more and more. There were some people that certainly became more accepting at the time, and I think in part, it was a huge part of the Tolerance Troupe. Prior to being in the Tolerance Troupe, you may just not have put as much thought into something. (Larkin)

Another alumna was initially disillusioned by the realities of Troupe members' limitations, their less than idealized, perfect acceptance of differences. She was especially sensitive to issues of economic class: "When I first started, I felt some of the students weren't as 'troupey' and being as non-judging as they said they were," Sharon recalled, but she went on to explain that trust grew among them as a part of practicing and performing. "There were some kids in the Tolerance Troupe I feel might have been the type of kid to be judgmental, but they weren't." She recalled one of the more affluent students, one of the "high status" students that she was wary of, invited her to carpool. "That showed me that people in the Troupe were open to accepting everybody. She wasn't judging me or anything. She liked me for who I was instead of when I was trying to be somebody else" (Sharon).

The most searing, critical report stemmed from the Troupe's first year. Fourteen years before, in a performance of the Troupe in its first year, there were no auditions, interviews, or screening process; the group was chosen by Edwards from members of the student council and by invitation to some students of color. An alumna recalled that two male actors, while doing a skit supposedly against homophobia, acted out stereotypically as "pretend" homosexuals, limp-wristedly skipping off the stage at the end of the skit. Outraged and offended, two other Troupe members discussed the boys' portrayal in a Troupe meeting, and the students were dressed down by Edwards. Said the alumna, "I don't know how the conversation went, but I don't think it was
very welcome." She adds, "The guys were upset because we were ruining their fun, but I don't think they did it again." Olivia reflects:

Everyone has deep-seated what-you-grew-up-with. You can have the best intentions, and I really don't think they meant to be offensive, so that's why it was so uncomfortable. [...] I just hope for that spark, that exploration of a better process for the actors [...]. You should have to go through conversations as a part of presenting to the other people. You should go through a self exploration."

Fortunately, an audition and interview process was instituted thereafter to help to screen aspiring Troupe members who join just for fun and friendship or the opportunity to get out of class. There is significant attrition for those who do not share the passion for the Troupe's work.

Even well-intentioned people who share those ideals may not live up to them. A graduating senior who spent all four years in the Troupe confessed that when he first joined, he was "boisterous and obnoxious." He had to be cooler-than-cool by putting others down. "I thought the world revolved around me," he said, and related his acting-out to dealing with his racial and sexual identity. He resolved that he could be whatever he "wanted to be" but had to extend that freedom of choice, as he saw it, "apply to other people, not be hypocritical" so others could be free as well:

I've learned tactfulness, [...] just being comfortable enough with myself that I can express myself when I need to, but not always be so loud and press my beliefs against other people. I really think that I have grown more than I think I would have without the Troupe for the last four years. (Raj)
Some degree of transformation of themselves and of others was verified by other current members of the Troupe. In fact, one of the first lessons in tolerating difference takes place within the Tolerance Troupe itself (Tasha and Emma).

Ariel states that part of the effect of being in the Troupe is keeping each other from bad behavior. "You help each other out because nobody's perfect. You're having a bad day or something. You might accidentally say something or you're short-tempered, or just normal mistakes. But it helps you keep each other in check." Some mention that they have cleaned up their language or become more comfortable with homosexuality or with Hispanics or with African Americans, or with white Anglo, "mainstream" members as well. As Edwards had mentioned, forbearance with appreciation took a range of contacts. Surprisingly, said Raj, the people who ended up caring about him were not the people he expected:

People that are like you or me or that have different disadvantages or different minorities always think, 'That white girl that is Christian isn’t ever going to care about someone like me,' but I couldn’t tell you how many white, Christian, Republican girls who have been through the Tolerance Troupe... and it’s really unique and cool to see. Just like people can’t stereotype me, I can’t stereotype them. I have to really get an understanding of individual people instead of generalizing people.

In terms of standing up for others, not everyone in the Troupe will reliably step forward in a crisis, but one young man did during the fall of this study. Several current Troupe members remarked that they had stayed in their seats in the cafeteria when a young man, whom Theo had recognized as "a bully" passed out and collapsed during lunchtime. Theo, a graduating senior, rushed to help this young man off the floor when he passed out in the lunch line and had "dropped his food and everything on himself": 
He hit the floor. Everybody laughed. Nobody tried to help him. I got up and tried to help him because I could have been that guy. [...] Other people laughed instead of to try and help him. [...] I saw people from the Tolerance Troupe – nobody got up. I'm not saying that people in the Tolerance Troupe are bad. They might have not noticed it, or they weren't sitting right where it happened, but it happened right around my table. [...] We realize we hit other people with this [to step up and take action, to defuse a crisis] and we forget ourselves [...] the characters we play and a lot of things we do – we step into that position. We change. We actually taught ourselves with our own skits. (Theo)

Identified as "the only person out of maybe two hundred people" (Raj), in the cafeteria to help a young man known to bully others, Theo assisted the student who had fainted get to a chair; next, Theo got him another lunch. Other members of the Troupe mentioned Theo's courage, and congratulated him for stepping up for the young man who fainted, who was made fun of when he fell, and apparently disliked by many in the school. Considering the reluctance of other witnesses including members of the Troupe, it seems that being seen and judged by peers is still inhibiting, even for well-intentioned actors. But even imperfectly, by Theo's observation, the Troupe creates openings for change and increases a likelihood of intervening by the actors gradually, through the work of acting in a cause for changing others.

Over time, Chelsea, another alumna speaks to the transformations she saw in Troupe members:

[I saw] people who were as shy as can be, had a chance to come out of their shell. I saw people who were so dead-set in their opinions finally go, 'I think I kind of get it.' At times I came out of a skit and I [thought] 'I so don't agree with you, but I understand it,'
That was my whole goal of going into it: I want to hear others say, "I get it." So when I came out of a skit saying, 'I get it,' it was just, 'Wow.' It was very humbling. (Chelsea)

These changes become part of teaching and learning about the self and a view of plurality in others that permeates inner and outward concepts of selves and their social worlds, of realization, of individuation, and view of wider connection with others. The Troupe experience is not without its tensions, but it does create community through working out of voices and values that goes beyond just affiliation or friendship.

**More than friendships: "You got to know a lot of people, maybe not best friends"

Most members spend on average two and a half to three years actively participating in the Troupe. Their work as a Troupe matters to them. As allies and individuals, they mattered to each other, and the lessons of difference -- of calling out and speaking up-- continue to matter during their growth as adults. What takes place within the Troupe goes on beyond high school notions of friendship, and this is made clear by its youngest members and oldest alumni.

Although a few alumni, mentioned that Troupe members were still part of their primary circle of friends, many more Troupe members would not consider each other best friends, but "great acquaintances" instead (Trina; Sara; Cassandra). Other members of the Troupe shared fellowship when they were engaged together and shared values when they were apart. Milner (2006) notes that the kind of community formed from theatrical or other performance is relatively self-contained for the course of the production or for season, and asserts that ritual performance increases group solidarity, as does the relatively low status and expressiveness of arts-activity, which creates shared enjoyment and fosters intense emotional ties. Milner's generalization seems to fit here. In terms of the Tolerance Troupe, the majority of members are ready to mention the enjoyment of acting, of travel together including the rare overnight stay, the
games played on the bus, or carpooling together. In my observations taken at rehearsals, auditions, and performances, including some time spent en route together, Troupe members sang and joked together, played at rough-housing, and I did see one romance disperse and another kindle. But because these small Troupe performances come throughout the year, there is no one intense time of bonding as there would be in a long-term theatrical production with music, sets, or rehearsed text. Because of improvisation and the shifting group of students who commit to half of the performances and rather randomly show up to fulfill that commitment when schedules allow, there is a loosened affiliation among the players. Some do have friends who have already been accepted into the Troupe and initially audition to join their friends; some who audition may be attracted to members in the group. But what happens is the creation of a community which is not about prior affiliation but the creation of new bonds among a diverse set of students who, previously, may have interacted minimally or never interacted at all if it were not for the Troupe.

"I don't know if we'd ever crossed paths other than the Tolerance Troupe": Diversity, bonding, and stretching

Members of performing groups like those in drama club, bands, and choirs, have the distinction of being regarded as being particularly weird, writes Milner, but also have a distinction of being more diverse as a group, as Milner (2006) found in his study of status in 251 high schools. In over 300 descriptions, written by students and graduate observer-researchers of these status group, drama club members were noted as more frequently sharing participation in other social groups, typically being drawn from the outset from more diverse social groups, races, and ages who come together intensely during practices and performances. In this study of the Tolerance Troupe, one third of the participants were individuals who identified themselves by markers of racial, ethnic, or religious difference. Considering the overall lack of diversity in
SAHS, the participation of racial, ethnic and/or religious or cultural minorities is significantly noted: "A lot of the minorities in our school were in it, but then a lot of white people were in it, mixed, so it was good to come together" (Karen).

Social cliques perceived to represent some staunch divide between jocks in sports and those in the expressive arts are bridged by the Tolerance Troupe as well, as a few athletes also participate in the Troupe.

Officially, I'd never acted or been a part of a group like that. A lot of the kids in Tolerance Troupe were the theatre kids. The way things were kind of broken up in high school, there were athletes, there were theatre kids, and I had been an athlete, and I hung out with the athletes. In the Tolerance Troupe, I got to know a whole other group of people I hadn't associated with, just because I hadn't played sports with them. [...] Because I hadn't been part of theatre, I did not have the opportunity to know them. It is really the age difference too. [...] Girls in different grades don't like each other for whatever reasons, so integrating grades together, it's an important thing to do; it doesn't happen really often in actual classes. (Cassandra)

So although Tolerance Troupe enrollment drew from theatre kids, some come from what Troupe members said were unexpected quarters – from jocks, from popular kids, from affluent and not so affluent families, students from racial and ethnic groups, and some who didn't fit any category at all:

It's bringing in kids from all different groups of people within high school. High school is cliquey, and you don't expect to see kids from all groups in the Tolerance Troupe [...] There were some kids in Tolerance Troup that I through they were too cool to be involved in something like that. [...] One was a stereotypical jock, and it always kind of
surprised me he was into something like that, and he was really into it, and he made sure he was at all the performances. And I thought it was really cool (Caroline)

In a predominantly Anglo school, Troupe members begin to affiliate and talk with people whom they might have never approached, and end up acknowledging as their friends as well. Emma, an Anglo, mainstream member admits that participation in the Troupe allowed her to get to know the African American Troupe members first, and then meet their friends, and "then I can defend them, like being loud at lunch. They're just having fun [...] I don't know that I would have ever met any of them of not for Tolerance Troupe. [White students say] 'They're so loud.' Well, why not?" Drew added that he wouldn't have gotten to know Jeanette, an African American member if it weren't for the trips together: "I never talked to her at school because she had her own group and I had mine, but on this trip [...] you really learn more about them, just from a little small talk." He continues, "It's no longer the cliques. You're just one big group [...] You all have fun, and it's no more cliques dividing people by what their normal group is at school" (Drew).

Beyond cliques or prior affiliation, beyond friendship, what matters most is the experience of diversity in the Troupe and engagement in discussing points of view that take members outside of their own comfort zones, largely because they are willing to do so:

We're not all best friends. I don't hang out with a lot of them when we're not in school. I just think that's an interesting thing about the Troupe: we're not all best friends, and we don't just choose people for the Troupe based on if they're in my clique or not. (Justin)

Leila, accepted into the Troupe that fall and just fourteen, addresses the age divide between freshmen and seniors, and how acceptance in the Troupe seemed to carry over to other friendships:
There are some people that I never thought I would never hang out with outside of school. [...] Talking to the older kids – I never really thought that I would until I got in the Tolerance Troupe, and that actually led to talking to older kids that weren't in the Troupe too. One of my closest friends that I met right after I joined the Troupe isn't in the Troupe, but she's a senior.

She described memories of formative experiences like the road trip to perform, spending a night away from home with the Troupe and her first performance that created social bonds, heady experiences of fellowship, exchanging ideas with a diverse and older set of peers:

Mostly everyone in the Troupe connected. We went out to eat, and we all talked about sports and news [...] and really got to know each other. Everybody in the Troupe cares about each other. [...] If you're down or something, they're going to talk to you. No, I didn't feel lonely at all because everybody wanted to talk and hang out and have fun.

(Leila)

Another new freshman member remarked on the ease of forging friendships unexpectedly, how newcomers meet the standards of experienced Troupe members, and again, how older students can act resources for younger members:

They're the best people to be friends with at school. They are a tough crowd because they critique, and they check to make sure you have stage presence and you're nice, [...] so it's kind of a big shoe to fill. [...] The thing that's odd or strange, how quickly we all get to be friends because I kind of expect to just be in the group, but I was amazed at how fast we all got to be friends and know each other, in just one overnight [...] In school, we go back to our other friends. We say, "Hi," in the halls, but it's not a family-ish thing.

We all bonded over one night [...] You'd think that they wouldn't want to be friends with
younger people, but there were there, so they know what you're going through, [...] when they talk about these things, you know what to expect, so you can help each other in school and out of school. (Jodi)

Mutual aid is significant, on the stage as well as off. When onstage characters are attacked in their roles by an animated, hostile, or misunderstanding audience, the other actors provide a bit of cover or support for their fellow students. They might pull together on stage, but would also discuss these breaches in debriefing after the performance. One alumna recalls, "I never wanted to disappoint my fellow actors and actresses. If you came out of character, you'd hear about it at the debriefing. [In creating characters] We each had our little niche as far as what we could help each other out with" (Chelsea). She went on to say that because improvisation in questions and answers with the audience is unrehearsed, for some, staying in character is most difficult. Therefore, Troupe members need to support each other by sharing their understandings, beliefs, and experiences:

There was a student who was an atheist, so when we had the skits [featuring atheism], he was able to say, 'This is why I believe what I believe', so I kind of know what's going on as far as what is in their minds. And there was another girl who had a friend who got pregnant [so she could volunteer to help a student understand a pregnant character] 'I know what happens, and here's the options we discussed with her.' So we each had our little niche as far as what we could help each other with. (Chelsea)

Again engaged in the task of bonding and stretching as a community, Lori, another Troupe alumna, reflects on a time during interaction with the audience when her own biases got in the way. Her own position conflicted with the character view she was enacting, and the internal
conflict threw her out of character. In her confusion, she froze onstage and forgot what to say.

Other Troupe members, staying in character, still supported her:

I literally felt like I couldn't [answer an audience question]. I felt like I had no voice
because, I guess, of my bias. I kind of agreed with what the people were saying, so I felt
I didn't know how to defend myself or stand my ground. So when I was speechless or
didn't have a voice, there were people there. (Lori)

Notably, others' speech helps out the actor as well as the character, and the character's
supposed ideological position is less important than support of the actor. A freshman recalls
pulling together to help another actor when a member of the audience asked one of the
sympathetic characters if he were gay. Relevant or not, the audience member said that he
wouldn't sympathize or want anything to do with the character or that character's point of view if
the character said that he was gay. The actor in the role at the time, another relatively
inexperienced freshman got stuck, and in some cases, allies on stage offered comments and
helped shift the question and answer discussion down the line, with Edward's help as facilitator.

Another freshman actor who came to his aid explains:

We kind of stuck to our family-type thing to protect him. He was the nice one, out of all
the acting we did, and he was asked [if he was gay] because of the part he did. [...] I felt
bad for him [...] even if you are or you aren't, it doesn't matter: you don't need to be asked
that. (Jodi)

Strength in difference, strategic values: "They had my back [...we shared attitudes...] not
necessarily the same, but close to what I believe in"

The quotation opening this section comes from Max, a graduating member of the Troupe
who explained that if he ever found himself in real trouble, he would talk his dilemma over first
with people in the Troupe; he trusted them, not because their beliefs were all the same, but because they could share information as members of a diverse community of ideas and beliefs. An alumna recalls that diversity of views was always a point of discussion, sometimes of heated discussion within the Troupe, because of the most important part of the Troupe's message:

...the part [that] you respect everybody, especially those who are different than you and it was really something we stressed and emphasized. We hoped to get members from all different backgrounds that we can all share experiences with each other, and then also when speaking of skit topics, all different ideas together. (Trina)

Support and diversity in the Troupe did create a confidence in its members to consider competing points of view and find their own viewpoint, not because everyone shared a single point of view, but they shared values, and values shared become more important than clique, race, religion, political leaning, or age group. Thus the positions of Troupe members embodied their own diversities. The Troupe was made up of "good friends who have similar but not identical perspectives," said Sara, an alumna, "so if you want a different perspective on an issue, you can get in touch with them, just all the memories of all the performances and everyone with whom we interacted and what they had to say," come back to problem solve for current situations, just as rehearsals and performances serve as problem solving for current members. Said another, about the value of this diversity:

We had people that were pretty liberal with more conservative people, different religions and races [...] . When you got into topics like abortion and teen pregnancy -- that gets pretty heated. And I can definitely see how some people [get upset] because we have diversity in the Troupe, and our political views too, so something like that, a lot of Troupe members didn't agree with one another. That was difficult. [...] We had a group
of really good people, people who were good inside, and you liked them all and respected everybody. But then there was always a discussion about how to handle a situation, and realize which way was right. (Trina)

What's important to note, and what will be addressed in more depth in the next Act, is that dialogue is the means of teaching and learning together. In the midst of a diversity of backgrounds and viewpoints, what united the Troupe was a shared value of openness, of tolerance construed as allowing for differences and a desire for service. They did not need to agree on every issue, and they did not need to change their beliefs either, because shared value and not position held them to practice and process together. Ultimately, the bond was not all about enjoyment or friendship or semblance, but about coalition, making alliances. These comments were made clear as alumni reflected on an experience that went beyond notions of high school friendship. An alumna said:

The Tolerance Troupe provided a group of supportive people with similar ideas to mine, and outside of that, there weren't so many people with the same ideas about tolerance [...] and it also probably provided a little bit of strength in pointing out and calling people out in later incidents or pursuing things that I thought were important. (Larkin)

Another former member, now a parent concerned with teaching her children well, emphasizes the power of practice together and the values of the Troupe's mission as a community:

It was sort of like a job that you didn't get paid for, but it was a job that you knew had a purpose. It's like a job where every little role that people play is important to making success. All of us had to come together putting our ideas in, interviewing new people, [...] making sure people were in it for the right reasons [...] It was sort of like we had our own family at times, because it's almost like a team where everybody plays. We were
sort of like our own little family. [...] It wasn't just us living our day to day lives, trying to impact people around us, but when you get a whole bunch of people together that have the same beliefs and have the same purpose and goals, and you put yourself in front of a huge crowd, that makes a huge difference because you make everybody think. (Karen)

A range of differences united by the same values and goals: the dynamics of the Troupe convey a sense of community. McMillan and Chavis (1986), characterize a sense of community by the following: 1.) membership or investment in belonging to the group; 2.) influence or a sense of mattering to the group and the group mattering to its members; 3.) integration and fulfillment of needs, or feeling that resources will be distributed and received by the members of the group, and lastly, 4.) emotional connection or belief that members will share history, places, times together to create similar experiences (p. 9). That sense of community is one shared across race, ethnicity, class, gender, age built by repeated exposure and participation in the Tolerance Troupe.

ACT THREE, Scene 3, Becoming the Troupe: "To help other kids [...] see and feel what I felt": Interviews, auditions, and processes on the way to a community of practice

As noted with some dismay by two members selected by Edwards for the first Tolerance Troupe in 1993, there was no audition or screening process, and the lack of one may have resulted in more talking the talk than walking the walk, as Edwards and the earliest members of the Troupe described previously. Along with Edwards' energy and vision, the way that members are chosen now contributes greatly to the Troupe's success. After the freshman performance come auditions and call back auditions, and between these auditions are interviews conducted by current members of the Troupe with the aspiring actors. Each year, members of the freshman audience come forward and try-out, and the composition and nature of the community of the
Troupe go through as many permutations as there are changing members each year. Openings in
the Troupe depend on who has dropped out, who has not met the activity or academic
requirements, or who in the Troupe will be graduating in the coming spring. Freshmen and other
prospective members attend a try-out session and call backs if the try-out is successful; there
were extended auditions at the time when I was observing. To audition, one does not have to be
a freshman; several alumni told me that they had tried out before, but delayed joining either
because they were eliminated in one round and tried out in a following year, or nerves or peer
pressure kept them from auditioning during their first years.

Audition is only the beginning

Edwards talks with prospective actors at the first audition, telling them of their
obligations as members of the Troupe: participating in half of that year's performances,
maintaining passing grades in all academic work, and last, keeping up a standard of behavior
expected in its members, "walking the walk" of the Tolerance Troupe: behaving honorably, not
bullying, not intimidating, or spreading rumors against others. These are the common values
important to the Troupe.

The audition itself is very bare boned. From the viewpoint of the prospective new actors,
although affiliation and familiarity with friends may be the reason for auditioning, it does not end
there. Several current members remarked that their friends had also tried out, or older siblings
may have been in the Troupe. Some who had joined previously or intended to audition at the
same time had encouraged their friends to join with them also. But Edwards breaks up
friendship pairs to compel each student to audition on her or his own steam in coming up with
improvised dialogue and projecting their characters to the audience. Instead, Edwards randomly
creates improvisation tryout groups organized by auditionees' birthdates or alphabetically by
names. Individuals who try out will be improvising with students they likely do not already know. Each individual gets two or more improvisations in different combinations of casts. Edwards will set the situation similar to one below, pointing to the auditioning actors in turn who take their places on the auditorium stage, turned toward the audience in an curved but open line, where just a week or two before most of them have witnessed the freshman performance. Below is a description of the audition process taken from audiotape and edited.

First, Edwards asks the prospective actors called on stage to give their names. Next, Edwards points to the protagonist: "I think you're going to start by saying, 'I don't know how to say this. You guys are my best friends, and I've got to tell you I just found out I'm pregnant. I thought I was, and now I'm certain. I'm three months pregnant.'" He gestures to the person standing next to the protagonist. "You want to be supportive of your friend." He designates the third girl as the potential antagonist, "You want to convince her to get an abortion. Let's go here and there, and then there, and see where the conversation goes." With no more prompting, he gives the cue: "Go!" The follow-up audition is taken directly from field notes:

Protagonist One: "Guys, you're my best friends. I don't know how to say this, but I'm pregnant."

Ally Two: "What are you going to do? You're going to keep it, right?"

Girl Three, Antagonist: "I honestly can't believe how irresponsible you are! You need to get rid of it. I'm sorry, but that's just how I feel."

Ally Two: "But it's a little life. You can't kill a little baby just because you made a mistake. It's yours now, and you have to take care of it."

Protagonist One: "I don't know what to do. I mean, it's my baby and I don't want to get rid of it, but I have a future. I have plans I want to do before I'm a parent."
Girl Three, Antagonist: "See? Exactly—you should get rid of it."

Ally Two: "It's a human life. That's killing. I'm sorry, but it's your fault, and you have to take responsibility and raise the child."

It doesn't matter if the assigned "supportive" ally also chooses to influence her distressed friend or if the antagonist is insufficiently persuasive; the lines and positions are filled in more or less spontaneously by the actors. Edwards ends it: "Cut! Give them a round of applause!"

Current members of the Troupe are in the audience watching, and so is a period's worth of Edwards' English class, because these students have to be ready to perform for a live room, a real audience.

Edwards may give advice to speak up more loudly or turn more toward the audience rather than the group's closing focus on the center character so that the audience will not only see the turned characters in profile, but aside from blocking and amplification, that is the only direction given. Edwards offers thanks to each group in turn, and gives the next a similar, narrow thread of conflict and argument. There were five skits improvised by new actors that period alone. At the end of the skits, Edwards asks all the potential actors to come up on stage, and asks them a crucial question, asked casually, to "say something that reflects how you feel about trying to get into the Troupe."

This is a question auditionees will be asked many times. They will declare their intentions publically and in a private interview with Troupe members between audition and callbacks, and their responses become an important criterion for selection by the Troupe members, because although Edwards facilitates the audition event, Troupe members with the most seniority first down to the less experienced are polled to see how the auditionees impressed them, both as performers and by their potential for ethical action: Edwards does not choose Troupe members.
First, to see it from the point of view of the aspiring actors, many of those auditioning talk about their enjoyment of acting, and that their appreciation of the Troupe's work follows after its initial appeal. For example, most students who audition are aware that one of the perks of joining the Troupe is getting out of class and going on the road to perform. And because female members of the Troupe outnumber males in the Troupe, a few girls mentioned the allure of interacting with older males in the Troupe too. Below is a sample of responses about their initial motivations for auditioning:

When I heard about the Tolerance Troupe, I'm not going to say I thought it was a joke, but I didn't know how serious it was until they had to ask us those questions. After that, the interview before you get on stage, and I'm like, 'Wow, they really take this seriously. Maybe I should take this seriously or not even try-out,' but then I tried out, and I liked it a lot [...] I did it to get out of class at first [...] This is a way to really get into people's heads and help them. (Jeanette)

The impulse for service or idealism may come later; desire like pleasure, is no stranger to inspiration, even for theatrical activism:

I'm not going to lie: I thought they looked really cool, and I wanted to do it – doing scenes with high school boys. I remember the skit they were performing, and the dialog was kind of funny, and it made everybody laugh. [...] Looking at high school boys and looking up to them, the older kids telling us what the right way to act and the right way to treat people – it definitely had first impressions. (Trina)

**Questioners at the Interview**

From the point of view of a member interviewing aspirants, however, some answers to their questions set off warning bells. Jeanette explains what she looked for:
We ask them why they want to be in the Troupe. "Because I heard it was fun" is not a good answer. So when a couple of them were saying that, I was like, "Uh-oh, I don't think you're getting picked now." [...] We have to interview them first to see if they are serious about it. Before [candidates] do an interview, Mr. Edwards talks to [them] so then [they] can see what [they're] getting into [...]. You interview them, and if they give good answers, then you tell Mr. Edwards. Then you see if the interview follows a good act, or if [actors] project well, if [they are] good with the crowd, if [they] interact well with the crowd and the people [they] act with. It's not just the interview. You could have a good interview, but that's just words. [They] could just say something like, "Yeah, I want to make a difference," and then [they] have to act out and see if [they] can take directions well, if [they] can make the crowd feel what [they're] trying to perform.

Active Troupe members are asked to observe "walking the talk" of the Troupe in candidates who are aspiring members. They are assigned to interview potential actors personally between first auditions and the call-backs before evaluation and voting takes place among the members after call backs and before acceptance is offered to new members. Therefore, the interview becomes more important than acting:

A lot of times we don't know the person, but we do have a window of time where we can call back, and during that overlap of time, you can check people out. You pay more attention to how they are in the halls, talk to their friends. It's almost like background research. You get to be a private eye for a few moments (Sara)

Sara continues to stress that "purity of intention" matters more than technique. "People [...] who don't have great acting skills sometimes get in because their intent is so pure." Of those whose intent is less pure, this alumna testifies that good acting is not enough: "There are people who
have not been admitted because Tolerance Troupe members have said, 'She may be here, and it may have looked good and sounded good, but this is how we really know how this person lives.'"

Another alumna agrees that acting the values, walking the talk, was more important than dramatic skill or stage presence:

There were things that were really a part of all of us. For example, we picked people who were good people and that would carry the message, not only relay the message, during the performance of what it means to be tolerant and a good person, but also in the classroom, in the halls, and that was really important (Trina)

What did the member-interviewers ask? Many had their own criteria, although there was significant overlap: good intentions and sincerity, audibility, not "hiding" when on stage, and passable improvisational skills, thinking and speaking on their feet, and staying in character.

Two offered specific criteria for their interviews. When one alumna interviewed newcomers, she wanted to hear honest answers, "and not what they think they wanted me to hear. [...] I liked it when people took their time and really thought about their answers." A too-glib answer, perhaps too much "acting" in the answer for her was suspect. (Sharon). A current sophomore member speaks about his role in evaluating and his criteria in the interview process:

We interview them and ask them questions about why they want to be in the Troupe. [...] The questions are: 1.) What do you think you can bring to the Troupe? 2.) Why do you want to become a member of the Troupe? 3.) What do you think will be the hardest thing? And by the answers they give, you can see if they are right for the Troupe. I interviewed this one girl, and she said, 'I think it sounds like a lot of fun, and I heard you guys had a lot of fun.' She didn't say anything about wanting to end intolerance or anything like that, and I didn't recommend her. I think when people say they had
experience with it [intolerance], that's why they want to join, that they've seen
intolerance, they've seen stuff like this, I think that helps. That is the kind of answer I
would try to find. (Justin)

Answerers at the Interview

Because this process is now protocol as the Troupe has become established, every current
member and several years of alumni have gone through this process; those who have been
interviewed become the interviewers. Sara describes what it was like from the perspective of the
auditioned:

When I was a freshman, a senior took me aside and said, "You have to walk the talk [...] your attitudes have to reflect what you're saying when you're a member of Tolerance
Troupe. As a member you have to be understanding of other people's differences.

Remembering that process, another alumna recalls the challenges of her interview:

They were questions that really made you think: What issues in the school do you think
could be improved upon? Probably more anxious than the original audition is waiting for
results: they had to see you again to really determine whether or not you were right for
the Troupe. We got taken aside by a Troupe member because the whole audition process
is run by students, which is one of the awesome things about Tolerance Troupe – that
besides heading up the actual performance, it was student run. Mr. Edwards was
facilitator, but it was completely student run. (Chelsea)

One of the two original members of the Troupe also describes the generative role of
students, from the Troupe's start in 1993. Edwards, the only African American teacher in the
district, was asked to "do something' on diversity because students had demanded a break-out
session or a workshop on diversity at a student conference. Olivia recalls how Edwards
approached identified "future leaders," from student government, chosen as the original group, and asked students of color, not part of the council, to join them. Next, "He asked us to generate some discussions on our own -- what issues we wanted to portray and had a conversation."

Even though the Troupe was instituted by Edwards, the students chose the topics for the skits. Students were brought together for dialogue and to raise issues, "coming up with scenarios together" and the first skits were built around teen pregnancy, homophobia, and race. Though both original Troupe members expressed qualified reservations about the efficacy of that first year of the Troupe, Olivia, now a middle school teacher, says, "in retrospect, that's possible that it did give me the confidence to, in real life, to stand up a little more when I did notice or hear things being said that were harmful."

The second, original cast member to respond to the study, who now is a teacher also, reaffirms that the experience made a valuable inroad:

> Giving students constructive opportunities to work with their classmates outside of their respective cliques is one of the easiest ways to break down socially constructed boundaries [...]. Creating opportunities for open dialogue in both the home and at school have a lot more power than what some educators realize. [...]. Students need not merely be told that 'all people are created equal,' but they need to understand through tangible experiences with the Other. (Traci)

For some, feeling of empowered acting with others who shared values was a revelation that grew slowly, by ongoing participation. An alumnus from the third year of the Troupe remarked, "We were a bunch of friends, we created the skits ourselves. It was having fun for us. [Then] It really hit home [...]. Wow, this is more than I really thought it was" (Alex).
The agency of a student-run activist drama group, the only one of its kind at a high school in the conservative Central Susquehanna Valley with its emphasis on being "made to think" was ostensibly directed toward audiences, but it succeeded in making its student actors think, and clarified the values and convictions of these diverse young people, teaching by doing and by dialogue together. They apprenticed with one another and through Edwards as a guide into a figured world created together by practice and talk.

**Learning in community: Acceptance into a figured world**

Troupe composition is decided by Troupe members themselves, and this collective decision by voice vote, a simple, "Who do you like," makes the Troupe "not just any club" as Drew remarked. Acceptance after audition, interview, and then call back is by agreement of Troupe members themselves, going down the line by level of seniority; those active in the Troupe the longest are asked their picks first. Edwards says nothing but keeps a tally, monitoring the discussion. And the agency of choice provides great satisfaction for Troupe members.

Lave and Wenger (1991) have a way of looking at learning in social contexts like the learning that takes place in the Troupe, by communities in relationship, their beliefs, values, structures, and identities; their way seemed most fitting in looking at the Troupe as a purposeful, structured community of practice, hands-on, "learning as participation in the social world" (p. 42), beginning with auditions, interviews, call-backs, and acceptance into the Troupe. Apprenticeship involves learning, socialized by norms and values into a practice that is shared and given meaning by relationships in community: learning "is not merely a condition of membership, but is itself and evolving form of membership" (Lave and Wenger, p. 53). The learning that takes place within the Troupe, including transformation of their ideas about their
own behavior as well as influencing an audience in the value of defusing conflict by speaking up, by peacemaking, can be understood as a kind of internalization from their participation in the activity of the Troupe. In that way, their understandings are transformative; as Rogoff (1990) explains, while engaged in a creative, social process, development and thinking is guided on a path, not determined by it. Individuals so engaged in a collective activity adopt what works for them. The activity of learning together "involves a creative process in which the effort to communicate propels the partners together to develop new solutions through social means, with the partners each bringing their own understanding of the values and tools of the culture to the interaction" (p. 196-197).

Here is what the Troupe members have told me about their being part of the local, school, and Troupe community. The shock of social realities hits many most fiercely in middle school, crucial time of awareness of stratification, social conflict, and crisis. They are convinced that diversity is needed in a homogenous surround like the local and school mono-culture; diversity should be appreciated, as a means of finding and creating freer space in relative sameness and attitudes of repression, a climate more perceptibly oppressive to students of identified difference. They have seen oppressive attitudes in themselves as well as in others, and have attempted to rectify them and change them by engaging in the Troupe. My respondents all value learning and teaching, framing their work in the Troupe as pedagogical, as service, carrying a message; they acknowledge that the Troupe's message was and is sometimes regarded as un-cool or unnecessary by school peers, and this sometimes reinforced the resolve of its members. Finally, the Troupe provided support for them and crossed categories of peer groups in their high school social worlds, mixing cliques, race and ethnicity, sexuality, age, and even varied ideological
positions on topical issues, unified by a desire to defuse hateful reactions, indifference, and coercion in their age group.

Self-making in communities such as this one leads to examination and discussion of values and identities made, always under construction, in repeated interaction with each other, with family, school, community, and later the adult world. The activity itself demands that they do so in improvisation and performance for others and for themselves too, as a group and as individuals, keeping the issues consciously alive as they define their work in the Troupe as consciousness-raising. Their learning takes place dialogically and invites meaning-making with the participation of others. In other words, said Chelsea, "The more you do it, the more you learn." Additional comments below reiterate ideas that resurfaced in our interviews: reinforcing awareness, the importance of dialogue in awakening ideas, interacting with diverse people within the Troupe community, and repeated encounter with difficult issues:

It makes you a more-aware kind of person [...] you become more *vigilant* is a good word because you're aware of these issues, and you're thinking about them, especially in school settings. (Ariel)

I definitely gained confidence – partly because of the Troupe and partly because of growing up, I guess also talking about different opinions. [Being in the Troupe] really taught you...I mean as a kid, you learn right from wrong, but it really reiterated your responsibilities and bring up these issues, like you're forced to talk about them within the Troupe and you're forced to face it and talk about it because it's kind of like right in front of you. (Antonia)
Interacting --being involved in that helped me understand that I can talk to these kids and not everybody is going to automatically judge me [...] I can be confident talking to just about anybody now than I could have been in the past when talking to somebody who I thought was not in my social group made me really nervous. (Sharon)

I’ll probably learn a lot more just thinking about the things I have to do, and kind of open up to a bunch of other ideas that without the tolerance troupe I wouldn’t have really thought of on a regular basis. (Jodi)

To me it was not a daily routine, but every couple of weeks we were doing this. So I was used to those kind of touchy subjects and stuff, and other people -- kind of in-your-face. (Alex)

In other words, Troupe members' knowing comes from experience of family and community, and being in the Troupe means that these issues are always at the fore. Repeated talk among one another provokes thinking, reflection, reconsideration.

Cultural activity theory makes the most sense of the stories and lessons Troupe members have reported to me: interactivity and dialogue is the primary work of the Troupe. Interaction uses language, but also demands the presence of bodies moving and speaking. Embodiment in gestures, speech, and presence is required of theatrical performance, in characters they inhabit and behind masks they wear for the sake of Troupe work. Off stage, the performatives of identity are self-intimate and under construction as students engage in learning and being: in feeling and form, embodied cognition and embodied emotion, engaging in experience and reflection, in worlds both social and psychodynamic, activity in invention and imitation. All of
these processes contribute to complex learning. Analytical language splits these ideas apart, and history and ideology attempt to make hierarchy and valorize one over the other where there is wholeness in experience. But as humans, we arrive whole, as points of self-generation, learning in juncture.

Interactivity between the individual and environment affords opportunities for agency even as the social world situates those identities. The Troupe itself is a figured world. Holland et al (2003) describe a figured world by its characteristics: 1.) they are historical phenomena which develop through the work of their participants; 2.) they are social encounters in which the participants' positions matter and "located in times and places, not in the 'everywhere'"; 3.) figured worlds are socially organized and reproduced; and 4.) figured worlds distribute an "us,": "spreading our senses of self across many different fields of activity [...]. The identities we gain within figured worlds are thus specifically historical developments, grown through continued participation in the positions defined by the social organization of those world's activity" (p. 41).

Activity promotes the growth we call learning. The actors use mediation not only through words as symbolic tools but through their bodies, through voice and gesture, gender, body type, and this action of whole self provides the path to knowing. Nested and connected by these axes, the personal-psychological and historical-cultural, students whom I spoke to experience, perceive, process, and draw conclusions about what they've lived and what they know. They spoke of their engagement with the Troupe as a way of problem solving and of coming to know themselves.

But knowing, cognition, cannot take place apart from the self in or as a body. Mediation of identity through the body and interacting with the bodies of others becomes complex. There
may be no mind without self, no "self" without a body encultured. Knowledge is lived, felt, and believed in the body, as Varela, Thompson, and Roch (1993) explain:

Knowledge depends on being in a world that is inseparable from our bodies, our language, and our social history – in short, from our embodiment. [...] Knowledge is the result of an ongoing interpretation that emerges from our capacities of understanding. These capacities are rooted in the structures of biological embodiment but are lived and experienced within a domain of consensual action and cultural history." (p. 149)

Experiencing and knowing, bodies are both agentic and enculturated. As such, knowing bodies are performative in their materiality, subject to interpellation by others (Althusser, 1971). I bring Althusser into discussion here because of the nested relationships of performance and identity. His assertion that because of ideology we perform in an "imaginary relationship" to beliefs that dominant social power makes possible while excluding other ways of being or seeing oneself, creating "performers" of us all. Interpellated bodies are stand-ins for identity seen through cultural lenses and produce foreclosed meanings as we "act" responding to how we are seen by others. This raises questions of identity and performativity, acting as others in "real" life. As one Troupe student mentioned, race is undoubtedly a cultural construct, but most people do not see it that way (Lori), and we all feel material effects of how we see and are seen by others.

When actors take on personae, masking as a character, they create a double performance, performing on stage and performing as selves while they narrate themselves to the interlocutor. When we engage in dialogue with one another, we perform to communicate. And if we were treated the same by others under the skin, there would be no use for diversity and social justice work at all; in Edwards' words, the issue of color "is always on my mind like it is always on my
skin.” Surfaces matter in their material effects, and yet identity which brings us to know ourselves and others is made of these fragments, intersections, and complexities.

So in the next Act, we go deeper into the living tree, to the growing inner layers and the pith of it as we consider identity work and the performative through actions and reflections of Troupe members – multiple in their diversities, in inner voices and in those they learn to perform, multiple in intersectionality, and in multiple positioning. Their message: There is more than one way.
ENTR'ACTE: Identity bridges

Entr'acte means "between the acts." In a long play, it was used as a pause in dramatic action, connecting one stage of the evolving story to the next, a transition completing a link which may have been missing between one act and the act that followed. In entr'acte, an interlude of music, a song, or exchange of dialogue took place in front of the curtain; entr'acte utilized no scenery or props, but functioned as a bridge practically so that the set behind the curtain or narratively, the mood could be changed for the act to come. This passage also, "between the acts," seeks to establish some working limits around the idea of identity -- a discussion to serve as a missing link between outward, previous descriptions of the Selinsgrove community at large and communal Troupe identity, transitioning inward to the most personal stories of identity, experiences of self and Othering that participants report.

Identity is twinned with learning in the Tolerance Troupe. Both take shape in ongoing social practices. Individuals come to the Troupe motivated to join in this theatrical pedagogy by compelling personal experiences, values, and by a desire to teach and learn. They find themselves situated into shared experiences of becoming Troupe members. Continuing through a novice period to "expert" in repeated performances, they matriculate, forging their own paths into their twenties and thirties, yet participants carried the Troupe experience, language, ideas and identifications with them. Troupe members interviewed spent an average of three years in the Troupe, from fourteen to seventeen or eighteen years old. These years of self-making and re-making stem from sharing collective social experiences with peers involved in similar processes, and this experience affects the actors in multiple dimensions. Therefore, I was particularly interested in how participation in the Troupe may contribute to producing and reproducing identities, how a person sees herself or himself, and how one reports the regard of others. The
"story" of identity is constructed again and again by stories recounted, retold, and given a sense of consistency by reinforcement and a sense of lived personal history.

A Moment of Exposition: "People gain cognitive insight not just because of what happens inside their minds but [...] because of larger systems that include interrelations among minds, other people, other people, settings, and activities" (Worthen, 2006, p. 97)

Lave and Wenger (1991) define identities as "long-term, living relations between persons and their place and participation in communities of practice. Thus, identity, knowing, and social membership entail one another" (p. 53). Participation in the social practice of the Tolerance Troupe appears to serve the purposes and values of its members. I wanted to find out how students and alumni cast this knowledge of themselves. Stuart Hall (1996) also offers a definition of identity I find useful in ways Troupe members and alumni express how they see themselves and others. These "others" are those persons exterior to the self, including the roles that the actors portray as characters in the skits, and real audience members whom they seek to reach by the Troupe's dramatic pedagogy.

Hall, after Foucault, refers to identity as a "suturing" of the psychic and the discursive: the subject, the individual, and the body inhabiting its experience as if unified, but living in a tangle of pressures and powers. The subject in the suture is called into conception by normalizing or marginalizing through constituting discourses. For example, how do we consider what makes "a man," manly, or "a woman", womanly? What is so white about "white" or "African" about "African-American"? How can we even think about these without their exclusion by binary? What do we make of someone we call "biracial" much less of the construction we call "race" at all? Meanings of social categories shift while the individual lives out the identifications as we "cast" them in, so to speak, making actors of us all. But one may
also live to resist being "typecast," to recreate, resist, or to alter these identifications and meanings. Even the body is not as stable as a "given," yet regulative expectations are constantly projected upon them, to keep in their "place".

Stuart Hall's "Who Needs Identity?" (1996) credits Foucault as having moved our thinking about identification by social categories away from over-determinism of the subject in his earlier writing to credit practices of self-production, with acknowledgment of interiority – of "recognition and reflection" (p. 13), that makes space for a measure of freedom for the subject, if not quite how a modern would see radical agency in intention or volition. What Foucault did not do, however, writes Hall, was to explore how:

individuals as subjects do (or do not) identify with the 'positions' to which they are summoned; as well as how they fashion, stylize, produce, and perform these positions, and why they never do so completely, for once and all time, and some never do, or are in a constant, agonistic process of struggling with, resisting, and negotiating and accommodating the normative or regulative rules with which they confront and regulate themselves. (p. 14)

The best way Foucault might have done this, suggests Hall, would have been to explore the unconscious, including the psychoanalytical, although Hall feels Foucault would never have embraced this approach, seeing psychology as just another oppressive regime of truth. However, Hall credits Foucault with early recognition of stylized practices and technologies of the self now recognized as performatives, presentations of self so that others might recognize that self, and cites Butler (1993) as the theorist most productively extending Foucault. Identity discourses as bodied and performed for recognition by others are defined not only by what they include but by what they exclude, and thus identities cannot be foreclosed since disavowals and differences
come back continually to unsettle those identities. Hall quotes from Butler's 1993 *Bodies That Matter*:

[Identifications] belong to the imaginary; they are phantasmatic efforts of alignment, loyalty, ambiguous and cross-corporeal cohabitations [...] Identifications are never fully and finally made: they are incessantly reconstituted, and, as such, are subjected to the volatile logic of iterability. They are that which is constantly marshaled, consolidated, retrenched, contested, and on occasion, compelled to give way. (cited in Hall, 1996, p.15)

I find that Troupe members and alumni make the most of this flexibility of self-understanding by recognizing multiple subject positions for themselves, seeing the powerful pull of context on themselves and others that makes a place for slippage, for complexity, and for places of agentic assertion and compassion for others. What is also true is that, although the cultural and psychological is sutured in this living, students and former members are not always ready to name their cultural outsides.

Instead, students and alumni I talked to cast their knowing in psychological terms, in terms of personal histories and personality traits, in discourses of the "real", not surprising in this very individualistic culture and from participants who share a humanist view of a centralized self as authentic, and who hold traditional convictions of pluralism. Among participants, there were few exceptions to seeing themselves as subjects of social forces or as essentialist selves. But there is a remarkable act of construction at work because they resist reductive categorization and recognize multiplicity.

They are aware of categorical delimitations; rather, they seem to push against these and unsettle them, seeing their identities as encompassing flexibility and growth, as *both-and*,
incredulous that some people persist in denial of this flexibility to change. That kind of
categorical rigidity in thinking seems strange to Troupe participants. Says Antonia:

There are people with just 'one-way' personality. They do things one way in the world,
and they don't want to see anything else. That's kind of extreme, but there are people like
that. Like depending on their religion or culture, they will only agree with things if it
agrees with their religion and culture, and that's it.

"One-way" thinking is something that confounds Troupe members because they regard
themselves as in process and as we will see, recognize multiplicity in the performances they have
played in their personal histories and cultural experiences.

Finally, and probably needless to add, language creates and reproduces identifications for
us. The role of language, of labeling or calling identities into being is recognized from Althusser
to Lacan, as we generate meanings from our words and mis-understandings of meaning as well,
so that labels seem as "common sense" and just as arbitrary. Repeatedly, we may be told from
birth whom we resemble ("You're just like your father!") and what we are like from our parents'
words to us ("What a good boy!" or "Bad boy!"; "Mommy's beautiful girl," or "You're a selfish
little girl!"). Beyond the family, to the outer community with whom we learn first to socialize,
we partially construct additional identifications from what others call us and how they treat us, a
kind of "looking glass self" (see Cooley, 1902/1978, for an early precursor to conceptualizing
performativity, and Riggins, 1990, as transition from Goffman to Butler), and we learn to behave
pleasingly or perhaps defiantly. We act outwardly or withdraw in retreat from what we might
call ourselves and as others see us and call us –whether "Christian" or "homeboy," forging
cultural outsides which come with real material effects, some privileged with affordances and
some loaded with delimiting constraints.
For example, race becomes a way of wielding power over others because of an arbitrary
distribution of melanin and because of historical forces of invasion and colonialization, taking on
very real consequences. Although many students have seen and comment on how furious they
become at racism, relatively few students used descriptors by category that reflected their own
positions in a cultural outside. Their self-chosen categories are eclectic: one alumna
characterized herself as "liberal democrat"; two described themselves as "Christian," or
"Catholic," one as "Puerto Rican"; one described herself as "a woman of color," and one spoke of
herself as "brunette." A young student actor spoke of his taking a frequent role in skits as
representing "the white male group," but this role was difficult for him to play, "because I don’t
consider myself a part of that I guess" (Justin). Aside from this one mention, no male participant
recognized himself as gendered. Not one of the five African American Troupe members or
alumni spoke of themselves as self-identified African American or black, but spoke only of
being treated prejudicially as African American, which strongly suggests performativity. The
only recurrent cultural outside I found repeated, though infrequently, was "feminist" which I will
discuss at the end of the first "scene" of identity construction for the young women of the Troupe
in Act Four which follows.

With these characteristics in mind, we leave the Entr'acte and continue to the storied
identities of members and former members of the Tolerance Troupe.
ACT FOUR: Difference & Identities of Race and Gender

In this Act Four and Five that follows, I will be going within. Using the metaphor of a living tree, our examination comes closest to core experiences of selfing, the shaping of adolescent identities practiced and learned, an integration of theory and practice. The most personal Act, this Act Four, begins with necessary exposition, a framework for addressing and authoring identity. In our conversations, students and alumni speak of the ways they have been seen and sometimes been mistaken as exemplars of social categories, treated or mistreated accordingly. They have spoken of how they come to know themselves in three significant ways, becoming Scenes in this Act. First we examine narratives of identity from students of color and of visible or expressed difference in terms of race and racism, and next address very similar concerns of those "mainstream" Anglo or Caucasian students, including those who carry "hidden" differences that shaped their participation in the Troupe.

Act Four, *Difference and Identities – Race and Gender*, addresses the organizing theme that the personal is political, implicitly, for these young people. They come to participation in the Troupe with an awareness of an intimate experience of power or powerlessness in situations of social conflict or injustice. Powerful feelings that came with these incidents have led them to participate in the work of the Tolerance Troupe, and those I spoke to feel a continuing influence of those incidents. They feel that the work of the Troupe addresses and reflects social conflicts that they have lived or seen beloved others experience that have touched them deeply, primarily injustices of misuse of personal power that included bullying through racism and sexism.

Racism is the first and most blatant injustice remembered and most frequently mentioned. Sexism and expression of sexuality continues to be a concern for young women by their numbers alone, since the majority of participants in the Troupe are female, and because gender tends to be
invisible to males, privileged as a given. The young women's views on sexism, and to a lesser degree, heterosexism are documented here, including the women who referred to themselves or their beliefs as feminist, one of the rare, politically categorical labels which repeated, though infrequently (three times), used in self-description. Narratives on race and on racism, and on gender, sexism, and sexual expression with the complications of teen pregnancy and abortion comprise this first examination of identity matters.

Before we enact these scenes, it is important to understand how the participants author themselves in the act of speaking and sharing their insights with me. They are asked to recount experiences, and doing so, they recreate a narrative of themselves. Hence the interview is also a performance of self. What they say about "playing as others" is as performative as how they cast themselves in stories of "self"; that is, they "play as themselves" as much as they play as characters in the skits.

Therefore I look at the recounting of memories that emerge as remembered crises, included with nearly every recollection of motivation for joining the Troupe in 32 interviews, with the exception of two 16-year old Caucasian males, current members of the Troupe. Only by the end of these two interviews did the two young men begin to reveal similar motivations, intimating either being a target themselves (Drew), or being an aggressor in interactions with younger members in their family (Max). Two alumni mailed-in responses did not address a memory of personal crisis, rounding out the study total.

Hence, every member and alumni in the study offered at least one story which positioned them in a moment of crisis or personal significance which identified their investment in becoming a member of the Tolerance Troupe. That each Troupe member or alumni would have a story that awakened a sense of justice seemed fitting. After all, as one participant had said in
the chapter previous, he wouldn't even select a new member of the Troupe unless that newcomer had direct experience with injustice: "[When] people say they had experience with it [intolerance], that's why they want to join, that they've seen intolerance [...]. That is the kind of answer I would try to find (Justin). These kinds of experiences were readily offered. Nearly everyone accounted for their motivations for joining readily with a personal experience as part of who they are, part of their self-making, and with a stance that they needed to take.

The first set of responses detail scenarios of personal crisis remembered from students of perceptible or self-declared difference; the second set to follow are incidents of personal crisis from so-called white, or "mainstream" Caucasian or Anglo students (terms I use interchangeably) whose relatively privileged social or racial location sometimes too much obscures their deeply felt experience of difference and their reasons for becoming allies against acts of bias. Both have felt the personal pain of injustice.

ACT FOUR, Scene 1: Difference and identity: "We don't all fit into one specific category"

(Jeanette). Students of difference mark personal narratives of crisis

The offense most Troupe members identify as most compelling is racism, and observations about the climate of the area (and nation, I add,) is not surprisingly mirrored in the concerns of other racial or ethnic minority or visibly different students since it is reasonable to assume that their outward appearance would be cause for some memorable incident of bias in the environment of the suburban/rural, central Susquehanna Valley. This is so, but what rankles students and alumni most are distorted perceptions and assumptions that go with categorical thinking, with stereotyping and its expected performances.

Stereotypes and expected performances of race continue beyond school-age years to carry over into the slights and assumptions perpetrated by adults who might know better. To set
the tone of continuing to bear difference after years in the Troupe, for example, one of the earliest alumnae is now a parent. Previously, we read her childhood story of the cross burned in her grandparents' yard and her being harassed while riding on the school bus. Even recently, when Helena's son was having problems with his teacher, the administration suggested the boy be examined for an underlying medical condition. They asked if Helena had access to a clinic, and Helena readily countered the assumption that she qualified for public health services:

[The school asked] 'Do you have medical access?' Why would you naturally assume I have access? Because my skin is brown, I have access? Because I hate to tell you, my husband and I bring in more money than you will ever bring in, so please don’t assume because of the color of my skin that I am on welfare. Not that there is anything wrong with being on welfare -- when you need the help, you need the help, just don’t assume I am on it.

Helena's family has been in the Susquehanna Valley for generations, but similar assumptions are made about students of color, treated as newcomers to the area from New York City or Philadelphia. I mentioned Helena's story because those assumptions continue to follow students of color as they become adults should they remain in this area, but the testimonies that follow are taken from current students of color or perceptible difference who currently act as part of the Troupe.

Moving to Selinsgrove from New York City, Jeanette was treated as if she were coming from an urban and therefore inferior school, but she explains:

In second grade [in my New York City school] I remember doing long division. I came here, and they were still doing addition and subtraction, and it was really easy. People
were like, 'Wow, you’re smart. How did you come from New York and be so smart?' I’m like, 'Yeah in New York, and I’ve already done this.'

I added italics above to point out the assumption made that Jeanette and that others have reported in interview, that students transferring from city schools and particularly students of color coming from urban schools are assumed to be academically delayed or working at a deficit. Jeanette also says that it was necessary after transferring at first to Selinsgrove schools to put on an urban-tough performance: "When you move somewhere to a new school and you're quiet, you have to put on an act," another insight into "onstage" schooling and racial performativity.

After moving to Selinsgrove, in a galvanizing incident, Jeanette recounts rumors and accusations of a young, white neighbor and classmate. The neighbor and Jeanette had gone fundraising door to door together for their sixth grade fundraiser. Both girls had made money for their school project, but after Jeanette had returned home, the neighbor’s mother came to Jeanette’s family’s apartment to accuse Jeanette of stealing the daughter’s money:

Her mom came to our door, and she said 'Oh you guys are always greedy.' My parents came to the door. They were like, 'What are you talking about? ’ And then the mom was like, 'Your daughter stole my daughter’s fund raising money.' I was like, 'What?' [...] I think they needed the money and stole the money and tried to say that I took the money. They were, 'Your daughter took my daughter’s fund raising money' and 'I don’t know why I trusted my daughter with you.' [...] It came out of nowhere.

The young neighbor then embellished the accusation. I’ve added italics above and to that which follows, to emphasize accusation by stereotype:

She made up this story of how I went in the house like a typical black person, and grabbed a knife, and then tried to stab her. I was laughing, I was so shocked. I was like
'What?' And then we went to school – all of this when I was in 6th grade. We get to school and she’s telling people this, and she couldn’t look me in the eye at all.

Every time she’d see me, she was scared. She knows she was lying. Why would you be scared if you were telling the truth? Like I should be doing scared? Like I’m going to get in trouble? But no, and she would tell everyone, and people would look at me like, 'I knew she does look like the type of person who would do this.' And they would all believe her except the people that are really my friends. They were, 'Oh yeah, she could do that – She came from New York.' I’m like, all this drama in 6th grade.

(Jeanette)

Theo, another student of color from New York, explains how strange it was to move from an all-black neighborhood to the Selinsgrove area. Like Gloria Naylor (1986) writing of how she "heard" the word "nigger" for the "first" time when it was used as a weapon to diminish her, even though she had heard the word used among her family for years, Theo heard the "N-word" spoken by a white classmate in elementary school against a young black girl on whom Theo had a crush. Theo rushed to defend her from the verbal assault:

He went up to her and said, 'Get out of here, you fucking nigger.' And I pushed him away, and said 'You can’t do that,' and then people started defending him rather than defending the girl, which I felt was kind of crazy. And being from New York where there was the majority of blacks where I used to live, that was unseen. You might have seen prejudice on T.V., but you never had seen race and prejudice in real life. And for me to see that, I was like, 'I can’t believe this just happened.'

That also made me a little nervous around people because once you see one person act like that, and then a group act like that, you start to think everybody acts like
that. And not everybody does. Coming from where I’m coming from, you judge or die, in a sense. Again, there is a double vigilance, necessary by those who are watched for performances of race. Performance of racism goes in hand with a performance of "race" as it is projected and then enforced by others. The performance of racism accuses the ones who bear "race," that which is "performed" by skin color alone. For students of color or other perceptible difference, these performances must be watched carefully; for students of difference, survival may depend on the cost of not paying close-enough attention: judge correctly or die, as Theo says above. If you carry what is projected as a burden or deficit by others, the performance of "racism" acted upon the "raced," then choose your battles carefully. Watch the combatants, and do not risk more than you can afford, especially when a teacher or other adult does nothing to correct the racist slur or offensive act, like the one which incited Theo's defense, a defense which he admits was executed with all the subtlety of a fourth or fifth grader. But as we see by his last statement, Theo qualifies his suspicion of white bias by saying, that "not everybody does" act like the white boy who insulted the girl whom Theo defended. But when a subject is regarded as an object by others, it is advantageous to hold back, to evaluate.

Danielle too was born in New York City but has lived in the local area since she was four years old. She affirms Theo and Jeanette's wariness; she also hangs back to judge whom she will trust. "My mother raised me to be open minded to all different races and different people" says Danielle, "And I was somewhat raised differently in the sense that I saw people for who they were and not just what they appear to be. I usually like to stand back and see how people react [...] before I get to know the person. That’s how I met a lot of people, good and bad." Sometimes, says Danielle, she goes into defense mode when the subject is racism, "because I am
Puerto Rican." But although she does not report feeling mistreated because of her race, she says that she has felt awkward in certain classes "where I’d be the only minority. I would never think about it except when somebody would bring it up."

She also remembers verbal attacks against a Muslim boy in her fifth grade class, being called a "terrorist" after the 2001 attacks, but as a fifth-grader, she did not speak up for him, she admits with some regret in her voice. As the area becomes more diverse, she hears more racist and more homophobic comments, says Danielle. "More and more there are more minorities coming to Selinsgrove. Some people do make comments, and it's mind boggling once again how they could say stuff in front of me." She mentions that she has been here so long that she has been included with the Anglo cohort, but she keeps her antennae sharp, aware of their comments and assumptions.

Another student of color remembers when an assumption of difference proves the necessity of the Tolerance Troupe's work for her. "I think what confuses people is what is perceived to be 'right' isn’t always true," says Tasha. Being "'right'" in this sense means adopting as stereotypical an assumption that Hispanics "naturally" are good Spanish speakers. "I was born speaking English; that was my first language, so I’m not very good at Spanish. [...] It comes easier now because I have to speak Spanish to my grandmother, but when I first moved here, people asked me questions in Spanish. I didn’t know... I think that’s a stereotype: just because I’m Latina, I speak fluent Spanish" (Tasha).

Instead of identifying as a native Spanish speaker, Tasha said that her felt difficulty in being in school was shyness more than her race. While attending school in New York City, she actually had more difficulty socially than in Selinsgrove. "It wasn’t like I was a minority in the school or anything. I really was with a lot of different people, but I think [difficulty in school]
was because I couldn’t make friends easily, because I was shy.” Tasha kept to herself and focused on school: "that kind of put on my forehead, 'Oh, don’t talk to her she’s like a bookworm person, she’s not cool,' that kind of thing.” Like the other Troupe participants, Tasha regards herself and insists on being known as a person and individual, not as a stereotype and not by racial or ethnic category. She is more concerned about relations to peers who would know her as an individual.

A student of mixed race, Raj has a similar but different story about the "meaning" of his racial status. He recalls that he was at recess in elementary school, and he wanted to play basketball with the other kids:

I can remember the picture exactly in my head. [...] They were like, 'No you can’t play," and I was like 'Why?' And they said 'Because you are black,' and I said, 'What does that mean?' And they said, 'Well, because you are black, we can make you our slave, and we can make you do whatever we want, and so you’re not playing basketball.' I still remember to this day what the kid looks like [who said that to him.] People can’t believe that if I’m successful or if I get a good grade on a test, or if I’m a good musician, it’s like, 'Oh that black person can do that?'

Scholars in the tradition of Erik Erickson (Marcia, 1980) write of identity as an achievement after an often contested exploration of identifications. As biracial and as gay, Raj has worked hard to achieve his identity as a young adult. Again, I have added italics to indicate his assertion about only one part of the identity issue he has tried to resolve:

I’ve been through so many different phases and different weird things because I was never black enough for the black kids, but I was never white enough for the white kids. So I’d go through these different phases where I’d try to be black enough for the black
kids, and I’d try to be white enough for the white kids. And finally I just settled into, you know, whatever. I don’t have to be black or white. *I can be both, and that’s how I’m going to present myself.* I’m going to do whatever and dress however and say whatever, and if that’s not black or white enough for you, then it sucks to be you.

Raj asserts his wholeness and celebrates his hard won equanimity. After struggles in the school yard and at home with an addicted father to triumph in the classroom and success in music competitions, including public acknowledgment of his sexuality in the homophobic social world of high school and conservative rural community, Raj likely seems to have reached a kind of identity equilibrium that writer Shirlee Taylor Haizlip (1994), of mixed heritage, explores in her family memoir, *The Sweeter the Juice.* Hazlip writes of achieving open ground:

> All in all, I have grown a great deal less certain about the vagaries of race and know that I am ambivalent about its implications. But I am comfortable with that ambivalence, for it keeps my doors and windows open. It allows me to keep learning. [...] My journey has made me more cautious in labeling or pigeon-holing others as well. (p. 267)

In Haizlip's memoir, the author sets out to reclaim both her black and white ancestors and address the historical color line, for she is a "them" as well as an "us." In reconciling all parts of her family from Orange County to Liberia, she resolves to be comfortable with the ambivalence of her identities in order to accept herself. Raj also adds to the conflict over race and racism, his struggle to come out to himself and to others, that hiding his sexuality caused him to be in reaction to others, to react and sometimes to attack them. But in self-accepting, he became more at ease with himself and authentically kinder to others, which he presents as getting "real":

> Four years ago I was not openly gay. It was spring of my freshman year I came out about being openly gay, and that was one of the first times when I first started to not care about
what other people thought and how other people saw me. [...] Through the Troupe, even that short amount of time from fall my freshman year until spring just changed me even that much, to finally be comfortable with myself enough to just be real.

Raj identifies himself as the "only" out gay person in school, and mentions that there is one teacher whom some students know is gay, but who would never come out because of the climate in the school and community. Homophobia is often used as content for Tolerance Troupe skits, but even though anti-gay bullying is endemic in schools, homophobia as a topic is specifically nixed by some districts as off limits to raise for discussion through the skits. Mind-boggling that in 2009, only one student of the thousand students enrolled in this relatively progressive high school identified as the only out, gay man, but this fact testifies to Raj's difficult identity achievement in his self-acceptance.

Since students and alumni of color and marked difference are relatively few compared to greater numbers of mainstream, Caucasian or Anglo Troupe members, we will now return to narratives of incidents of bias remembered by alumni who participated in the Troupe. About her heritage as mixed race, Caucasian and Asian, Karen remembers that she didn't grow up hearing anyone saying more about her biracial difference other than overhearing a comment like "tiki eyes." For a long time, she said, "I didn't realize I was different." Suddenly, however, she remembers realizing her difference in appearance from others, and asking her mother if she could grow up to look like her blonde, blue-eyed cousin. Her mother responded, "Don't you want to look like mommy?" Well, of course, I wanted to look like my mom, so she helped me: that's when I first started knowing that I was different," she recalled. As for being seen, "Everybody sees there is something mixed in you," says Karen.
In a comment like this one, we are made aware of the gaze of the other and the raced mantle the "object" of such a gaze takes on. Gender and sexuality become much more important to her later in her life, and I return to the discussion of gender and "feminist" later, when Karen makes note how her choices conflicted with family culture and expectations of marriage and chastity for proper, young Asian-American women.

Antonia has already spoken about her childhood friends misunderstanding why her family from the Indian subcontinent, as Hindu, held beliefs and cultural practices different from those of her friends, including enforcing stricter rules over the behavior of their daughter. Now studying as a pharmacist, Antonia admits, "I always wanted that, people who would understand." Trina was only one of perhaps three Jewish students enrolled in high school, but she said that she felt fortunate; Jewish identity only became an issue around Christmastime when she was bullied in middle school for religious difference, or feeling awkward during discussions of the Holocaust when all eyes "looked at me."

Tracy's mother had walked her by the hand to elementary school early, to make sure her daughter arrived on time for class. Her mother was rebuked for arriving early to school with her small daughter. "We're not a babysitting service," Tracy remembers the teacher scolding her mother. Tracy asserts that her mother was regarded as a lazy welfare case because Tracy's family is Hispanic. Tracy felt marginalized and invisible in school, and told that she had limited prospects as a Latina. She writes eloquently in an email, "In high school, it wasn't so much about particular instances as it was about mentalities. I felt that often teachers were very quick to draw conclusions about students based on their perceived notion of what a student could accomplish." In elementary years, she was also a target of harassment and bullying by another young Latina girl. Now thirty years old and one of the original Troupe members, Tracy is now a
teacher herself, an expatriate woman of color teaching English in Korea, declaring that she will probably be the only American Latina her students will ever know. She is acutely aware of the power that teachers can have on the feelings of their students. She recalls learning to challenge Anglo cultural tunnel-vision in high school when she became part of the Troupe:

I joined at a time in my life when my appetite to question conventional norms was insatiable. It was around this time, I started wondering, “Why does everything in both history and literature always go back to Europe? Why don’t we learn about ancient African or Asian civilizations? Is everyone around me really naïve enough to think that Europe was both the 'cradle and center of human achievement and celebration’? The eagerness that I had to learn about human history from a much wider scope than a typical public school education is willing to afford is still something that I carry within myself.

Tracy remembers one skit performance that galvanized her own inner turmoil in which venting was allowed, but she recognized that for all of the venting, nothing structurally was changed. Righteous anger was expressed and duly noted, but no reforms came after expression. Her complaints were then placed politely aside, kept on the reservation for border-keeping. I quote extensively from her explanation of the incident:

One year, we were invited to attend the Latino Symposium at Susquehanna University. I remember that there were many responses from the audience as people were encouraged to ask questions while we were in character. What was most poignant about this particular performance, in retrospect, was observing how racial divides and prejudices often simmer just beneath the surface. One of the things that I heavily associate with both the 1990’s and my college years in the early 2000s was an unquestioning sense of
political correctness that heavily permeated all social discourse that I recall taking place during this time.

The hubris of the academy appeared to suggest that each and every injustice from our collective socio-historical past had the potential to be rectified as long as the following two conditions were met: 1) a proper acknowledgment of all social injustices were fully documented and made known through the educational system; 2) a voice and/or audience were given to those victimized groups usually understood in their appropriated subcategories in Ethnic or Gender studies.

The unforeseen consequence of these amendments, however, developed into the institutionalized subjugation of the Oppressed narrative. Within the confines of Ethnic or Minority studies exists parameters which, by their definition, serve as boundaries of understanding. As a result, audacious conclusions concerning the fundamental, underlining premise of these cultural existences dwarf the possibility of extending these narratives beyond their genre specific realm. These instances of subjugation can be most clearly seen and experienced in the classroom. One need not look further than a college syllabus to an American literature class to understand how this practical partitioning takes places for the average student who will only be required to spend one or two classes out of a fourteen week course dedicated to ‘minority’ literature.

So when the audience got riled up at this particular performance, I saw this frustration boil to the surface for myself. It is precisely the kind of frustration that develops from being relegated to the margins of human experience. The prejudicial and foregone conclusions made about a minority group both confines and mutes their ability
to grow their participation in a large canonical manner to be taken seriously and to be treated as validly as their peers.

I quote Tracy at length because of her extraordinary insight and eloquence and for the ways this experience of the Troupe performance remains potent and applicable to her life today. I added italics to Tracy's statement, "'I saw this frustration boil to the surface for myself.'" Interpretation of her statement could be ambiguous: she either witnessed the frustration of other Hispanic students at the college's Latino Forum, or – or perhaps and – she saw the frustration for herself or in herself always put in the margins of human experience as a Latina in a dominantly Anglo small town. Taken through this interpretation, Tracy would be affected and angered by the performance in which she played a part.

Tracy's eloquent document reiterates how prejudices are fostered under the surface in polite company, and although the skit was a safe place to express feelings about injustice, there was no integration that experience of bias and exclusion moving forward to make institutional change. This is a criticism heard in other discussions of theatrical interventions in which participants recognize a shared problem but neither relate the individuals to a hierarchy of power among them (Spry, 1994) nor devise a plan for larger collective action or structural changes together (Fisher, 1994). Nevertheless, participation and articulation provide conceptual movement through dialogue, by vocalizing possibility, and we will return to both these criticisms and possibility in later discussion.
ACT FOUR, Scene 2: Anglo Students Talk Race, "One of those 'elephant in the room topics'": "Mainstream" Anglo or Caucasian students deal with difference and mark their own personal narratives of crisis, including their hidden diversities

When it comes to how personal history intersects with oppression, it is a mistake to only consider racial or ethnic difference as relevant to students of color or other visual markers of difference. Mainstream students also explicitly cite racism as the predominant concern motivating them to participate in the Troupe (Sharon; Olivia; Jodi; Drew; Alex; Hank; Lori). Hank asserts a view representative of most of the Caucasian Troupe members. That racism is of perennial concern:

For me the most important skits were involving racism. I always thought it was one of the more important issues because it was always one of those 'elephant in the room topics'. Everyone was afraid to talk about it and some people were offended when we did talk about it. In a small, predominately white, school district like Selinsgrove, racism is present in everyday life. No one talks about it and tries to avoid it, but it was there.

Given that year's Ramirez killing and trial, and the general hysteria over immigration in central Pennsylvania, Drew, a current member of the Troupe, specifically mentions bias against Spanish-speaking students that he sees in his school:

It’s not necessarily black people that gets insulted -- it’s mostly Mexicans in our school. People will say 'You’re in America now, speak English' because we have some Mexican students who don’t speak good English. They’re learning, they’re learning as hard as they can to speak it. They have a Spanish tutor and they get taught that, but it’s just mostly that kind of irritates me because I have no problem with them. If I went to Spain right now I would be totally lost, and I would feel horrible if I got treated that way
because I came from America and I speak English. [...] That’s really the subject that I’m the most motivated about to get the word out about.

As teenagers, current Troupe members as students speak of their elementary and middle school experiences more vividly than alumni in their twenties can recall from memory, but what I noticed are mention of hidden identities of "mainstream" students which do not outwardly show. These memories have impact on their development as individuals and as leaders in active resistance against bias as they grow into adults. The following looks at a representative sampling of personal memories and hidden vulnerabilities and diversities which impacted their sense of justice and sense of themselves as different also.

The first circle of affiliation is family, and frequently, the reason for action in compassion for others comes from how family members have been mistreated. Caroline remembers that her uncle and his wife adopted children from Pakistan who became her cousins, and who would come to visit and play:

One time I took them to a sports event when I was in middle school, and this kid who was like a bully in my middle school asked me who these people were, and I said they were my cousins. And he made jokes, for like, an hour and a half at the game beside me about how they couldn't possibly be my cousins, and made them feel horrible until we had to leave.

Family feeling also motivates alumni and students who mention that beloved gay or lesbian siblings motivated participation in the Troupe (Leila; Sara) another alumna credits some of her frustration with racism to her sister's interracial relationships and the racism her sister encountered for dating African Americans (Caroline).
Motivating Troupe participation to do justice to others by principle, for both students and alumni who are mainstream and those of color or other difference, several participants cite their family’s overall values (Sharon; Lori; Alex) and family’s religious values of compassion and tolerance, including Unitarian Universalism (Dylan; Olivia) and Christianity (Jeanette; Jodi; Emma; Danielle; Chelsea; Julie; Kimberly), even while acknowledging the limitations of some varieties of religious faith which disparage difference in others. Exposure to and encouragement of diversity in one’s family life and beliefs seems to be a common motivator, as Lori explains:

[Being] brought up in a family where we’ve had friends of different backgrounds and different diversities and different religions and different sexualities -- and it’s just something that I have sort of been raised in that type of atmosphere. This is the way to sort of bring all of those topics to people’s attention.

Just as significant a motivator for activity in the Troupe are experiences of those who find that their families include some whom they see as negatively holding on to prejudices of racism or homophobia, likewise motivating these alumni and students to actively resist the attitudes they have seen and disapproved of in their own intimate family circles (Leila; Julie; Lisa; Sara; Lori; Karen; Larkin).

In a wider circle of affiliation, just beyond the immediate family, students and alumni report having beloved gay or lesbian close friendships (Sharon; Tasha; Leila), or gay or lesbian neighbors who played important roles in their early knowledge of the world (Emma). In fact, the neighborhood figures as a first look at others beyond the family members to leave a lasting impression. Several Troupe members mention growing up in more diverse neighborhoods and moving to this more homogenous area in later childhood, either having already been exposed positively to difference (Emma; Tasha) or already having to adjust to being an outsider (Sara;
Karen; Kimberly; Gracie). One experienced mixed race romance as a teen and had been the
target of hostility for crossing the color line (Larkin). Many have shared friendships with
racially diverse others, friendships which made them targets of racism also (Justin; Lori; Alex).

Alex, now in his middle twenties was friends with Edwards' twin sons growing up. He
described himself as being hesitant to stick up for himself and his friends against racist
comments, and recounted a situation which literally left him speechless:

In seventh grade, I had a Navy sweatshirt on. One of my friends said...I forget how he
made it up, but basically, that I was a nigger, and I was so offended, it brought tears to
my eyes. I told him how I felt, but I had a lot of trouble, and I was intimidated, and he
wasn't an intimidating person. After I'd been in Tolerance Troupe, I had those same kind
of situations, and I wasn't intimidated any more.

Disability in the family also leaves its lesson: Dylan's sister has Down's syndrome, and
Dylan expresses how he learned early on how to deal with peers' comments like "That's
retarded":

To this day, you will rarely ever hear the word 'retard' in my house in my family, and if
so, it's only referring to someone who has a very legitimate disability. That sort of
rubbed off on me. When I hear one of my friends say, 'Oh, that's retarded,' I pretty much
immediately say, 'Please don't say that.' [...] The great thing is that people will
immediately take that to heart and say, 'I'm really sorry; I didn't mean it in that way.'
[But] 'I didn't mean it that way sometimes gets annoying because I think people should
realize that that's what they're implicating when they say something like that."
Dylan concludes that speaking up can make an immediate change in offensive behavior, and gets people to think before they speak, particularly if he is there to catch them. Speaking up in the moment about disparaging difference can create change.

Again, as much as responding to thoughtless offense is Dylan's often practiced behavior, it reflects the message of the Troupe itself, which Helena, seasoned alumni and perhaps the most outspoken says, is "to use your filter." Difference means cause for restraint if not respect, and the Troupe's mission is about changing actions and outcomes rather than changing beliefs. She summarizes the Troupe mission:

We just want you to be civil. [...] Watch what you say, watch what you do; that's what we wanted. It's all about being tolerant of it. You don't have to include us. You don't have to include me in your circle, but don't hold my circle against me. That's what it's about. (Helena)

This basic injunction to use a filter includes circles which are distinguished by obvious difference. The four Troupe members whose statements follow could represent the kind of outward appearance or social position that would be highly valued by a society largely homogenous, Caucasian, and patriarchal. They represent attractive, heterosexual young men and women of fair complexion, who nevertheless carry differences that affected the way they have experienced their social worlds. Privilege may come by luck of the draw by birth as attractive and valued shade of skin when that luck is constructed by history and culture, but there are hidden vulnerabilities in these young people.

Of young women who might seem ideally placed in an affluent, cheerleader-type, Lori describes the limitations of being seen as the "stuck-up" type and playing that role in the skit."[When] people 1st look at me being blonde and dressing more preppyish [...] I would get
things from that. We did a lot of skits about being a stuck up bitch or different things like that that I can connect with." She had to assimilate what she saw others may have perceived her.

Drew, blonde, small but powerfully built, is an avid participant in school theatre, actor and athlete, a tennis player, and active in forensics. He described, in a previous Act, how most jocks would not regard the Tolerance Troupe as a cool thing to do, but he attests that he feels confident in his masculinity to do both drama and sports. Interestingly, when he speaks about a time he intervened for the benefit of a freshman being teased or bullied in the gym dressing room, Drew reveals what I believe is an unacknowledged burden of masculinity, size discrimination:

It was a new freshman, and he’s kind of a smaller guy and me and my friends were in the locker room getting ready for gym, and they said something mean to him. And I said, "Come on, guys, that’s not cool. He’s just a freshman, and we got joked around like that last year. (December 31, 2008)

I have placed italics around "smaller guy" and we" in Drew's interview excerpt above because it may not only imply how sophomores like Drew were treated the previous year, but may also reflect how smaller males including Drew are treated as well among athletes which include the school's state champion footballers. This is my inference, but I found it interesting that Drew was the only student Troupe member who did not mention any personal connection with bullying or harassment. This was the only mention which may have included himself in mentioning status or stature.

Justin, another blonde, heterosexual, Caucasian male has worn his hair long and has "been called gay more times than I can count, and I wondered if my hair had something to do with that." When I started following the Troupe, Justin had flowing hair down to about the
middle of his back, his long hair displaying a sign which put him in the "gay" category by choosing not to display masculinity by shortening his hair. He had explained that he been mocked from an early age because his mother is lesbian, but more confusing to him was a remark that a girl relayed to him:

I remember the first day of [high] school, I came in and sat down with a friend of mine in the gymnasium, and a freshman was sitting next to her, and we were talking for a little bit. And she goes, "Is he a skater?" because of the way I was dressing. She was asking me if I skateboarded even though she was asking somebody else. And she said, "Well, you look like a skater but you talk like you’re gay." I was like, "Is it strange that I can’t be both or that something about me would say that I would be gay?" I just thought that was strange....I replayed it over in my head, but *her world is so small that she didn’t think that a skateboarder could be gay.* It just was weird to me to hear that.

I have italicized parts of Justin's recounting to illustrate how multiple positioning characterizes the ways that members and alumni of the Troupe see the world; to paraphrase Justin, their world is *not* that small; multiple positioning acknowledges the complexity of intersections of the personal with multiple social categories, one of the characteristics which resurfaces repeatedly in the narratives of the interviewees. These multiplicities will more deeply explored in the next Act.

**ACT FOUR, Scene 3: Gender & teen women's sexuality: "It’s not my life they are living -- how can I really make any judgments?"**  
Young women talk about teen sexuality, feminism, and abortion

Finally, since the majority of participants including alumni are young women, the marker of gender makes bullying by gender, sexism, and heterosexism pertinent to most of the
participants' concerns. Gender remained salient for the alumnae interviewed although
categorical identifications by gender (i.e. using "I'm a woman" to describe oneself) did not arise
when participants were asked for explicit descriptors. Considering that the majority of Tolerance
Troupe members and alumni are young women, (89% of alumni who responded to my request
for interview and 65% of the current troupe who interviewed), gender and thus sexuality as an
implication of gender retains importance throughout their lives as young adults. Alumnae ranged
between 19 and 30 years old, ages in one's lifetime when establishing new careers, romantic
partnerships, and families. From the beginning, many of the skits concern themselves with
gender and sexuality, as we saw from the freshman performance on battering, so I had expected
that these two threads would have surfaced in descriptors of self-identity (as a woman,
heterosexual, gay or lesbian), but they did not..

But there was one exception to this dearth of categorical identifications offered by three
alumni who used the descriptor "feminist." I would like to look at a complex of their responses
at some length here. Julie, a twenty-year old attending university responds:

I would consider myself a feminist. I would. I think that there is sort of a negative
connotation with that word sometimes. When they see 'feminist' they see radical feminist
-- that is what they see. But I do consider myself very much a feminist and concerned
with women's rights around the world globally because I'm a government major. [...].

Interestingly, she positions herself as feminist because of involvement within another category
she mentions, as a government major, concerned with political power and distribution of its
goods. As an advocate, this alumna is concerned about the exploitation of women for sexual
slavery; as a student of Russian, she aspires to work for women's rights in formerly Soviet
countries, exposing the so-called bride-trade: "These girls are violently held against their own
will and forced to work as prostitutes and [...] I was like, "Oh my God, this is what I want to do. I want to try and fix problems like this." The resolve to do something about issues that concern them, to take action, is common in those interviewed who participated in the Troupe. What does it mean to be a feminist? Julie described rancor and confusion over what feminism is and isn't, and the origin the confusion, she felt, was conflict with deeply-held religious attitudes:

A lot of women do like gender roles...there are still a lot of women out there that their primary focus is to get married and have children, and yeah, they might be concerned about their career, and they want to go to college. But a lot of women still want to play the role of a woman. They want men to open doors for them and pull out chairs for them, and I think that to them the idea of a feminist is to make men and women completely equal, and they don’t like that idea. Where, in fact, feminism isn’t necessarily about getting rid of gender roles; it’s more about, well, if you want to get married and have babies -- that’s perfectly fine. But at the same time if you aren’t concerned with that and you just want to be a career person and the idea of having a family that is okay too. But I feel there are a lot of women who feel feminists are trying to take away from what they feel to be their God-given role in life, and that’s what I think. I’m not particularly sure.

As for conditions affecting the lives of American women, "I do find myself very kind of riled up when I hear how on average men’s salaries are far above what women’s salaries are still today, and I do get kind offended when I find men politicians debating about the abortion issue because I don’t know if that’s really a men’s issue for them to decide." She discussed her change from being "pro-life" because of her Catholic upbringing, which still centers her moral choice, but being politically "pro-choice" as part of her maturation: "I’m still pro-life although politically I would consider myself pro-choice because I feel like it's an issue that's up to the individual"
(Julie). She goes on to say that skits dealing with sexuality “were particularly difficult because there are people who have strong religious beliefs that they translate to their own moral beliefs, and it is really difficult to change people’s opinions when they are based on religion.” Her emphasis on religion and values justified through belief appears integral to her sense of identification and its material and political effects.

A second alumna, Olivia, one of the original Troupe members, also considered herself feminist. She described what she felt was a privileged upbringing without being a target of bullying, except for the sexism she encountered, including comments on her looks, especially those made by another Troupe member:

A lot of these comments – personally, the hardest thing I had to deal with was just typical female -- being treated a certain way because I’m simply a female, but nothing so harming to my identity I don’t think. [...] Plain old sexism. It’s interesting because I had a lot of pimples in high school and the one guy we talked about who was in the Tolerance Troupe also -- and the worst things I dealt with in high school was him. (Olivia)

Of the themes that concerned the original Troupe and one that continues to be a topic for skits important to adolescent girls that Olivia finds relevant are skits about teen pregnancy because of negative attitudes toward female sexuality:

"The teenage pregnancy skit -- I think that one was more accessible. It was something that kids didn’t really think of as an issue that drew hate or discrimination. Even me, being I was like, 'Oh yeah.' Girls that get pregnant really carry a lot of shit, and that’s kind of a hidden. I mean it’s not hidden, but it’s not something that I had thought about before being one of the participants as an issue of discrimination, but it definitely was, and I think that was pretty accessible to at least the girls. (Olivia)
Olivia explained that because her school was nearly all Anglo, girls' sexuality and rumors about their sexual expression were frequently a flashpoint. "We talked about teenage sexuality and situations such as teenage pregnancy that could come up in high school, that you would receive a lot of flack and hatred. It certainly wasn’t just about race." Concern for the double standard around sexual behavior is affirmed by many of the young women interviewed; skits dealing with girls' sexual behavior and judgments about girls' sexuality including gossip were salient to their concerns including the ways they saw themselves as well as saw others.

A third alumnae in her later twenties, Lara, minored in Women's Studies and spent time as a prochoice activist in Texas and South Dakota, as well as working as an ESL teacher and preschool teacher. She wrote that experience in the Troupe, "definitely helped shape me into the liberal feminist (with libertarian leanings) I am today. It also awakened me to the intolerance and straight-up denial in my own high school." As a visiting Troupe performer acting in skits as a guest at another school, Lara mentioned denial in another context which included race and gender when a Caucasian boy in the audience asserted that his school had no problem with racism. She writes, "[His] school did have those problems, but possibly as a young white man, he didn't experience them himself." What concerned Lara most and skits which were the most effective dealt with "Double standards involved in teen pregnancy: guys being studs, girls being sluts) [...]. I wanted to make schools see that teen pregnancy is a huge deal, that double standards exist, that sometimes you need to be in your face to get through to people, that the status quo needs to be shaken a little bit.

Although only three alumnae and no current students spoke of themselves as feminist, other alumnae confirmed the importance of acting out conflicts around female sexuality, teen pregnancy, and exploring stances on abortion:
It seemed like anywhere we went, [a need for skits on teen pregnancy] that was a huge one because typically if a girl gets pregnant, is pregnant in high school, you hear she’s a slut, she’s a whore. If you don’t know that person and one of your friends is telling you that, of course you’re going to believe that she is. [...] With teenage pregnancies it seems like people are more out to just say harsh things about that person. When a girl gets pregnant in school everybody knows about it and all you hear is the negativity about that person. You don’t hear anything about the guy even if you know who the father is, but I think that one really made people think. And I think it was nice for the girls, even if you weren’t pregnant to hear that. Hey, if I’m sexually active doesn’t mean I’m a whore. [...] If you’re a girl, and you’re sexually active, you’re a slut. If you’re a guy and you’re sexually active, it’s okay. Girls don’t go bragging about who they had sex with. If guys do it, it’s cool. Girls are made to feel ashamed of having sex. Boys, it doesn’t really matter. I think too, though, the Tolerance Troupe helped me with that. (Karen)

This alumna's critique of sexuality and the double standard of gender roles applied to women continues to concern her now as a single parent and with pressures from her family who disapproved of her pregnancy and her choice to have her child, and who is now raising two children after leaving her partner: "When I became pregnant and I wasn’t married, my parents were so mad and were ashamed of me: that was really hard on me," Karen said. Sexual behavior is not Karen's only concern; so is taken-for-granted, gendered division of labor:

Also if you’re a female, you’re expected to be the one to cook the meal -- not just for your kids every evening, but for the meal for the family as well. And the cleaning and everything else, and girls are "better" at that kind of thing. But I think the Tolerance Troupe helped me feel older too because I refuse to take out the trash. If I’m doing other
stuff, and you’re living in my house, you better take out the trash. I didn’t mind cooking
the meal for your whole family every night, but I’m not doing the dishes, and if the
dishes don’t get done, I’m not cooking for you tomorrow night. I don’t mind doing
laundry, but if you put your laundry all over the floor and think it’s the woman’s job to
pick it up, you’ll go without clean clothes -- I don’t care. Whereas with my mother and
my grandmother, that was their job and you just did it. [...] The older one [son] thinks
that certain things are a woman’s job because he sees it in daddy’s side of the family. I
teach him that’s not the way it is. [For her younger son,] All of these times I took as
good opportunities to tell him, "I’m your mother -- I made you that. You take your plate
to the sink, and you tell me that you’re thankful [...] I want him to grow up to be a
gentleman.

For Karen, respect for women and women's work, fostering gender-role equality, and inculcating
appreciation for women's work in her young family is of continuing concern, part of the intimate
and personal social justice work that she credits with her activity in the Troupe.

Helena, from one of the earliest casts of the Troupe, remembers that active expression of
girls' sexuality was more taboo a decade ago in the nineties, and rumor-mongering among teen
girls was savage. Helena didn't call herself a feminist, but a "sexist." Her recollections about
young women who gossip are cutting:

Sex was a big deal. And now it's a little bit more widely accepted that teenagers are
doing that sort of thing, but when I was in school, you didn't associate with the girls that
did that sort of thing. I remember during my junior year, a fellow classmate [...] got
pregnant and that totally blew our world that somebody, a peer at such a young age,
something like that could happen. And that, of course, we incorporated sexual
relationships into the Tolerance Troupe then because it was something else that kids were going through. And of course, adults don't want to hear that, and how other kids react to it, especially the girls, because females are a vicious group of human beings put on earth. Girls are evil. Girls are evil. We happen to be the nastiest group of individuals. I can't even think of another species of animals that is more vicious and hurtful and cruel than female teenagers.

Boldly outspoken, instead of a feminist, Helena calls herself "sexist" describing herself as "domineering, aggressive, pliable, flexible. I know when it's time to take over, and when it's time to take over, I will. And I know when it's just time to sit back." Calling herself "sexist" is ambiguous here because she both disparages the cruelties of teen girls yet affirms her assertiveness as a woman. As for the influence of the Tolerance Troupe, Helena realized, "it's not just about big things like race, it's not just about sexism; it's not just about sexuality. It's about those little things too, like who would have thought that a blonde joke would be offensive?" The use of the blonde joke, another example of gender bias, is still used by Edwards to debrief audiences at the end of many performances, and the blonde joke as an example of unexamined sexism unexpectedly pops up in Helena's narrative. The shoe and the power to fill it, is on the other foot for this alumna, who is unafraid of standing up for herself and for her children. She says of her role in the Troupe and in "real" life as a powerful person, when it comes to calling out offensive words and behavior, "Standing up for yourself was apparently also mean behavior. But it's okay -- I don't mind" (Helena).

Issues of gender for female actors and alumni include exploring reasons for deliberating a stance on abortion, intertwined with heterosexual behavior or expression. Many alumnai and female students expressed ambivalence about where they might stand on the issue of abortion,
especially in the context of teen pregnancy, the most common scenario the Troupe uses in which abortion discussions take place. This means that many students feel morally challenged by abortion, with younger students having stronger feelings against abortion rights and older alumnae recognizing the importance of political choice around the issue. Here are examples of their responses:

* I remember the pregnancy skit, and I might have played the pregnant part. And I remember thinking I felt like I would feel torn. (Antonia)

* [the issue] I’m the most close to is probably teen pregnancy with abortion because I’m a very strong activist against abortion, and that’s kind of hard to discuss with my friends because a lot of them believe it’s a choice. (Becky)

* [I said in the skit] "Oh you can’t raise the baby, you’re in high school. You need to get your education. You’d be better off to just have an abortion and then you wouldn’t have to worry about it." You just kind of have to put yourself into the role you are playing and say what comes to your head. [...] I’m absolutely not for abortions. (Leila)

* With some of the characters that were kind of on the line that weren’t really sure which way to go on certain issues. Different ones like abortion, ones because I guess I was not sure what I thought about that then. Now I know it doesn’t really matter what you think about it. What matters is that you don’t hate other people because of what they think about it. [...] If I would have seen a situation like that before I would have been like, 'Well it sucks to be her.' But she made a mistake so now she’s going to have to deal with it.' I don’t feel like that anymore. I’m just using the teen pregnancy thing as an example, but I would hope the child would bring her a lot of joy in her life. We all make decisions that affect our lives forever and hopefully it turns out really great. (Kimberly)
From the younger student who has attended annual anti-abortion rallies in D.C. with her mother and says the rosary outside of clinics to two alumnae active in NARAL, there is not one stance on abortion found in common within the Troupe, though it is safe to say that those who considered themselves anti-abortion earlier as teens have come to at least more consideration for the needs of the mother and the freedom to choose for herself and her family.

Tracy calls her generation "post-feminist" and acknowledges that:

Being a female person of color in what is supposed to be a post-feminist, post-racist, and post-modern world, leaves one with a lot of issues pertaining to identity, space, and legitimacy that my generation of young women will be left to write from scratch. There is something both exciting and uncertain about being the first to do something. My mother's generation had plenty of firsts with the feminist movement and the civil rights movement. It is impossible to not feel constantly aware that anything you create and decide to become will be in large part due to the road that was paved before you were even a thought. I was proud of every little success and achievement that I was able to have when I was in high school because I always felt very aware of the eyes watching me, even if they really weren’t.

Like Karen, Tracy conveys her feeling of both acting as subject of her own experience and as an object, seen and evaluated by others. Although she speaks of a post-feminist moment in which no stable, unitary position or experience to represent all women can be assumed, the continued oppression of women, as part if not the whole of identity, can be found in the double standard of sexual mores and sexual behavior, rumors and reputation over sexual expression, pregnancy, and abortion acting as social controls over women. Both current Troupe members and alumni
repeatedly recounted the importance of raising issues of sexuality in the skits, from teen pregnancy to rumors about sexual activity. These issues remain current for high school actors and audiences now, just as gender remains salient in their lives in ways young women are regarded, treated, or mistreated. In recalling being part of the partner abuse skit similar to the freshman performance, another alumna is aware of who may be watching:

[When] you're up there playing the antagonist, the person who does that in real life, the male student who really does hate women is down there, and he's upset by your portrayal of the values he's actually trying to internalize. (Ariel)

Ariel credits the Troupe with offering up a counter narrative that can interrupt developing sexism. Characterization of the times as "post-feminist" does not mean that there is no continuing, strategic need to counter sexism, abuse, or domination which these alumnae repeat as concerns and to a lesser degree, current Troupe students mention in their interview-testimonies.

These young women literally embody such contests over expression of female sexuality, over agency, and expected, designated performances of gender that are social givens. They have enacted skits around these issues of conflict, performed as characters, using their own voices and bodies. In doing so, I would not credit performance not as the primary facilitator for the processing of positions around these issues with particular relevance for them, but would propose, as Osmond (2007) did, that performance is not simply expressive but profoundly pedagogical, functioning as "a medium to transform ordinary space into theatrical space such that the potential of that space opens new opportunities for changing the minds of participants and viewers" (p. 1109).

As such, actors negotiate meanings and challenges to assumptive givens and norms, explore and critique them, and work out their convictions and their search for alternatives. The
issues which arise as so personal gain added weight and value by their performance as both subject and object. In enacting and performing a body and an identity, an actor may objectify that body or one's identity and, in Garoian's words (2002) "explore its ontological terrain, its memory, cultural history, its corporality, and desires in order to critique its inscription" and then reclaim its subjectivity (p. 162). This ongoing negotiation and reclaiming of subjectivity includes those who, as we have discussed in this section, are marked by difference and are also compelled in some way to perform their race or sexuality and contest that performance too.

For example, Ileana has played a racist in skits, including the most recent one before our interview, as a character who suspects all white people are racists and never to be trusted. Speaking of her performances as an African American racist and her feelings about racism, Ileana said:

People look at me or they hear that I'm from New York, and I just want the stereotyping to stop. They automatically think that because we're from New York, we have a knife in our back pocket and stupid things like that. That's why I take time to talk to people and show, like, 'This is how we really feel.' We feel you don't understand [how it feels to be a target of racism]; it's just like you feel like we don't understand – but it's the other way around. People think our parts are just acting, and we don't act like this outside [of the Troupe], this is just for school purposes. [...] I just want people to understand, 'This is what it's like on the other side.'

Acting against how they see the world and against how they may feel, actors provoke the processing of their deepest feelings and thoughts about self and contexts that constitute that self, better enabling them to grapple effectively with confronting racism, sexism, and homophobia.
And the process extends to the mainstream students who also have experienced the political in the personal and who also possess hidden diversities in their cherished relationships. In negotiating their positions and performing even as they disagree with the characters they embody, the actors grow into more dedicated nuance of thought, feeling, and conviction and more dedicated to the elimination of bullying and bias. That more nuanced thought includes the benefit of growth in years and maturity, but truly begins with the taking on of multiple positions, which we explore in the next Act.
ACT FIVE: Multiplicity Matters

"There were times when a character -- or even your character -- will say something that is intolerant and you realize you thought that yourself, and when you hear it said out loud you think, 'Oh my gosh that’s terrible I don’t believe I ever would have thought that.' But you realize you have thought it." (Kimberly)

A focused extension of the previous Act, Multiplicity Matters attests that the feelings aroused by personal incidents of bias and involvement in aggression are complex. Those who express acute emotion over these experiences -- guilt, remorse, anger, or ambivalence -- resolve to change similar situations or their own behavior by Troupe participation. They have a view of themselves as taking multiple positions in these kinds of conflicts. They demonstrate perspective-taking and acknowledge how they have been both bully and victim at times or have stood aside conflicted and silent, to their own dismay. Scene 1 demonstrates that these young people acknowledge that the complexity of human behavior cannot be reduced to simplistic judgments of good and bad; they resist such oversimplifications of themselves and others.

Scene 2 addresses a peculiar position unique to these actors -- how it feels to see oneself on stage simultaneously as masked and performing as another, yet seeing one's own personal issues being enacted in a skit while performing. As part of their involvement in the Troupe, students regularly take multiple stances on a variety of topics; thus multiple-positioning on stage and in the dynamic of target, aggressor, and indifferent has been part of their lived experience and integrated into their knowing. Most interesting, however, is that part of their multiple perspective-taking and thus learning also arises in the context of performing skits that provoke shock and deeper reflection, including reflection upon seeing their internal conflicts portrayed
externally on stage while "playing the other." This internal shock can catalyze thinking from feeling, seeing their own biases and sometimes their own lives in conflict as part of the skits.

**ACT FIVE, Scene 1:** "There’s not one way, not one lifestyle, and there’s not one economic group, and there’s not one racial group, there’s not one right way." (Olivia)

How would seeing multiple identifications apply to agency? I recall one alumna saying, "The big picture is too big" (Lara). What can the individual do, after all, with profound limitations of self and not self? We engage in social life with others, and through our language and bodies not completely our own, produce and exchange meanings, including meanings "which might be" (Fine, 1994). The opening for agency cannot only be thought of as the power to resist others' meanings, but also to recreate other meanings which can contest meanings that oppress us. Although we cannot go outside discourses made available that render identifications "for" us, we can make space for alternatives through which we and others might see discourses of oppression as what they are.

This is the kind of work which engages the Tolerance Troupe, and in asking the question, "How do members of the Troupe see themselves in this work," I found that they do not see only one-sidedness in themselves or in others whom they identify as bullies or as biased. Although they may use discourses of a "real" self referring to authenticity and voice, another way of seeing a self is equally salient in Troupe members and alumni. Instead of a unitary, unified self, they acknowledge that they have "played many parts" of target and oppressor, and that offering a model for acting in familiar contexts can tip the scale for changes possible on the small scale. Collective effort is one of gradualism at the level of individual action, with the hope of a greater shift by turns, but it is accompanied by some lack of understanding of how to build structures
that would reinforce larger changes in the younger members, and a consideration of the need and
difficulty of doing so in the alumni I spoke to.

In younger student Troupe members, individual realization is the reasonable way of
changing initial attitudes of bias and the most comprehensible way to open perceptions of those
that see racial, ethnic, or gendered groups in only one way. One student actor commented on the
duplicity and selectivity of ascribed stereotypical behavior. Observes Emma:

You can count the number of black and Puerto Rican people that are at our school. [...]  
The black people in chorus -- they act sometimes loud, but again, everybody is loud, and
I really get annoyed with the people who go, 'Oh they are so annoying.' And yet they
don't see that there are white people in that group with those black people that are being
loud as well.

Besides selective perception belying complexity, an otherwise good person can do evil
things; behavior must be approached in context. Theo, whose cousin was stabbed from
intervening to stop a street confrontation, said that one must judge from appearances to survive;
one must sometimes "judge or die", but that does not mean that a person doing something wrong
is necessarily evil. A person could do wrong because of their circumstances or environment, but
again, approaching a person naively can be disastrous, and wrong actions cannot be excused or
dismissed at one's peril:

In New York City, you might see somebody who is a bully or a gang member, and you
judge them. But we judge them –in the sense of like, they're just straight up bad people
because of the things they do, but then you don't understand where they come from. And
if you don't want to know where they came from, you're not going to find out, so it's like
you judge them for what you see, but not for who they really are because you don't
You try to find out, and sometimes people do die from that. People do get killed for trying to find out more. [...] You can try to help. I’m not saying to stop trying to help, but you just can’t be up and jump into what their lives are because they may have done something for you or to counteract a balance. It’s not going to work but you can try.

Jeanette also shares Theo’s sensitivity; bullies or aggressors have more than one side or one story that reveals a complexity of motives for their behavior. Other Troupe members have spoken of Jeanette sometimes as appearing intimidating before they have come to know her better, probably because of her outspokenness, and she explains that she has also learned to size up a situation first before relaxing her guard.

She adds that people have to learn that looking intimidating or being intimidating doesn’t work, before learning to eventually give these defenses up. "You have to actually fail and stuff to say, 'Okay, I learned my lesson.' That’s when you know you don’t have to be all tough and all-bad-boy look." In our interview, she told about intervening for a young man who was acting out but also being misunderstood by his family and in trouble at school. I chose to use several excerpts from her text below; Jeanette says that she understands more than the surface behavior of someone who might be considered aggressive. Her thoughts reveal insight into performances of bullying and the intimate relationship between one’s pain turned out toward others:

You know all the outside of him, but then you don’t know the inside. You don’t know what he’s going through. You don’t know every day he wakes up and has to worry over something, and he has to come to school, and all these people in his face. He feels like he has to be a bully and get back at them because that’s how life is. He’s probably being mad at home. No, you could probably sit down and talk with him and show him, no, okay, that’s not how you are supposed to go about things.
That’s why, when people bullying other people, I don’t yell at the people who’s bullying because they’re probably going through some stuff. The only problem I have with bullying is, ‘Why should you be bullying someone if you’re being bullied? You don’t know about the person who you’re bullying.’ But I wouldn’t really get mad at the person who’s being aggressive because they’ve probably got lots of stuff bottled up inside of them. I just don’t want them hurting someone else -- that’s the only thing I have problems with, bullies or people who want to act disrespectful to other people.

For you to survive, or for you to get somewhere, you have to put toughness on. You can’t look all soft, or people are going to judge you right away and give you no respect. That’s why I understand where [an aggressive, male friend] he’s coming from. And it's harder for boys. Girls, they just get catty, they just talk a lot; they won’t get [physically] aggressive. The boys, if you look at them the wrong way, like if you dress up in a specific kind of color, they think you’re a gang banger. That’s why you have to put your guard up at times when you move somewhere you don’t know. Then when you start making friends you can start loosening up and be yourself. But I think people really do have to be all tough when they first come, like not ignorant and aggressive and rude, but make sure people know not to mess with you, and get people to relax and then try to get to know you, instead of trying to come at you in a way without knowing who you are.

I know kids who come into the school now -- they seem all quiet, they seem like they don’t want to make friends just because they’re not used to this area. I wasn’t used to it; it was weird. I wasn’t all mean or anything, but I was quiet. I didn’t know who was a good person to be friends with, and who’s not. I’ve learned what kind of people are good, and what kind of people are not, and I’ve had friends -- and then I have to be all
tough again and then relax, and then be tough again and then relax...It's crazy. Kids everywhere have to go through stuff like that. (Jeanette)

Jeanette is compassionate toward those who might find themselves in similar circumstances as newcomers and those who share marks of difference to act in self-defense of their identity performances but not to victimize. She says of her portrayal of characters with whom she at first found nothing in common, "You can't just judge someone on the way they look on the outside and think they believe [...] in one thing and they don't. That changed my mind."

Jeanette's comments, extensively quoted above, suggest two things to me: that negative behaviors can be unlearned and new ones learned if they are taught with understanding that bullies and bigots are people too, with experiences, reasons, and emotional pains that are cause for offensive, self-protective, or defensive performances, reactions that other Troupe members will also affirm.

The second observation is one that again resonates with Dubois' doubleness, arising in particular from the comments of the Troupe's African American students, an awareness of how they, as African American are regarded by the dominant Anglo culture. Such protection masks their feelings from attack ranging from mild racism to hostility, in Fanon's words (1967) to be fixed in other's eyes, experiencing one's being through hostile others who fix blackness as "an object in the midst of other objects" (p. 109), and disregard, by category, the whole and complex person, and this makes the event of a Tolerance Troupe skit powerful for actors as well as audience. Denzin (2003) attributes W.E.B. DuBois with regarding race as paired with the performative, viewing difference enacted as culturally constructed, and Elam (p.5) with seeing meanings of blackness linked to issues of theatre and performance; Denzin calls for theatre to
construct more available definitions and meanings of blackness and to fight against racism and white privilege.

This experience of doubleness and the need to reassert oneself as subject is one is salient for students of difference as it is culturally appropriate pedagogy for its mentor, Harvey Edwards, who has said that race is never far away from his mind "just like it is always on his skin. So rather than thinking about it, I just realize that is what it is, and I need to convey to people how important it is that they look at individuals, not by their skin color or by their sexual orientation or anything other than how that individual interacts with you." Since I will address teaching and learning in forthcoming Act Six, for now it is significant for me to see that the students of perceptible difference are quite aware of disjunctions among how they may be seen, what they may perform for others out of necessity, and how they know themselves and others as multiply identified and complex selves.

To extend this notion of doubleness, one may be seen as a kind of mistaken metonymy, the individual mis-taken and framed or equivocated with "all" one's social group or stereotypic type. Troupe members see complex selves in themselves, not foreclosing identity by race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, or political diversity, but also extending doubleness to the bully and bigot, another component of the Troupe's work and message, not to permit transgressions but to hold compassion for those who aggress, and be wary of those who do not admit their own human biases and failures. Olivia comments, that she sees continuity between her work now, teaching Spanish in middle school, to her dedication to "openness to different ways of life, and realizing there’s not one way, not one lifestyle. And there’s not one economic group and there’s not one racial group, there’s not one right way." She calls herself cynical about how much the Troupe actually accomplished at first because of assumptions of smugness in its first cast of actors. "I
have the sense it was more people who felt they didn’t have any prejudices and that they could pat themselves on the back,” she says. But she also makes a statement about reclaiming the humanity of those who might be seen as the most ignorant or adversarial against the message of the Troupe by those who think better of themselves by comparison with this reminder:

I think one of the greatest prejudices is self-proclaimed liberals or open minded people being open to the fact that bigots are people too and people are different and trying to put yourself into their shoes is a good practice too. Everybody gets to where they’re at now through their life experiences, so it’s a good practice to try to figure out what experiences would have brought someone to that. (Olivia)

Recognizing multiplicity of roles or subject positioning is crucial to recognize in the self and in others, just as there is no one right way for everyone as I italicized in Olivia's comments, prior. Just as the Troupe members have had experiences both as bullies and as targets, it is crucial to remember that aggressive actions arise in context and in contexts, and thus, people can change. Acting out is created from reactive experiences, often by the perpetrator’s suffering that creates suffering for others.

To see the self as self-justifying and unattractive can be cathartic, but to undo that vision requires action. Even more conflicted feelings are reflected in the provocative quotation begins this section, the admission that even though one might think of oneself as "good" or just as this former Troupe member did, a character might articulate an ignorant or bigoted statement, and there arises the stinging insight: "you realize you thought that yourself" (Kimberly). What stands out in this remarkable comment is "hearing it out loud": vocalizing makes conscious what may be repressed because it was not yet voiced aloud. Kimberly admits to realizing her own biases in the skits, saying, "I guess nobody is perfect. Everyone can be selfish at times," sharing this way
of knowing herself, crediting that good things come from that realization, "you can see things from a new perspective as a member of the Troupe."

Kimberly was not alone among Troupe members and former members in admitting this unwelcome knowing of themselves, seeing themselves as oppressors while attempting to champion against oppression as well. In particular, I quote extensively below from Sara, a recent graduate of the Troupe the previous year when we interviewed. Her father worked on the road, and her family moved often. Sara remembers being the new kid in school, being bullied, and also tormenting another student in yet another school she had moved to. Seeing herself "playing" the role of bully, target, and indifferent in actual social dramas, she comments on what it was like to find herself in all of these positions.

I remember being in three different 2nd grade classrooms. I remember always being the new kid. I remember being accepted some places and bullied at others. When I was in the first 4th grade classroom, [...] my younger sister and I were quite literally the only little white girls in the entire school [...] where I can remember being bullied [...] I had this hugest crush on this guy, and he was so mean to me. And I can remember this one time we were playing dodge ball, and he kept throwing balls at me even though I was out. That really hurt. [...] So I knew what it was like for the Tolerance Troupe -- to be the bully, to be the bystander, and to be the victim. So I have experienced all of that, and I just wanted other people to know that they weren’t alone. [...].

I went to a Christian academy for about 6 months, and I remember there was a girl in my class who was very, very intelligent, and she looked very stereotypical kind-of. When you think of someone intelligent, you think of big, thick glasses that magnifies their eyes, and she had long pony tails, and all her outfits matched. And it was just in my
4th grade attitude: she was strange, and I took every advantage to point out to the rest of the class that she was strange. I remember tripping her when she had her lunch tray. I was not really nice to her, and I have actually taken what the Tolerance Troupe has taught me, and I go out of my way to be nice to people now. Because not only do I feel better for what I did in the past-- the Tolerance Troupe taught me to be a better person to everyone else.

Sara also describes times she has been the bystander, a position just as painful and ambivalent for its conflict between safety and empathy and a gnawing sense of injustice:

[I remember] during the middle school ages, a lot of standing off to the side and watching someone else being bullied or standing off to the side and thinking, 'Oh I don’t want to be caught up in the drama,' or 'I have my own drama to deal with. Why do I need to stand up for them?' I think in the middle school it’s so hard… no, it’s easy to be the bystander in the middle school simply because you are afraid of what other people will think of you. I remember, very conscious of what people thought of me, not only because I was the fat friend, but it was you get so caught up in what people think of you if you step out of line from what your class or your little society within that building dictates. You’re so afraid of what people will think of you, you don’t do anything. And that’s really awful because I think the kids who are really bullied don’t deserve it.

I have highlighted by italics Sara's explanation, feeling better for what I did, and You’re so afraid of what people will think which seem to suggest that seeing oneself positioned all three ways, as bully and as target and as indifferent bystander, in refusing to intervene to lessen the conflict and pain of another. All of these positions result in guilt or a disturbing emotional ambivalence that
motivated many students and alumni who spoke with me to join the Troupe, to learn new, more proactive, pro-social behavior in line with their sense of fairness, responsibility, or justice.

Profound changes happen to the actors themselves. Because I have seen multiple positioning come up so many times, I have reason to believe that multiple positioning is crucial to the Tolerance Troupe's work, as the students see themselves as targets and as perpetrators off the stage, and some report having felt remorse in remaining indifferent when scenes of social aggression unfolded around them:

Everybody is a bully, everybody is a victim. Everybody who is a victim has been a bully to somebody else. When I was a victim, I was being a bully to my little brother, and I realized it’s not fair because my uncle told me him and his brother had a really bad relationship because his brother used to bully him a lot. And he said he still hates his brother, and I don’t want to ever have my brother hate me. (Theo)

Raj acknowledges that multi-positioning and role performance motivated his reasons for joining the Troupe, and phrases his positioning as identification, as being the role rather than just playing the role, as below:

I had been so many different roles in the play that is bullying, getting bullied, dealing with adversity. I’ve been the victim, I’ve been the bully, I’ve been so many different things, and the troupe was just an excellent outlet to grow and learn, not only about other people but learn about yourself. I really don’t think I would be the person I am today without being in the Tolerance Troupe. It’s just taught me so many things, not even about other people but just myself and so it really just showed me that you can make a difference [...] It can be something as simple as putting on a skit and answering questions you can still make a difference. That’s why I wanted to join the Troupe. (Raj)
Again, Troupe members are aware of the multiplicity of subject positions they have occupied and aware, sometimes painfully aware, of aggressions and transgressions which take place in their school and community worlds. One Troupe alumna, a teacher in an urban metropolitan district, recognizes that her privilege sometimes gets in the way of understanding her students and their parents' lack of involvement in school, but catches herself thinking about her own biases, going back to her high school experience, enjoying white privilege but also having been bullied. She processes aloud why she might have been a target, in spite or because all of that class and racial privilege:

I remember being bullied. My senior year a girl told me that she was going to kick me in my face, but I wasn’t as innocent as I looked. [...] I felt in high school I was always friends with everyone. I was friends with some Hispanics and friends with the popular crowd, but for some people that wasn’t okay, and this girl who was Latino and rightfully so to not trust me. I can understand like, 'What are you doing?' I didn’t have a vendetta towards her -- I’m just not going to be mean. I think it was a defense mechanism -- where you’re in an environment where your defenses have to be up because people are treating you badly. (Pamela)

Her own biases continue to plague her as she works with youth of color and parents in a Midwestern metropolitan urban school, having to remember what it is to now be in a minority, "stopping the judgment" when parent conferences about a student's behavior results in a parent's response that the student is in for a beating. Says Pamela, "Just because it’s not the way you were raised or saw [the world], doesn’t mean it’s the wrong way. There are so many different things you have to break down when you are now the minority working with a different culture
and race. [...] It’s humility -- you have to be very humble." From repeated experiences, Troupe members learn that they are compelled to consider and articulate another's world view.

"In life you see people act badly and it forces you to understand -- where are they coming from?" A bit of theory: Playing the Other is not being the other

In terms of insight into the connection between "who we are" and "our connection with the lives of others", the actor cannot really know, much less pretend to "be" an Other.

Performing another's identity, specifically in performing as Other, Hornbrook (1998) questions to what degree of enacted projection through imaginative empathy really can convey experience of another person's reality; he asserts that such a question is crucial when it comes to using drama as a pedagogical tool, as a set of educational practices intended to explore moral worlds. Theatre is a representational act, an interpretive one, and so Hornbrook turns to descriptive anthropology as analogous to staged interpretations of these "othered" worlds. Hornbrook cites Clifford Geertz (1973) as affirming that, no matter how sincere or empathetic, a performer cannot fully apprehend another person's world as if it were her or his -- or our -- own. Role-playing is just that, subjective and interpretive play only, a "selective project onto an unfamiliar social structure of the cultural matrices of our own" (as cited in Holbrook, p. 95). My participants echo these ideas when they admit that their creation of characterization of "others" they have not directly experienced for improvisations frequently draw on stereotypes. Many confess they cannot enter the invented character but only interpret how such an "other" might act. Paradoxically, the student actors use stereotypes to fight stereotyping.

Such a conclusion, that one who enacts or explains another's knowing cannot know others is affirmed too by critics of Geertz who object to too-tidy interpretations which purport to illustrate realisms in ethnographic practice (Visweswaran, 1994; Alcoff, 1995), and who say that
even the invented texts of a life experience as representation are a betrayal of those without power to speak themselves, what Deluze calls "the indignity of speaking for others" (as cited in Alcoff, 1995).

So if skit and character are imagined fictions of representation at best or blatant betrayals of others' experiences and beliefs at worst, made up stereotypic projections about some "Other", can we understand the worlds of Others through dramatized representation at all? Where are we to start in understanding one another through performance? How can imaginative activity based in theatrical processes enable agency and interrogate relations of power? How are we to interpret both speaking and silences, as a self and an "Other"?

As possible answer applicable to the problematic representational work of the Tolerance Troupe, I believe Visweswaran makes two significant observations. First, she writes, "to confront the subaltern [or Other] is not to represent them but to learn to represent ourselves" (p. 77). In the case of young actors in anti-bias drama, enacting the "Other" may enable the student performer to learn to represent herself or himself and construct auxiliaries to an identity unavailable before taking on "othering" roles. Second, continues Visweswaran, betrayal is an occasion of opportunity to see through "the fabrication of events in a kind of fictional time and place through use of the dramatic frame" (p. 80). That suggests an opportunity for these young people to see the constructedness of dynamics of bias, of identities and reasoning allied with these dynamics, and the narratives constructed in presentation of these skits. Troupe members appear to understand this distinction: that acting as another is not the same as being another.

In terms of acting as another on stage, one invents but cannot really feel what another feels, Ileana attests. Acting as the Other, as a victim in a skit, she says: "I'm looking from their eyes now that I'm looking at how it feels and how it hurts really bad. That hurts my heart a little
bit. I can sit and say, 'I know how you feel,' but you never know what anybody is going through. You still don't know with acting, but get a piece of it [...] a blueprint of what she said, of what she was going through."

In other words, one cannot appropriate another's experience. Troupe members like Ileana are aware of this, and make use of their own, self-betrayals as well to aid both stage performance and transformation. But in most cases, however, actors must inhabit characters whose stances diverge from their own significantly, and need to invent character stances on topics which will vary widely, from partner abuse, to homophobia or immigration. But although character stances on specific topics may not be familiar, students who join the Troupe have not needed to appropriate stances of target, aggressor, or indifferent bystander. Instead, they have already been there, many in all three of these positions, and conscious knowledge of this multiplicity characterizes their statements.

As adults, they continue to acknowledge their own biases, acknowledgement which is often integral to their maturation or career choices. One alumna, Lori, is completing her master's work as a school counselor:

A lot of the counseling we do is multicultural counseling, and really learning about ourselves and about our own biases and learning about things that a lot of times people don’t see, being racist or being hurtful. And I think my eyes are open to that. And I think they always have been.

This alumna claims that openness and awareness of her own biases has always been a characteristic of her self-knowledge. "Openness" or "open-mindedness" is also the most commonly identified trait, mentioned by nine participants or approximately one-third of both students and alumni as a self-description in my closing interview question.
ACT FIVE, Scene 2 "I’m like, wow, a tolerance troupe skit." Seeing personal conflict, live on stage

Another part of multiple perspective-taking and thus learning arises in the context of performing skits that provoke shock and deeper reflection, especially when students are seeing internal conflicts and challenges to their values portrayed externally on stage. "I’m aware of so many things I have done or said that shows racism," admits Lori, who recalls a skit during which her character is the protagonist of the pregnant teen, while her personal, unexamined position on teen pregnancy was negative toward sexually active women.

Lori was playing the pregnant protagonist. During questions from the audience, she froze because she could not go beyond her own viewpoint to answer as her character. She finds that Troupe members who supported her made her think more about her assumptions and judgments and about someone being in need of support when they were attacked and disparaged. Rather than relying on her privileged status, preppy looks, and assumptions, her reticence to support someone being bullied arose in a context of race, but the teen pregnancy skit left her with an acknowledgment of what supporting another young woman in that situation could mean:

I never knew of any girl getting pregnant in high school. A lot of the skit was 'She’s a whore, she’s a slut.' [judgments about her character in the skit], and I actually did see my own biases in that. I was thinking, 'Well, she got what she deserved, in a way,' which is horrible to say, but I think and that’s just honesty coming from my standpoint where I was at the time. I had never seen a girl my age in high school that was pregnant, and when we would act out the skit I would see my own bias in that, and I did recognize that.

I know my heart rate increased and I felt like my blood pressure was going up, and I thought 'Oh my goodness, I can’t wait to get out of this and break character.' It was
also really interesting for me because I do remember a lot of the Troupe members staying in character but sticking up for me so that was neat -- because I was able to have people standing by my side and supporting me when I felt like I couldn’t, and I literally felt like I couldn’t. I felt like I had no voice because, I guess, of my bias. I kind of agreed with what the people were saying, so I felt like I didn’t know how to defend myself or stand my ground. So when I was speechless or didn’t have a voice, there were people there.

The neutral person [...] stood up for me, and that was an interesting experience I had. It felt really good, and I think being in a situation where *I never really had to have someone stand up for me* it was neat to see -- because it was like, 'We can make this every day. We can stand up for people every day.' We have a voice, and maybe at the time they don’t, or they feel like they have nothing to say, or they don’t know how to say it. And that is how I was feeling. 'Man, this person just called me a slut, but I kind of agree with them. What do I say?' I shouldn’t be having sex when I’m in high school, and getting pregnant in my character role that I was playing at the time. So having those people there to defend me -- I think that shows a lot of how we can take that, to apply with the context.

Lori mentioned that her own negative judgments about teen pregnancy kept her from really understanding her character placed in the likely dilemma of having or aborting a child. To her surprise, when another Troupe member covered for her answering during audience interaction, the real heart of the skit experience, it was eye-opening to feel vulnerable and in need of -- and grateful for -- support after being disparaged by others, including bearing her own judgment against teen pregnancy which caused her to freeze during question and answer. Having support on-stage from the so-called "indifferent" character initiated change for her in terms of judging
and condemning others when she herself stood aside, uncomfortable but compliant, thinking of herself before with her socially aggressive friends as voiceless, changing her reactions in real time and in a case of name-calling:

Whenever someone would make comments about [a Latina in school] I would say "That is not funny." [...] Most of the girls in our school had that 'all American' look to them, and she was different. And I do remember sticking up for her, not with her in their presence, but with my friends. Instead of joining in and laughing, thinking things like that were funny, I really started to say, 'It's really not funny, and it's not okay.'

Lori describes herself as playing the aggressor role in skits because she shared those blonde, all-American cheerleader looks "We did a lot of skits about [the character] being a stuck up bitch or different things like that that I can connect with," she recalled, but admitted her complicity when she had stood aside in her peer group when her friends made mean comments. "It would never come from my mouth, but I would laugh, which to me is equally involved and condoning it."

To return to vocalizing one's own bias as featured in our opening quotation, hearing a thought spoken aloud reveals to the actor a hidden, unspoken distaste, assumption, or prejudice. Kimberly maintains that self-knowledge of her biases is not the only way that her thinking has changed. We had read a portion of her comments in discussion of her feelings about pregnancy and abortion. The comments bear repeating in context, in that she now thinks of a person's life in terms of choices and outcomes which may be ultimately redemptive:

One thing I've changed about is not judging people based on the decisions they make. [...]. Based on the decisions they make, like the teen pregnancy ones, I guess I always felt some sympathy for people in tough situations like that. But now I just really feel
differently about all of that. I just don’t even want to judge them at all because it’s not
my life they are living... How can I really make any judgments?

If I would have seen a situation like that [teen pregnancy] before, I would have
been like, 'Well it sucks to be her, but she made a mistake so now she’s going to have to
deal with it.’ I don’t feel like that anymore. I’m just using the teen pregnancy thing as an
example, but I would hope the child would bring her a lot of joy in her life. We all make
decisions that affect our lives forever, and hopefully it turns out really great.

Such a change in attitude and softening of bias takes time, but the skit that she recounted is
paired sharply in memory of this lesson and her new view now. This galvanizing of issue and
most memorable Troupe event persists for others who join their most remembered performance
with issues which continue to have the greatest significance and meaning for them today.

Justin, current member of the Troupe, recalls how it felt to enact a skit on rumors that he
lived out as a young man targeted by negative rumors in his freshman year of high school.
Justin, a sophomore when he was interviewed, recounts how strange it was to live this kind of
rumor and deception and see it reflected in a skit. He remembered a middle school friend who
he had been friends with through the first half of freshman year in high school. Later, he found
that his friend had been spreading rumors about him. While enacting a skit about bullying by
rumor, he experienced the shock of self-recognition, his life given an exemplar life on stage: [...] I’m, like, 'Wow, a tolerance troupe skit.' It’s almost bizarre. It feels unreal, but then when you
see it, it’s kind of confusing.

"Sometimes it is really difficult to do the right thing in a situation, and I can see that as a
person I would have difficulty dealing with a situation the way the good guy did in the skit,"
continued Justin. "By doing the skits you can see little parts of yourself and try to overcome
these things." He acknowledges that he'd like to think that he has no prejudices, but everyone does. Even though it is nice to say stereotypes are based on ignorance because that makes the person saying it sound superior to others, every person needs to acknowledge that he or she still carries stereotypes within and must actively seek to see another individual apart from these biases made from their differences, not dismissing the difference, but being aware of stereotyping differences, that obscures the person "for who they are." Yet it was still a shock to see himself objectified for an audience.

Sara too saw her home-life and conflict with her parents in performance, and heard Edwards debriefing the role she said that she had played in fights at home. The topic was a painful one, but led her to think about those family fights from a different perspective, forcing a reassessment:

I’m pretty sure the ones that were hardest for me are the ones where we addressed “diverse families.” Families from broken homes, families that the parents were being abusive, skits that had to deal with parental child relations simply because that’s the way my family is. And it was hard to face up to fact that this is the way my family is, and it’s really weird to see it from that kind of point of view, especially if I didn’t make it for practice, but I could go to the performance. *That was the hardest I think of anything I ever did in the Tolerance Troupe watching a skit be performed by my peers of my home life. That was strange.*

I think the different points of view were kind of hard to register just because I had my own idea of what was going on in my house. Well, that’s not right because my father actually thinks this, and hearing the point of view that the characters had constructed was the most jarring part of all. Mr. Edwards is so eloquent when he speaks, and he just gets
right to the problems, and he doesn’t stardust it, which made of that entire performance
[...] the hardest. Listening to him speak on it, just because he was right.  And I had to
own up to that.

Sara admits that when students were asking questions, each cast member was weighing in on the
conflict between the rebellious character Sara identified with who was fighting with a
contentious or dysfunctional family; Sara had to acknowledge that the character might have been
escalating the fighting, making the conflict and its consequences worse. I have added italics to
emphasize Sara's assumption of responsibility for conflict in her home. Not only was it
uncomfortable skit to see, but the news was unwelcome as well.

Sharon is finishing her undergraduate degree in business and management, involved in
GLBT pride week, active in V-Day and involved in issues of violence against women, and in
providing alternatives in substance free living on campus. But in elementary school, Sharon felt
the lack of acceptance from her peers because of family's economic class standing. Hopefully that
a move to the Selinsgrove District in middle school would change her social prospects; she found
that she had only moved from being a target in a rural school district to a target in a more
suburban one. "My family never had a whole lot of money, so I didn’t have the means to buy the
cool clothes, and a lot of things were hand me downs [...] I still got picked on a lot." A middle-
schooler, she decided to reinvent herself, to change her friends, and make it into a popular clique.
In doing so, she regrets that she lost herself in a contest for a social alliance:

There was the leader girl, and we were always competing for her affections, and it was
really frustrating... and I feel horrible for doing that now. I wasted part of my life
idolizing another human being. Her doing things and saying 'You should do that too.'
Change the way you dress to be like her, change the way you act to be like her.
Sharon became Other so she could belong, a challenge to most teens. She followed a Cool Girl so she wouldn't be bullied, wouldn't be an outcast any more. But her earlier insecurity, her anger and pain over class inequities never left. She remembers her first performance question-and-answer period which aroused her most personal source of conflict. To understand the comment's impact, it is important to remember that Troupe members perform in ordinary street clothes, never in costume. Sharon describes the skit:

A girl, C., was a senior when I was a freshman. We were the outcast kids, and there was a group of other kids [actors in the skit] standing there making fun of us the entire time about our clothes, what we wear, why they shouldn’t hang out with us. When someone in the audience stands up and says something back to you about your clothes or about what you're wearing -- that can sometimes be bothersome because this is who I really am. This isn’t acting. I’m not wearing this for a certain reason sort of thing. I recall at this one performance, someone stood up and said, to one of the actors that was on stage, 'You look like your mom buys your clothes at Sears.'

That hit me because my mom has worked at Sears for 25 years or more, and a lot of my clothes are from Sears, and you can’t tell they’re from Sears. And I just wondered how she felt when somebody actually said that to her, and it was her real clothes.

Not only was there a personal connection to the "otherness" of her friend in the skit whose clothing was being ridiculed, but this was potentially directed to her too and to her mother. This wasn't a skit for Sharon, but part of her life, part of her family.

This is only one memorable skit of others that Sharon recounted that could connect with her life. Her best friend is lesbian, and she found it difficult to play a homophobe in the skit, but tried to imagine her friend laughing at the absurdity of her character in the cause of showing the
absurdity and injustice of homophobia. The teen pregnancy skit could have just as well been about her sister, and it was hard to hear negative judgments about teen mothers expressed by other characters and by audience members:

My sister had a child when she was 16, her first little baby, and he’s ended up being a blessing to our family, but knowing the situation and being able to connect with somebody in the situation kind of helps to understand both the emotional side and physical outward side of what’s going on.

To experience parts of her life on stage has made Sharon realize what her sister may have gone through. "My sister had sex with one person and the condom broke, and she got pregnant. And that was just an accident, but if people were judging her in that way, it had to be hard for her."

A process of coming to an understanding of oneself and of others under these conditions emerged from interviews with several Troupe members and former members. Most found it was as difficult to act in character against one's values and beliefs as it was shocking to see one's experience on stage, as a real player in conflict in skits that strike close to home, especially in skits that awaken shame or remorse. But compelled to do so, it is just this kind of dialogue, a measure of distance and empathy which allows for learning and change, creating and transforming how the actors see themselves. And those multiplicities offer nuance and depth that foster growth in themselves and their views of difference. As Sharon expressed it, "putting a label on them, and then they put a label back on you -- and it’s unproductive." Instead, "You get to know something different about somebody that makes them special. [...] Being able to recognize the differences in people and understanding what makes those differences special instead of what makes that difference a bad thing, or a social norm" is an alternative to hate, denial, and resistance to opening just a small space to shift one's thinking, to shift one's agency in
the direction of understanding. Taking action -- including seeing the self differently, contingently as multiply positioned and unconfined by category -- makes life a little easier for the self and for others.

How exactly this acting as pedagogy teaches and promotes learning in the actors and in others beyond themselves by dialogue, by physicality, by distance and empathy at a remove is the next topic to be explored in Act Six.
ACT SIX: Teaching, Learning, and Living It

What was – and still is -- remarkable to me from the outset when talking with the 19 alumni is that so many of those who responded for interview are either currently working or have worked as classroom teachers or classroom aides or as counselors in a school setting. In fact, counting those who have spent time as classroom teachers represent seven of the 19 interviewed, well over 35%, and this figure alone does not include students who speak of the importance of their volunteer tutoring or leadership work which included at least some teaching or working in an educative capacity in community settings. Three alumni are currently working in classrooms as public or private school teachers (Olivia; Pamela; Tracy); two others are no longer teaching but have served as teachers or teacher-aides including early childhood or pre-K education (Helena; Lara). Of the five above mentioned, two are or have been EFL instructors living outside of the United States (Lara; Tracy). Add to this figure one student who has interned as a school counselor completing her Masters degree (Lori) and two who have worked in a college setting volunteer counseling, majoring, or mentoring as part of a clinical or social work degree program (Larkin), including one double major in clinical psychology and in education (Ariel). Once more, add to this number, students who mention education as part of their studies, including tutoring or community service, (Antonia; Trina). Top it off with one current pre-service teacher (Chelsea). Taken together, teaching or counseling in an educational setting is reported as part of or the career path of 12 of the 19 alumni interviewed, a surprising 63% of participants.

Act Six looks at teaching and learning through the Troupe, an experience which fosters learners to discover or come to voice ideas and alternatives dialogically and dialectally. Students who pass through the Troupe experience appear to pursue lifelong learning and intercultural
experiences. Scene 1, focusing on alumni, explores how students speak of the lessons they have learned as they encounter new experiences which remind them of Troupe practice, dialogue, and events experienced while acting as part of the Troupe. This practice, with its repetitions of thinking-out loud transforms the processing of difficult issues and situations of conflict and translates that practice into praxis of reflection and action. Troupe members who encounter additional incidents of bigotry and bias in their college and work lives as they mature, carry the teaching and learning from their Troupe-days forward, and represent the ongoing transformative legacy of the Tolerance Troupe. The second Scene of this Act will address how performance teaches through the pedagogy of being in the Troupe, and examines both teens involved in the Troupe in the years studied, inclusively along with alumni.

**ACT SIX, Scene 1, Alumni Lifelong Learning: "It made me realize that I love questions."**

Olivia, a current classroom teachers and of the two original members of the Troupe I queried, expressly connects her convictions and activism before her entering teaching to include the Troupe experience. Again, I have used italics to show how multiplicity, discussed previously, becomes integral to this interconnection:

I’m doing a pretty traditional job teaching Spanish, but my teaching Spanish is very related I think. [...] learning another language is very, very opening to the rest of the world and it’s very… you know that our country is so reluctant to admit that we should try to learn someone else’s language. I think it’s totally related to all of these issues of acceptance and openness to different ways of life, and realizing there’s not one way, not one lifestyle and there’s not one economic group and there’s not one racial group, there’s not one right way. I just wrote to a college friend [that] I can’t believe I’m a Spanish teacher because I was going in the social work direction, and then I actually
wanted to learn Spanish because of my job with the HIV [community] and then I ended up teaching it. It all seems very related.

Such interconnections are seemingly obvious, yet subtle and just as round-about. In Act Six, participants speak of what teaches them as participating members of the Tolerance Troupe, how they observed that the Troupe skits teach themselves and others, and what is educative about the experience for the players and for the audience.

Why Discuss Alumni First?

The experience of being in the Troupe left deep impressions on its dedicated participants, and "lessons" of being in the Troupe are repeated and recursive in their adult lives. We see this in their responses: as young adults, alumni are placed in expanded relationships and environments, interacting under a wider scope of contacts and situations over time. As more mature individuals with an expanded range of experiences, travel, and relationships, alumni offered responses more articulate and nuanced, as one might expect, compared to responses from fourteen-to-eighteen year olds. They had spent time reflecting on their high school experiences and what these experiences meant. In this first Scene of this Act about teaching and learning, I look at the paths of the alumni and find that 1.) Education is primary in the lives of those participants who answered a call to be part of this study, from those who are or have been classroom teachers to those pursuing other career, trade, or family paths as well. 2.) Second, as Olivia observed and I note in general, many participants' interests continue to be multicultural or international; 3.) Third, their paths as young adults continue to show leadership, vocationally or ethically. Standing up, taking action, or doing the right thing is a powerful lesson even when contexts are complicated. Taken together, alumni recognize stepping up and speaking up comes first, that as an outcome, peaceful coexistence along with some advocacy for justice is the
minimum to be achieved, even if the optimum is justice and appreciation of difference remains
unattained. Second, if this is the knowledge that unites them, then how is this knowledge
facilitated by their participation in the Troupe? That question brought me to a discussion of how
being in the Troupe educates.

I thought it best to begin by describing the importance of teaching and learning for the
participants, beginning with alumni. Alumni are in their mid-twenties, some nearer to thirty
tyears of age; they have had more years to cultivate the lessons of the Troupe and see how the
experience might be applied to their daily, independent living, including travel, vocations, and
their own young families.

I should clarify why I included in the 63%, alumni who are not classroom teachers or
counselors. The following two alumnae mention educative activity as part of their career path by
the examples that follow, while a third volunteers as a tutor and mentor. The former two are
majoring in biological or medical sciences. Antonia explains why education is part of her work
in pharmacy, including her participation in the American Pharmacists Association (APHA):

\[I’m on the medication education committee, so basically we go out and try to educate\]

\[people about their medication and their disease, and things like that. [...]. People come,\]

\[and our professors help with [our] patient training skills. And we’re planning another\]

\[event, to go to a health care clinic and talk to people, give handouts, talk to people at the\]

\[clinic about their medications or just basically about their health, their disease -- like [if]\]

\[you have diabetes, how to stay healthy. [...]. Just being able to communicate with\]

\[everybody in general, proper medication uses and what-not.\]

Antonia’s experience as fluent in a home language other than English, a difference which had
created alienation from her peers as a youngster now becomes invaluable in her adult role:
We see people come in for their medications and they don't know English, and you need to communicate with them. My boyfriend’s sister -- she works in a pharmacy, and one day she had to talk to a patient a customer in Indian [Hindi], and the pharmacist was kind of like, 'What are you doing, what are you saying?' And she's like, 'Well, he needs to know what he’s getting,' and she was trying to help him, and the pharmacist was like, 'What are you saying? What are you talking about?'

For Antonia, studying pharmacy includes educating patients in community settings, developing practice with and for patients who can benefit from both her unique communication skills including use of her home language. Her narrative also demonstrates how English-only professionals may be skeptical of bilingualism in the workplace. The second student majoring in biological sciences did not mention teaching at this time, saying that she feels overwhelmed with coursework and lab work now, but stated that she is ultimately interested in working in environmental education as her expertise as a scientist develops (Kimberly). A third student, Trina, also did not specifically mention teaching as part of her career goals, yet pointed out that multicultural understanding is intrinsic to her volunteer tutoring work as much as it is her major in International Studies:

I work in D.C., in Columbia Heights, and all the kids there and all the families are African Americans, and the majority of us tutors are from American University, and the kids saying, 'I don't want a white girl as my tutor,' at such a young age. But then you talk to them, and they’re so sweet to you. It’s just they have their own culture and their crazy rap songs, but it’s crazy and hilarious. Even just something like that, putting yourself into their culture and mixing with them. And I wouldn’t have any opportunity to do in Selinsgrove. It's really cool.
Even for those not specializing as teachers or as counselors, education and mentoring is part of their ongoing concerns, as is multicultural competence. For some, their interests go well beyond national borders.

**International feel: "I'm thinking either Dublin or Dubai..."**

The section heading above comes from Caroline who is considering her options for travel abroad. She is privileged to be able to do so. But the weighing of options like those above does not illustrate the full range of alumni concerned and involved with matters of multiculturalism or international relations. To be fully inclusive, I need to recount briefly those in teaching or counseling, mentioned before, and note their continuing involvement in multicultural and/or international concerns. In some ways, their continued involvement is fairly self-evident: Pamela is teaching in a multiracial, inner-city school; Olivia is teaching Spanish language and culture; and Tracy is an expatriate teacher of English in Korea. Lori, obtaining a graduate degree in school counseling mentions that much of her course work and practical counseling is multicultural, but although she did not go into detail about multicultural aspects of school counseling, said that her own learning consists largely of "learning about ourselves and about our own biases, and learning about things that a lot of times people don’t see, being racist or being hurtful." Another adult alumnus, Hank, a Navy officer, commands a multiethnic company which may be shipped out to the Middle East or other international destinations and mentioned the importance of the Troupe to his understanding and appreciation of cultural diversity, while Helena and Karen are raising bi-racial families. Antonia and Trina's examples, of patient education and tutoring respectively, also reinforce this second significant finding -- the importance of multicultural understanding for alumni who do not particularly mention classroom teaching. Three alumnae explicitly state their intention to cultivate careers in international
affairs including governmental involvement, work in NGOs, or international media (Trina; Julie; Caroline).

Many have already been international travelers, their experience ranging from living in Seoul to St. Petersburg, Russia to Ulaan Baator, Mongolia (Tracy; Lara; Julie). Trina drew a direct line between avid appreciations of diverse cultures because of her participation in the Troupe:

A lot of times we got into different cultures and respecting different cultures. My major now is International Studies, so obviously I’m interested in cultures, so that was a really big part of me in the Tolerance Troupe. I just really wanted to see these different cultures we were talking about.

Two students who had traveled extensively expressed interest in writing as their career path, and of the two, the elder of these had already been a pre-K teacher and an EFL teacher. The second and younger alumna of the two, Caroline, started college intending to become a teacher in music education; however, she discovered that she didn't want to teach music or major in performance. Instead, she switched to a writing major in English:

I’m in the writing program. [...] I don’t want to teach, so [I chose] international media or anything like that, an international specialist. [...] I’m interested in what’s going on in the world and I would love to be the person who is finding that stuff out and writing about it and reporting it back. I love to travel and write.

Caroline, whose most searing memory of injustice was the insulting of her adopted East Asian cousins by a middle-school bully, often mentioned love of travel. She is living in Philadelphia, having traveled or having lived briefly in D.C., Boston, California, Canada, the Caribbean, and Hawaii. She pairs her skills in communication with her desire to explore an interest in
international journalism, expressing a desire to seek internship with the Associated Press. I asked what else she had been involved in to find out that she was an athlete, a performing musician on saxophone and violin, and an organizer and planner -- class president from ninth to the twelfth grades, active athlete in high school field hockey, track and field, and in basketball, and a competing choral performer in middle school. Caroline claims to have gained a perspective about standing up and speaking out against racism or bias, that her experience learning about people around her through the Troupe is not limited by geography now that she is older:

Now that I’m in college with people that came from everywhere, I realize that this close mindedness attitude isn’t only coming from Selinsgrove. I have my own roommates. I hate to say I live with 3 other girls, and every single one of them is completely racist. Sometimes it’s tough, but they know not to bring stuff like that up in front of me. [...] So that’s tough to live with, but it definitely affects me more now than it ever did in high school. I mean, yeah, I’m not in the Troupe performing it, but I’m living it.

The italics I added above indicated the strong connection between this alumna's current life and the meaning of the lessons from the Tolerance Troupe. Evident also from her past activities and statement is leadership among her peers as an advocate against racist comments, a history of stepping up, along with her desire to travel.

Like Caroline, Trina, has experienced international living, and attested that the influence of being in the Troupe percolated through to junior year of college when she decided to travel:

Junior year was when I first went abroad. I went to Japan, and I was like 'Oh that’s so cool.' Just because I saw different cultures, and the Troupe also helped. Within the Troupe, talking to different people about current ideas, and I think that goes with any
club you join and you meet new people [...]. It also helped me realize I liked to meet people and sharing ideas. I really like cities and diversity, and because I wanted to go international, that’s why I went to college in D.C.

It's interesting that Trina mentions that the Troupe exposes one to new experiences, "like any club you join," yet makes a distinction that this club addresses controversies and differences in cultures, not one's typical high school social club ("not a typical club" at all, as Drew emphasized in his interview). I want to return to the importance of dialogue toward the end of this Act; however, for now, highlighting leadership brings me to a third feature uncovered as part of my interviews.

**Leadership is living it: "I’m not in the Troupe performing it, but I’m living it."**

As Caroline said in reprise, above, the experiences or lessons from the Troupe are recursive and carry these alumni forward. Several who made no specific mention of teaching or counseling in their career plans per se, still stand out as student leaders or as adults in leadership positions. Hank, an officer in the U.S. Navy, also wrote that he uses skits to teach: "I never shy away from any chance to make skits for certain events." When I asked how the Troupe taught him, Hank responded:

Joining the Troupe gave me the confidence to be my own person. I enlisted in the Navy with the confidence I gained from being in Tolerance Troupe. That confidence continued as I applied to the United States Naval Academy. At school, I became a character rep for my company.

A character representative is recognized in evaluations by the command structure as an officer who adheres to high standards of competence, professionalism, ethics, and values, and whose oversight provides a conducive working environment and professional development among those
enlisted in his or her command (U.S. Dept. of the Navy, 2008, p. 1-12). An officer's commission is an obvious claim to leadership; however, leadership claims on the part of alumnae may be more subtle. Another young adult, Sharon was completing a Bachelor of Science in Business Administration when we spoke. Her interests and activism on campus far exceeded business coursework. She served as coordinator for the Substance-Free Living program on campus, participated in V-Day to raise awareness against violence toward women, and participated in GLBT awareness during GLBT history month and annual Coming Out Day in October. Sharon's most personal issues concerned economic class bias and class privilege; she mentions that her Management 101 practicum was conducted at a food bank, and her affluent classmates' eyes were opened to an experience of need they had never considered before. Being exposed to those with privilege in the Tolerance Troupe as a community of learning was more instructive to Sharon than exploring issues in the skits themselves:

My one bias I have is towards people with money because I was always picked on by those people. But there were the kids with money in the Tolerance Troupe, and seeing them in real life and having them not make fun of me, and having them accept me for who I am helped me close down that bias I had, thinking they were mean. Anybody that has a high social status is mean [was my assumption.] I guess real life was more beneficial to me than the skits.

I have italicized "not" to emphasize her verbal stress given and "real life" because what teaches this participant and others also exceeds discussion of issues, but the "instruction" or exposure that teaches is located in the experience of being in the Troupe itself, exposure to its diversity, working together, practicing, speaking, socializing, which lend the solid contact of experience to
build upon for this student and for others who give the Troupe credit for contributing to the development of interpersonal skills and confidence. Sharon continued:

It gave me confidence interacting. [...] Being in the Troupe helped me with my confidence level when speaking. [...] So being involved [...] helped me understand that I can talk to these kids, and not everybody is going to automatically judge me. I can be confident with myself. I can be confident talking to just about anybody now than I could have been in the past --when talking to somebody who I thought was not in my social group made me really nervous.

Again, note the importance of confidence in communication, in being-with, but also talking-with, which again involves dialogue with others. Sharon is the daughter of a custodian who works at a private, highly-ranked university, a student whose tuition is covered by her family's labor; she has the opportunity of attending university and sometimes the burden of negotiating among those who have never considered their level of privilege to study in an Ivy League environment. In current correspondence, Sharon writes that she has just begun her first post-graduation position as a business-technology analyst. Sharon is in her early twenties, and I expect both the sensitivity toward those less-privileged and her desire to involve herself in her community will likely continue.

Sharon is not the only one who mentioned the confidence to get up and speak her mind among those whom she may have suspected of judging her unfairly, to stand up for her convictions or to stand up for others who are discriminated against. Lori mentioned her grandmother's habit of calling Asian people "Orientals":

And not realizing that is actually, like, being racist. They are not Oriental, they are not a rug, and I tried to explain to her. She says she’s not sure if they are from Korea or Japan,
and I said, 'You can call them Asian.' [...] I think, throughout, the Troupe has really *given me a voice* in a lot of ways because I would have never said that to my grandmother otherwise [...] even with my dad, opening up his eyes to it as well. And I think that being in something like this where you are speaking out, you're acting, and you’re getting a response from such a large audience, it gives you more confidence to speak.

A voice is needed to offer to others, not pretending to speak for others, but for speaking among others. I would argue that this kind of confidence is a different kind of confidence than the kind of confidence that could be gained by playing in a school marching band or in student government or forensics or at cheerleading camp. This kind of confidence is engendered by tackling hard questions and bias framed in primarily student and not adult-driven language during unscripted question and answer, wrestling over meanings that come from controversy and the use and misuse of power that has continuing influence in these young peoples' lives.

Such confidence is meant to be used. "I guess the focus is not on rules and doing the right things all the time, but reaching out and taking action," said Kimberly, "Action -- more than following rules." This sentiment from Kimberly offers "the lesson" of the Troupe in a nutshell, the uses to which that confidence must be put. Kimberly recognizes multiple positions are possible as are contradictions in people's behavior. For example, she comments that her grandfather is racist yet can see no contradiction between holding an unfavorable opinion of African-American people in general, and yet having a valued African-American family friend. She makes a distinction that people, even bigots, are not to be coerced into understanding by force. Holding a bigoted opinion is an acceptable difference, but trampling on another's rights is the dividing line for her:
In the end I think it’s all a matter of human rights. If you want to change a circumstance and it infringes on peoples’ rights, that’s probably not okay. But I think differences are okay to the point -- that everybody still gets their pursuit of happiness and all that -- and obviously, not everybody agrees on right and wrong. Some people are probably going to want to discriminate against certain groups, and that’s a difference of opinion too, but when it takes away from human rights, then I think it’s not okay.

Perhaps I should make some kind of disclaimer about universals like "human rights" or "human worth" here or notions of "authenticity" and "the real" or "voice" elsewhere, but I think that although there is a naïveté in talking absolutes, nothing is served either by diminishing the importance of participants' belief about justice and equity by raising their contingency. No quality of relief of human suffering is advanced by raising exceptions to using a broad brush soaked in the assumption of universals like human rights or fairness. The proof in such a murky pudding of abstraction is making on-the-ground choices that foster greater opportunities for agency for self and others, which fits becoming a more ethical person. For these young people, becoming a more ethical person is shaped through the becoming, speaking, and choosing, supported early on in their Troupe experience. Taking action is "living it" and although bigots have the right to be bigots, verbal assault as behavior crosses the line for Alex, Kimberly, and Larkin, below.

"I didn’t join the Tolerance Troupe and start to learn about tolerance. I was raised around it. [...] I grew up around it, I lived it. I still do," said Alex. Alex, in his late twenties, has become a self-supporting tradesman after losing his parents. After their death, he was no longer able to afford college, and now works full time. He affirms that his Troupe experience helped him and others find the confidence to express their feelings toward injustice, including stating
their objections to insults and name-calling. Again, in reference to confidence in speaking as taking action, the italics are my own:

[We] got used to being in front of people and telling them how [we] feel and telling them what’s not appropriate to say, at least not around you. And it definitely made me **stronger as far as voicing my opinion**. I will admit I was more hesitant in middle school with the racist comments I was less likely to say something, and I think Tolerance Troupe helped me and everyone with that. It definitely made everyone a little more bold. [...] I wasn’t intimidated any more.

For Alex, the complicity of inaction is almost as reprehensible as being the racist antagonist or bully. One hopes and encourages the bystander to take action, but the onus is on the aggressor or instigator of injustice.

It’s damn close to just as wrong to sit there and watch that go down, but the person watching didn’t put themselves in that situation. The antagonist put themselves in that situation. So right off the bat they chose to be an asshole. The person sitting there watching didn’t choose for that, and they prefer not to participate. I personally think they should intervene, but I can’t tell them to intervene. I can tell someone they should not say that around me. [...] My main point is they [the bystander or target] didn’t put themselves there. I think they should speak up for themselves, but I think the real crime of the situation is someone **choosing to do something racist**. That’s the problem.

I have italicized Alex's words about the *choice* of action: one can be proactively positive or negatively attack an Other; the onus is on one who chooses to verbally or physically attack another, and that is where the line is drawn. For Larkin too, behavior, and not the mere holding of a biased or racist opinion, is what cannot be justified:
[Abusive behavior] It’s not acceptable. I certainly believe in individual worth of every person, but I think there is a standard and a bar of how you can treat others. And even though I can be understanding of your personal plight, it doesn’t provide you a free pass to treat others unacceptably.

Being part of the Troupe, reiterating the message of the Troupe, becomes a springboard to action, said Ariel. "Normally you might just walk by it in the hall, but after awhile it’s in your head and you’re like, 'Okay, I can’t walk by,' and you want to stop, and you want to do something about it [...]. It like engraves it in members of the actual group" she asserted.

Part of the practice of acting, taking action, perhaps one of the most important practices in teaching and learning is process, to demonstrate a wide range of opinions in the skits acted out and articulated by the cast. Larkin is completing her Masters in Social Work; her mother and father are also social workers, so as part of her development, the experience of the Troupe did not alter but only reinforce that trajectory, giving her a supportive network, exposure to differing points of view as a way of problem solving, and a "little bit of strength" to speak up. The experience "gave me some words for ideas, rather than just saying to people, 'That's wrong. Don't say that.' -- offering them another explanation." Said Larkin:

[The] Tolerance Troupe was a part, but many things have helped me to evolve into the person I am and hopefully will continue to grow towards. The Tolerance Troupe provided a group of supportive people with similar ideas to mine and outside of that, there weren’t so many people with the same ideas about tolerance, so that was very important. And it also probably provided a little bit of strength in pointing out or calling people out in later incidents, or pursuing things that I thought were important.
I’m excited to have experiences with diverse groups and to have had a strong base and have really grown to be accepting of all cultures, races [...] and I have to attribute a large part of that to the Tolerance Troupe, so I’m thankful [...] especially working in social services. You work with all different kinds of people and people that don’t have the same opinions as you, and I think it will be helpful to have thought or seen things through their eyes as well.

We have seen how Troupe alumni attribute action to speaking against, speaking out, speaking up, and speaking with others. I wish to return to looking at the spectrum of positions in the skit as a primary way that the Troupe teaches its participants in the second half of this act. But for the alumni, all mention that dealing with diversity and its conflicts are the lived lessons of the Troupe in taking proactive parts.

One alumna was currently intensely living the philosophy and practice of the Troupe, teaching in an inner city, metropolitan high school. Pamela, a former math major, was one of the few who expressly discussed their privilege in terms of race and class. She was motivated to pay it forward and recruited with Teach for America. The first school to which she was assigned experienced high administrative and faculty turnover, gang presence, violence, and ethnic and racial tension. It was a very hard first year of teaching. Her second school, a minority charter school, is smaller and less chaotic, but is intensely demanding, also with high rates of teacher burnout. In terms of taking action, she told me, she sees a big picture with so many structural problems to overcome. "It’s overwhelming, it is. You can’t change it all -- you have to pick your battles and do what you can where you feel you can, where you have the ability." Pamela's take on the lessons of the Tolerance Troupe was twofold. Joining the Troupe gave her exposure to minority student peers who were part of the Troupe in a disproportionately Anglo local
environment, with whom she had never socialized with before; second, she had never challenged her white, upper middle class privilege before:

I started to move into an awakening period of starting to question the things around me and question how I was raised and my experiences, and what I believe in and stuff. [...] I don’t think it was that I became more definite, [in my beliefs yet] but I think it was more of a forming stage where I started to form my beliefs. I don’t think I’d ever done that earlier. I think that’s why I was friends with a lot of kids [...] because of the Tolerance Troupe: a lot of the minority kids were in the Tolerance Troupe, and that’s how I became friends with them. Go to football games, go to Little League, go to basketball games.

I definitely became more of a leader because I was in it for four years. It just opened my eyes to different things that were happening around me. It’s so easy not to see when you don’t have to. It’s a really long process when you have never been in a situation where you are disenfranchised in any way. It was really when I first started to see things and not in the way that they are. Not everything is a pretty painted picture where everyone loves everyone. And then that continued to evolve in college as I learned more --generational poverty and policy and stereotyping [...]. The more I learned, the more I want to change.

Her energy and dedication is palpable in our interview, as was the difficulty in scheduling time with her on infrequent visits to the local area back from the Midwest. I cannot claim that the Tolerance Troupe engendered such dedication, but that it did nurture and support those with a desire for social justice and offered an opportunity to explore those issues and their stance in them.
Here are ways that other alumni expressed similar sentiments about their Troupe experience, first, more from Caroline who authored the subheading of living the lessons of the Troupe, and who spoke before of living with unconscious racists as roommates:

It taught me how to deal with people who aren’t necessarily as tolerant and not say like "You are wrong," but to say like, "Just because you feel a certain way, doesn’t mean you have to be acting this way." To challenge people and the way that they think. [...] I hate to say -- I live with three other girls, and every single one of them is completely racist. Sometimes it’s tough, but they know not to bring stuff like that up in front of me. [...] So that’s tough to live with, but it definitely affects me more now than it ever did in high school. I mean, yeah, I’m not in the troupe performing it but I’m living it.

Above, I italicized her readiness to challenge racism. Also in terms of confidence, Olivia felt that acting in front of others and creating bonds inside the Troupe overcame barriers for her:

I am also a very shy person, but I think that it was a good challenge for me because being up in front and in the Troupe, the group, we worked with putting on the skits. We built a lot of trust, and it was the group we trusted in front of other kids our age, because trying to open up a discussion about things you’re not too comfortable -- so doing it through that format rather than just sitting down and having a discussion. [...] But I do know, I definitely I know, I have more confidence to for that than I did at a younger age. I should have told you that at the time. Being in a group that was public must have had something to do with confidence building and other experiences as well.

What other experiences? Olivia averred that she did not remember any particular example of standing up for another being victimized in school, but added that such injustices added motivation to join the Troupe, and joining might have fostered more speaking up:
Maybe I wouldn’t have been likely to call someone on a comment I heard in the hall, but I would be more likely to be able to participate in the Tolerance Troupe, and ultimately participating in the Tolerance Troupe gave me more confidence to -- for example, bring up the fact that I saw stereotyping pretty bad. I mean [in] retrospect, that’s possible it did give me the confidence to in real life to stand up a little more when I did notice or hear things being said that were harmful.

As for leadership, as if working as a teacher full time and on her Masters degree were not enough, Olivia has demonstrated considerable confidence in tasks she has taken on before entering the middle school classroom. She started a peace action group at Bryn Mawr, was active in an environmental group, started a living cooperative, and was active in Students against Sweatshops. For degree work, she studied the sociology of HIV and AIDS and became an AmeriCorps volunteer, working in an HIV AIDS organization in Philadelphia which led to her job after graduation with the Philadelphia AIDS Association. There she began learning Spanish to better communicate with the HIV community, and is now teaching the language in the classroom, the full circle journey she spoke about at the beginning of this section.

"Ever since I had kids, my biggest thing is just teaching them how to talk to people, what’s nice and what’s not nice..." Parents teach and lead

In addition to the kind of leadership demonstrated through formal organizations, alumni have also become parents in their mid to late twenties, and they also talk of the confidence they gained through the Troupe experience along with the importance of teaching their children well. Two parents in this pool of participants who spoke of raising more aware sons or daughters are raising bi-racial children. A third, Hank, a father, did not mention raising children but only of teaching his enlisted sailors; only the mothers in the sample did so, a fact which seems to
illustrate the invisibility of gendered expectations to males in much the same way that male members of the Troupe by large did not recognize the privilege of masculinity. Nevertheless, I did not include young parents in the 63% of alumni working in educative capacities if they were not also involved in formal educative experiences or outreach like tutoring, but I wanted to recognize the ongoing, informal, and crucial job of teaching children about responsibility to others that goes with parenting.

One parent, Karen, offered the quote beginning this section which includes parenting as both leadership as well as education. Karen is working two service-oriented jobs while raising two sons as a single parent. She spoke to me of a need to change gender expectations in her family as her particular concern. As a mother of young children, she is their first teacher and the most important; Karen speaks of gaining confidence to parent and teach as part of her Troupe experience. Below I repeat a version of a quotation, extended, that includes that contribution:

I’m teaching my kids at a young age. The older one thinks that certain things are a woman’s job because he sees it in daddy’s side of the family. I teach him that’s not the way it is. [...] The Tolerance Troupe helped me to stand up for myself, so if I say, 'That’s not my job just because I’m a woman,' I don’t have to feel bad or ashamed because I know I’m right. So that helped me in sense like that, because I always wanted to be the person that would stand up for myself as far as traditional roles and what it means to be a woman. But it helped me say, 'Okay, that’s who you are. Stand up for what’s right' because that is what I believe is right.

My italics indicate the message this young parent gained from participation in the Troupe, both a sense of confidence to speak and what to speak up for, her ethical responsibility. A second mother in my study, Helena expresses support for her children and pride in their abilities. She
has a degree in early childhood education because "they’re the ones you have to start with. It’s so much easier when they’re young." It has been difficult at times, raising biracial children in the rural, Anglo environment, yet the support and confidence in her children conveyed here is unmistakable:

[Teaching in early childhood education] it’s something I really, really loved doing, and I [...] helped with my daughter in preschool three days a week, to have that social interaction, and I would go in and help out because I have my degree, so I could go in and be a part of that with her and be right there beside her, helping her out. So if she happened to slip, I was there. Don’t feed into that [negative attitude]. Don’t tell them 'you can’t' because you can. [...] [My son] at 7 years old [...] can read chapter books by himself, and I say to him, 'Do you remember last year when you said you couldn’t do it?' He’s like, 'Yeah, but I can.' I’m like, 'Yeah, that’s right, you can. You remember that when they say 'you can’t.' What do you tell them?' 'I can.'

Helena was fierce in her love and support for her children whom she knew had faced and would face assumptions and bias as children of mixed race, her message of confidence in one's potential and value being passed to her young children.

"It's not strangers, but it's about friends." (Alex)

To assert oneself, to stand up for oneself and for what is right for others is quite different than overcoming shyness by generic public speaking. It may be more difficult to speak up against what violates someone's dignity or humanity by ignorance or slanders made by one's acquaintances, family or friends. In fact, the confidence to speak up is most important in the context of those one knows because the need for acquiescence may be more important among acquaintances, friends, or family.
In the following excerpt, alumni speak about using the lessons of confidence to speak in situations they currently find themselves in. For example, Alex explains that speaking up in front of those you know is much more difficult than directing well-meaning comments about bias to strangers in an audience to a skit:

And a lot of times the biggest conflicts is with your buddies. It’s not with the assholes that won’t shut up -- it’s with your buddies or someone you care about, or one of your friends, someone you care about, one of your friends. And that’s where it got tough for people. How do I tell this person? I don’t want them to think less of me. I don’t want conflicts with them. I don’t agree with that [a prejudicial comment], [and] I don’t know how we’re going to get past it.

Caroline, who declared she was "living" the lessons of the Tolerance Troupe, gives an example of a time "just last week," when she spoke up to her unconsciously racist roommates:

It’s nonstop all the time. We’re sitting in our living room and something will come on TV. One girl is worse than the other girls, and every time someone who basically is not white comes on TV, she’ll make funny remarks about race, or she always has something rude to say, and I always snap back at her every time. [...] It hasn’t caused any huge problems, but sometimes it bothers me that I’m living with three, really unconcerned people. Here’s a good one that was just last week. One of my roommates, the one that I thought was probably the best in this group, was talking to me about a guy she thought was attractive who was black, and I said, 'Oh that’s cool. Yeah, he’s really cute you should go for it,' or whatever.

And she said 'Well, there is no way I could ever bring him home to meet my parents,' and we got into an argument over me not understanding that at all. [...] Then
my other roommates came home and we talked about it, and they both said, 'Yeah, we could never bring anyone home who is not our race to meet our family. There is no point even dating anyone outside of our race because nothing could ever happen.' And I didn’t understand that. I still don’t understand that. She goes, 'Well, my parents aren’t racist at all. They’re not racist, they’re definitely not racist, and neither am I. It’s just the way it is, and I could never challenge that.' And I said, 'It sounds like racism to me.' What else would you call that? That was just last week. If that’s not racism, what is?

Like Caroline above, Olivia characterizes her role of frequently speaking up and speaking out as "the dampener". Remember that Olivia was a member of the first Troupe, her experience having passed fifteen years ago, and now teaches at a middle school. At school, she hears insults of other students all the time, and as a teacher, she states that she makes use of her authority to step in. However, intervening is trickier when dealing with friends and family, including her in-laws. The less she knows someone, the easier it is to intervene, she remarked. In terms of intervening, she is still trying to find ways to inform people without shutting them off, knowing that if one stands up by putting another person down, the lesson may be lost entirely:

It’s harder when it’s someone you know like a family member or like in-laws, and it comes up in humor a lot. People think they’re allowed to say things in humorous tones, and that’s okay. That happens to me a lot, and I am the dampener. People thinking they’re having good fun, including my husband. [...] People think they can say things in humor that I don’t think they should, so I’m constantly dampening, but I feel like I’m learning to not be that judgmental.

You can be doing the same thing back and forth in a very judgmental way, and that doesn’t get you anywhere. So that’s really what I’m still learning, and it’s a lifelong
learning. [...] To have these conversations, human-to-human, and not be afraid that people are going to get offended, but also not do it in such a way that you’re just shutting someone off because you’re offending them. [...] With the humor thing I don’t have -- there are countless things that people try to be funny about that’s not funny. In that situation, I just try to say, 'I think I used to think that was funny,' and tell a little story relating to the person and be like, 'Here’s why it’s not funny.'

Olivia brings up, as others do, that friends and family are the hardest around whom to intervene and correct. She also comments that learning to do so is a life-long process, but taking action, standing up and speaking up is implicit and ongoing. Our next Scene therefore, addresses the pedagogy of performance and practice, of action and reflection which make up the praxis of the Troupe.

**ACT SIX, Scene 2: Ready, Set, Action! Interactive pedagogy and "not them" -- Repeat as needed. "It really reiterated your responsibilities and bringing up these issues, like you're forced to talk about them." (Antonia)**

    Taking action is not only the message of the Tolerance Troupe experience, but its pedagogy lies in literal "acting." Scene 2 addresses the pedagogy of acting as both alumni and current actors in the Troupe see it. Alumni have the advantage of longer perspective, reflection, and more sophisticated language to express those reflections while current Troupe members have the advantage of daily immersion in high school conflict, ideological negotiation, and identity construction. In addition to bringing theory into the discussion at this juncture, I begin the discussion focusing on the only former Troupe member who responded to my search, who is currently pursuing acting as an artistic discipline. I knew of one other alumnus professionally
active in theatre also, but I was unable to obtain a response from him, so Sara will speak to the acting as a craft.

We have seen in Act Five, *Multiplicity Matters*, how participants take stances by multiple positioning, acknowledging complexity in their identities and in others' too. We have seen previously the kind of thinking that is inclusive of contradictions which is "Both/And", a negation of one-way thinking and "one-way" world they see in attitudes around them. I want to pull out how Troupe members and alumni say that skits teach, looking at the teaching of others first, and following with how skits teach the actors, which was revealed piecemeal by asking how they create and stay in characters and improvise, as well as how they have changed in their thinking by playing roles which they often object to, playing a bully or bigot or an advocate for abortion which they might disagree with, or in this religious rural area, advocating atheism.

I also asked about memorable performances which awakened the narrating of crucial "lessons" about learning in interviews. In most cases, the ways teaching and learning takes place for others and for actors shares the characteristics of interactivity, dialoguing, and by multiple positioning as problem solving and offering options. In many cases, we are looking at invoking a kind of psychic distance involved in assessing one's point of view similar to ascertaining and judging viewpoint by assuming distance as in literary study (Booth, 1983; Moffett, 1983) rather than identification by empathy.

As a practicing stage actor, Sara had a great deal to say about the way a skit teaches others, first by breaking down the passive relationship of the audience so that interactivity distinguishes performance pedagogy, and second because there is still a wall between actors and the audience that is not confronted directly. The audience addresses the actors in character, yet no one demands that students identify themselves or declare where they stand in the dynamic of
protagonist or antagonist, racist or ally. There is enough protective distance in performance for audience, which I believe is also expressed in the participants' testimony of feeling a distance between their own positions and the positions they represent on stage. From the point of view of the audience, no member must step forward and ask for support or identify or condemn a tormentor, although some audience members have done so. In the remove of this arts-based pedagogy, a modified version of Forum Theatre, there is still protection for the audience (italicized as the "not them" below) and the potential for increased empathy as a spur for future action. Sara is one of those "theatre geeks" that the Troupe draws from, who is passionate about stagecraft:

Drama speaks to the soul, and I've always believed that it speaks on a level that nothing else can touch, especially what the Tolerance Troupe does, because it's interactive, and it's not them. They may be in the same situation we're portraying, but it's not them, so it's not quite as scary or intimidating. And I just think if you just show someone a video, they can see the situation, but the video doesn't show you how to deal with that. It doesn't give you a chance to be inside the actor's head and saying, 'What is going on inside you, why are you doing this to me?' The Tolerance Troupe gives the kids who are being bullied a chance to ask questions of why someone is being bullied, why the bullier is doing that, and not have to stand up and say 'I'm being bullied.' It's a way for people to find out information without having to be in the situation themselves. And I think it really just does open up people's eyes, even some people who aren't in the situation. I think drama is something that everyone can relate to on one level.

Sara repeats, "it's not them" which includes the targets in the audience and perhaps perpetrators as well, and includes the metaphor of "opening eyes", which is how attention is directed literally
to the living actors on the spot, in the moment, as questions can be asked and answers given to
the audience showing "how to deal" with confrontation, something impossible on video.

Larkin, too, refers to not-them even as the audience is confronted with unwelcome issues.

You can see by her words how the actor too is not-them:

Part of it is you have to remind yourself you are playing a role. You’re acting as a
different person, not yourself. You’re not telling people what to or not to do, you’re just
providing insight and to have fun in this role. [...] I think the greatest thing perhaps is if
they [audiences] gain the insight of empathy. Looking into the mind of someone else.

Hearing or understanding how someone’s feeling that is not yourself, and maybe you
haven’t been in that situation, or haven’t thought like that person -- then you are provided
with some of that insight. [...] You’re teaching by not making people have to defend
themselves, not making them have to reflect a whole lot if they are not comfortable with
that. They are seeing some dissonance, someone far away acting like a bully, and they
don’t even have to admit that’s wrong or that could be changed.

For these actors, the stage exaggerates and yet makes safe. It shocks and provokes, but it
maintains safety for its audience, a what-if that can be experienced and felt, even felt as
threatening, as an opening for potential change, but experienced on stage, at a remove. Later in
the interview, Larkin reflects on taking part in a role in which she makes a remark, and having it
magnified on stage, later considers how that remark might have been taken off stage, and echoes
the uncomfortable self-knowledge discussed in the last Act as well:

Maybe [I saw myself in the skit] some of the good when you are playing such an opposite
role from you, and maybe some of the bad when you are playing a role and you have to
regretfully admit, "Oh, I’ve kind of been this person before." I think maybe sometimes
when you have to be one of the people that kind of makes a snide remark on stage, something in passing that you think 'Oh that’s not that hurtful,' but you’re just the person on stage saying it. Well, it kind of magnifies that and you realize what a large impact small things have. (Larkin)

Another alumna brought up the metaphor of magnification, the exaggeration of staged talk taken from natural student language, throwing light on small insults and again, the uses of shock:

You see theater and stuff and it’s magical or different or out there. This was like, 'Wow, this is going on every day. I can see this happening in our school,' and so that connection you feel to it.

I think there is something really powerful about it being right in front of your face, it’s being acted out and you are watching it. I always felt it was like taking a microscope and putting it over a lunch table, and just really maximizing what is going on so you can really take a look at what is happening here. I think a lot of topics we discuss you didn’t think happened -- the perpetrator is so casual when they say things and make derogatory comments [...] putting a focus on it and letting them see it be played out and see the severity to the issue and really pulling it to the front of things instead of just casual things as hallway talk or lunch talk. (Lori)

Alex spoke previously of the uses of shock, and here stresses the importance of every one playing his or her part in representing the range of responses in the skit:

If we were really doing our job and have at least one person identify with everyone in the skit, at least one person who identified with every character. That’s what we want them to touch on both sides of the story how it affected each person in the story whether they
were directly involved or watching or overheard. [...] Everyone was just as important in all the skits. We all played an important role.

Caroline also felt that the collective experience of seeing the scenarios minutely focusing on the everyday "real" was transformative, especially when viewed as a shared experience:

Everyone is seeing it and experiencing it together, and we’re not telling them how to think, we’re telling them this is something that actually happens whether you realize it or not and this is a way that you can deal with it. This is a way that you can stop it. So basically it’s like a larger group, seeing it all at the same time is effective because it’s not necessarily something you see every day, but it’s definitely happening every day whether it’s bullying or intolerance in general.

Caroline also stresses putting the incident in focus and offering alternatives, as well as not telling others what to think. Her emphasis, interestingly, is on the collective experience of teaching and learning. We will find several metaphors in this section as alumni and students explain the workings of teaching by theatre. First Sara and others raise the characteristic of skits as interactive, as dialogic. Similarly, here is what others say, and their comments are more often cast in contrast to lecture rather than to video as Sara has done; many specify the importance of dialogue and again, of shock at that dialogue. Below is a sampling of comments about theatre as pedagogy from Troupe actors past and present:

It's not a lecture. People aren't just talking at you, hoping you listen and get it. We were vibrant, at times wild and provocative, real. We were interactive and let people ask questions after the skits. I think the audience was always more affected because they had never seen anything like the Tolerance Trouble, and suddenly had a mirror held up to themselves. [...] I think a lot of schools had no idea what they were getting into when
they invited us to perform. We *opened a dialogue* and let people discuss these taboo subjects. (Lara)

First comes grabbing the audiences' attention, and then the interactivity:

It kind of really catches people’s attention first of all, and also I feel the discussion after the skit when the characters stay in their character and the *people get to ask questions* that you really are seeing the situation through the eyes of whatever that character is, whether or not that person is the bully or the bystander or the person being victimized. (Julie)

I think everyone’s imagination can be sparked in a different way or maybe a combination. Also people’s comfortability levels. So for the audience too, seeing a portrayal of a situation *instead of just having someone come and stand and speak* in front of them and having it be kids their age. I think that was neat. *We were the spirit of peers of our audiences.* (Olivia)

The eldest of the alumni, like Olivia, Tracy, and Helena, recognize being addressed by one's peers when one is actually going through a school world of cliques, rumor, and harassment has significantly more credibility than any message an adult could offer at that time:

*We were more honest because we were teenagers. We were more honest, and they knew we were real, and they knew we were going through it now, versus an adult who went through it fifteen or twenty years ago. We went through completely different things. It’s easier to reach out to kids when you, in fact, are going through it rather than when you went through it years ago. We’re more understanding, we’re more approachable, we realize what’s really going on versus an adult. And as an adult, I know I don’t really remember being in kindergarten, but I can say to my child, 'Bullies are normal,' [but] that’s not what they want to hear.* (Helena)
What renders the experience believable is embodiment, enactment, and interactivity, kinesthetic speech and action. Tracy recalls that her choice of dialogue in character was best taken from what she heard around her, making her performance believable as high school experience:

I would do my best to articulate the perspectives that surrounded me. If I was playing a student who got into a fight with a white student over racial territory, for example, I would think about conversations that I heard in my own actual high school cafeteria or amongst my own relatives. Being able to use our environment as a resource is what I believe made the performances so authentic.

Compared to the alumni comments like Tracy's, predictably, the younger, current members of the Troupe proved the most sensitive to adults' droning on in moralistic lecture, and point out the contrast between adult talk at them and the effectiveness of performance in accomplishing anti-bias objectives. Given in a series of comments that follow from current Troupe members, emphasis on interaction with one's peer group is further heightened:

If you just have somebody just speak to them, it doesn’t make an impact on them. People aren’t going to listen -- it’s just boring, speaking. The skits they’re fun and people get involved with them, and afterwards they can ask questions of the actors and they’re still in character. So they’re interacting with them, they can ask them questions, and it gives them a look inside of the characters and their motivations and I think they can see themselves in the characters. [...] Because when you hear it from a teacher or an adult speaking about it, it doesn’t have as much meaning. But the fact that it’s their peers trying to communicate it -- this shows that this is an important issue. (Justin)
We have the same views as the teachers who lecture do it, but when we get up there it’s, 'Okay, we have kids our own age thinking this way not adults who were teenagers in the 80’s thinking this way. It’s kids now today who have this view and maybe we should start thinking like that.' It’s more effective than a teacher getting in front of a big group of students and just give them a lecture on this stuff saying, 'Don’t do this, don’t do that.' It’s full of a group of kids who are their own age so they are able to relate to this situation, and it really just gets them thinking. (Drew)

When you have a kid who doesn’t like being lectured, this is a different way to show it like, it’s true. When I seen it, I was like 'I want to be one of those.' 'Oh yeah don’t believe, don’t do this, or don’t do that,' we’ve all heard that all before. I didn’t know they were going to act it out. And when they did that, it captured me more serious. I felt yeah, that is how that one person I know was acting down the hall the other day. Putting yourself in their experience on stage. Teenagers really see the way we act like not just listening to something like we do all the time. You really get to see how kids think or how kids react to certain kinds of situations. It’s powerful. (Jeanette)

I think it’s more effective than just standing there and telling them a bunch of facts. Things about bullying, like 15% of your school is bullied. They just look at you and go, 'Yeah we already knew that.' So I think acting it out and they see it, I think they get it better than just hearing it. (Leila)

There is presence first, breaking through to attention, and not the usual assembly talk but taboo words and hard subjects that arouse sensitive emotions, and in most cases, presented by peers.
As in the discussion of carnival, the body takes center stage both literally and metaphorically, and then comes provocation, emotional arousal. As alumna Ariel sees it, the shock must be tempered so it does not lead away from content itself:

You want to provoke the people in the audience to ask questions. You do want to rile them up a bit inflammatory enough to get a discussion going but you don’t want to be so inflammatory that you’re just saying terrible outrageous things that it gets focused on what you’re saying since the focus is really on the discussion. So you have to learn to say things that you’re just provoking enough but not so much that it takes away from the actual topic. (Ariel)

The need for shock exposes the unexpressed beliefs and prejudices in the audience which can then be challenged. The actors are foils to air those raw feelings in order to work on them, but the rawness must be opened first, says Dylan, a current member:

One of the great things about the Tolerance troupe is that, 'Yeah I’m a racist, but I’m not going to talk about it,' and there’s people who speak up, and you go, 'Oh my God, you just pointed the finger at yourself,' but the fact that this was laid out, and it’s not going to be suppressed -- 'Let’s all be nice, let’s all be nice,' instead of like, 'Let’s get it out on the table.' That really is an act of exposure or an act of trust really between you and the audience even though they may know that is not a cool thing to say like [Raj] in the last performance said, 'Yeah they should be like Jews, they should all be put away,' or [Max] using the 'N word.' (Dylan)

Dylan makes reference above to the last Benton performance. Honesty and the unacceptable hate and fear do get a hearing, and they cannot be dealt with unless those feelings are exposed, put on the table, as Dylan says. This actor also frames the extremes the Troupe represents as an
act of trust, a perspicacious way of handling both the suspension of disbelief between audience and actors and a warrant of honesty between them.

"Practicing, like practicing for real life, but it catches you off guard." (Olivia)

But what seems to teach the actors the most is weighing those multiple positions that we have spoken of before. There is fellow-feeling and some empathy that arises for the protagonist, but note that the injunction for others is to "make [them] think," not to make audiences identify or empathize with character positions. The skits, from rehearsal to discussion to performance and debriefing, form around the interactions as occasions for thought intended for the audience, but function to make the actors think as well. Some skits are well positioned just that way, as characters state their opinions in a kind of round-robin. Edwards as facilitator or sometimes one of the cast members will go from character and ask each one to weigh in as an ally or antagonist from most extreme to most lukewarm or indifferent. In practicing the skits and readying for the improvisation of staying in character and anticipating the questions from the audience, the actors are compelled to examine their own beliefs as well as the positions of the character they temporarily inhabit. This examination applies to external performance and to internalization of recounting these many voices and positions.

For example, in a community performance for Martin Luther King Day, a skit on race and politics was arranged to represent a range of opinions to open up audience discussion about the election of our first African American president, embedded into a skit as the actors played students in a contemporary issues class. The "teacher," played by Raj, asked his students their opinions of the election. The audience (and reader) can see a range of positions laid out as follows from this round-robin approach to skits, condensed from the transcript of that performance.
Cassandra: "Our country made a great choice in Barack Obama. He's going make a real
difference in our country and do a great job."

Gracie: "Barack Obama was elected? It's not a big deal – it's not like whoever gets elected can
make a difference or anything."

Emma: "Are you kidding? Have you forgotten about McCain? McCain would have been the
right man for the office. He was a P.O.W. so he understands war, he was in the Senate for years,
so he has experience, and to make my argument, he's been a politician longer than Obama has
been alive."

Danielle: If a Latino was elected, you wouldn't forget who it was. We are so disrespected! Bill
Richardson was in Obama's Cabinet, and he was forced to drop out. Shoot!"

Tasha: "I'm sure no one made Richardson resign. And Obama has Latinos in his Cabinet. We
all have to get behind the President, whoever the President is."

Danielle: "Where's your [Latino] pride?"

Theo: "Obama's black, and I'm all for the black man. I don't care what he does. Just because he
is black and he's the President, it changes everything! I don't care if he blows the earth up, I
don't care! He's a black man. Black power!"

Raj (as Teacher): I'm sure blowing up the earth is a pretty big deal, but thanks, Al Sharpton.

Justin: "Gracie and Theo have it all wrong. Theo just likes him because he's black, and Gracie
doesn't know what's going on. You have to educate yourself to find out, you know? And what
my opinions are, are none of your or anybody's business."

Imogene: "I think we're screwed with a black President. I don't think he's experienced enough,
smart enough, or responsible enough to run the country. Look at Theo: empowering a black
person with that kind of attitude is just ending the world right there!"
Raj: "This is America, and we all have to respect each other's opinions. Dylan, how do you feel?"

Dylan: "There's only one person who should have become President, and that is Sarah Palin. She's smokin' hot!"

Cassandra: "Dylan, I can't believe you think Palin could be a good President because she's attractive! What do you think about the election, Mr. H?"

Raj: "I'm half-black -- I spend a lot of time with my black family, and I have to say that we are empowering the wrong people. The last thing we need is 'hood-trash in the Oval Office. Before you know it, the national bird will be fried chicken, and the national anthem will be sung by Biggie Smalls."

These opinions, exaggerated or attenuated, and aired down the line in the skit are in concentrated form; one can hear those like them confided in private quarters and on talk radio -- I remember hearing the racist fried chicken "joke" before, through a conservative media outlet during the campaign. To cap the controversy, Raj, half-African American, was asked to work against expected type, as if shared race or ethnicity automatically meant acceptance and alliance. His position was possibly intended also to raise issues of self-hatred within the black community; remember, this was a performance for MLK day at a community center with a multi-racial audience. In the positions expressed, the audience (and actors themselves) inhabit and simultaneously reconsider their own emotions and reasons as well as "forcibly" hearing and interacting around positions and arguments of others. Yet the actors stand outside and aside character to deliver lines made for positions that articulate conflicting opinions and reactions heard and distilled from discourses around them, rearranged for voicing. For the actors -- by rehearsal, by performance -- this practice is iterative and turns back upon itself.
Creating conditions for Bakhtin's heteroglossia seems a fit way of exploring positions and options that clash, branch, and diverge. In the creation of the world of a novel, writes Bakhtin, a believable whole is constructed "out of heteroglot, multi-voiced, multi-styled and often multi-languaged" (p. 265) voices, rendering a multiform, authentic social voice. The study of heteroglossia goes beyond the boundaries of the study of the novel, Bakhtin writes; the creator authoring a world is always outside of the events recounted. Even when the author uses the most plain and direct discourse can the author only convey:

*as if* he had seen and observed them himself, only *as if* he were an omnipresent witness to them. Even had he created an autobiography or a confession of the most astonishing truthfulness, all the same, he as creator, remains outside the world as he has represented in his work. (p. 256)

It is impossible, Bakhtin continues, to write or relate about an event in time and space and share the identity of subject and teller. One stands beside the story; I is already outside the subject as the story is told and comes into being, as impossible as lifting "myself up by my own hair" (256).

Let me address and apply what Bakhtin is saying to the self-reports of my participants. They are telling stories which involve themselves, and this puts them at a distance. They are engaged in acts of narration in reflection, going back over experience and "storying" it, and they are also "storying" their stage characters. In doing so, they are narrating different voices, creating several positions which they do not necessarily share. Dialogism, in Bakhtinian terms, is a way of coming to know the world, by interaction among many voices which influence one another as a way of building an epistemological stance, aware of other positions yet finding one's place in the mutable interchange of reasons, beliefs, and ideas. This is seen in the following comments from my participants.
Ileana believes that what sticks in the audience is staying in character, answering audience questions from that imagined other point of view which provokes thought:

Staying in character. It really bites it: 'Oh, she did that; Oh, he did that.' I want people to get that, so they won’t be, 'Oh, that’s not real.' 'Ok, but they’ll still have that impact. Ok, I finally saw another side or perspective of it. I saw how some people react.' Maybe some of these people who we perform for never seen people like act aggressive, and they’ve never seen someone like act racist. We can do anything, like cyberbullying -- maybe no one’s experienced it, but they finally see, 'Wow, that’s how it feels for people. Wow, that’s what it feels like to actually do it, that’s horrible.' That’s the impact of staying in character, and when we answer questions to give them a good hit on their response. Instead of like a rock that will bounce off, a sponge that will sink in. That’s what I think is one of our key points. It needs to stick. That’s why we stay in character.

It's common to speak one's ideas in dialogue; that is a way of talking that Ileana shares with many people, but the fact that expressing ideas by way of recreating dialogue I think points to validity in the way Bakhtin spoke of dialogism, of knowing the world. Speaking from a character's viewpoint, hearing and conveying another's imagined, individual voice is powerful in Ileana's view because one absorbs the character's reactions or hears first-hand his or her rationale for behavior. A lecture would be a "rock that will bounce off" young people.

First encounters with issues of bias and bullying create first knowing by feeling, arising from experience of family and community, but being in the Troupe means that these issues are always at the fore, arrays many positions to consider, and solidifies participants' beliefs and positions. In fact, repeated talk, dialogues about conflicts, issues, and positioning seems to provoke thought from outside to inside. Below, Antonia reflects on how the dialogue among the
Troupe members helped her find her own way on issues like abortion or teen pregnancy that raised inner conflicts for her.

Also I guess because it really taught you -- I mean as a kid, you learn right from wrong, but it really reiterated your responsibilities and bringing up these issues like you’re forced to talk about them. [Within] the troupe you’re forced to face it and talk about it because it’s kind of like right in front of you. [...] There is some issues where you don’t really know where you stand. I think there are some issues like that.

A current student actor, Theo uses a metaphorical lens of close-up and pull-back to show the multiple positioning spurring thought about a range of options. Here he is making reference to the audience in seeing themselves "from far away":

When we do a performance we look hard. We zoom in and we look at it from all stand points. We pull out what we need, and we make the characters. Like the strongest parts and we give it to the person, we recite, and they are looking from far away and they’re looking at us as we’re pushing it onto them. We involve them in the skits we ask them questions. Then that’s when we give in to them and get them to zoom in to look at it objectively. (Theo)

Here the range of positions takes center-stage, and the lens focus is thrown forward and back, the better to see what it there, as objective a view and not as subjective identification with the viewer. There is a touch of empathy because one is acting, embodying another view, but it comes with the assessment of distance too, seeing other people’s reactions. Tasha explains:

Definitely if I hadn’t joined the Tolerance Troupe I’d be a completely different person because when I see other people’s reactions, I step into other people’s shoes. Even for the few minutes we are there, it’s just that tiny bit of time when I’m in somebody else’s
shoes. It helps me understand because there was always that phrase, 'Don’t judge a person until you’ve walked a mile in someone else’s shoes.' It’s one thing to say, it but it’s another thing to actually do it. You are in somebody else’s shoes. You are thinking what they are thinking or feeling, what they are feeling, and that changed me forever. I will never go back to what I was before.

Another current Troupe actor, Emma, explains how seeing a range of positions changes the student actor as well as the audience by playing the Other. I have used italics around Emma's assertions of how acting changes her, and again, include highlighting of seeing the self in playing an Other:

You actually see what the situation is, and because we’re acting we exaggerate it a little, and it shows how ridiculous it [bullying/bias] really is and it teaches them how horrible it is to be the bad guy or even the kid in the middle who doesn’t show anything. [...] It also teaches us -- since we’re put in the places of being a mean person, being a bullied person, we see their point of view.

When you play the mean character and even when you see that little hinge of meanness in yourself, you seek out the closest way to get that out of you, and try to find a way to say, ‘Okay, you’re insecure. It’s okay to be this way -- you don’t have to be insecure about it. Playing the indifferent character has shown me that I think I was a lot of the indifferent character, and so now I try to take a stand and be this is my opinion, this is what I believe. I don’t really care if you disagree with me, we can agree to disagree.
Leila uses the teen pregnancy skit as an example of finding out where she might stand, and her comment points out the way her thinking comes from outside to inside in considering possible options made available by taking part in the Troupe skits and discussions:

Because I’m in the Troupe, you can pick out the different sides --Oh, that person is indifferent, that person is for it, that person is against it. *The Troupe isn’t really about teaching you what to say in a situation-- it’s just exposing you and making you think about what you would do in this situation.* I guess when your friends or you are doing that skit, you kind of do think, 'Oh what if that was for real life?' or 'What if one of my best friends was pregnant? What would I tell her?' I guess it kind of gets you thinking like that. [...] It kind of gets you prepared if you’re in a situation like that, and *you can think of what you actually would say.*

You might not think of some way to react until you see a skit. Maybe one of my friends gets pregnant -- all I can think of 'Oh well you have to have the baby,' and one of the people [in a skit] says, 'You should give it up for adoption and give it a good home,' and maybe in real life, I would think, 'Oh maybe you would want to consider giving it up for adoption.'

Drew finds that putting multiple views and dialogue among them articulates ideas and feelings that students are afraid to declare out loud:

You will find a lot of times in certain situations, in school life, that there’s always *differentiating views on a subject and sometimes it’s a little unrealistic* [the skits as extreme are unrealistic at times] *but other than that, people always have different views, they always have different thoughts and feelings on an issue, but they don’t always want to portray them.* And that’s another thing: I think is good about this program. It shows
that people aren’t afraid to express their views, but I just think people always really do have different thoughts about a subject -- they’re not just really willing to put them out there.

Troupe skits are intended to put ideas "out there". They are willing to shock, to represent extreme views that some people do hold but would not express. Those views get some airing and some feedback by other characters who speak against those views or support them. By airing all views, even those who hold unpopular or prejudicial views get to hear how they sound, how they might be received or countered or modified, and how people who hold them might think – and ultimately—act differently. Nevertheless, plurality is represented by the positions taken by the Troupe cast. Says Jodi, a novice member, of the Troupe:

I think I’ll probably learn a lot more just thinking about the things I have to do and kind of open up to a bunch of other ideas that without the Tolerance Troupe I wouldn’t have really thought of on a regular basis [...]. A lot more about the bullying and other ways to deal with things that go on in our school, because if it’s just happening, you’re going to go and think like, fly or sink or fall ...whatever that expression is [...]. If it happened to me I just go off my instincts in my gut, but if I have to think about it beforehand and all these ideas and possibilities with the Tolerance Troupe ...and it does happen to me, then I have a bunch of different things to go off of, and I’d have a better idea of what to do about an experience than I would if I didn’t have. (Jodi)

Jodi, a freshman, has only turned fifteen, and to be expected, shows less fluency articulating some of her ideas, yet we can see those ideas clearly on the move. As she sees and hears more options presented to her as part of her membership in the Troupe, she has more options in her own thinking as she grows into a standpoint that defines her own beliefs and guides her actions.
By contrast, Tracy and Olivia, educators at the precipice of their thirties, speak with seasoned passion and conviction. Tracy writes:

Creating opportunities for open dialogue in both the home and at school have a lot more power than what some educators realize. Using the framework of political correctness as a means of establishing equality does not guarantee the epistemological scrutiny that is needed in order to understand multiculturalism in the society at large. Students need not merely be told that ‘all people are created equal,’ but they need to understand through tangible experiences with the Other. (Tracy)

Of two emeriti of the original Troupe, Tracy recognizes that a message about justice or equality is only half effective. In some ways, the Troupe provides a representation of a lived experience for audiences; for Tracy, being in the Troupe was a chance to speak out against racism, "an empowering thing for my teenage self." Olivia, the second emeritus, was critical of the disjunction between well-intentioned but smug white members of the Troupe and their reliance on offensive stereotypes, yet she also remembered that being in the Troupe, acting in front of audiences, taking a public stance, and sharing points of view in that community of practice must have had positive effect. She reflected, "It must be good for all our confidence, to stand up in our lives, like practicing, practicing for real life but it catches you off guard."

"Practicing for real life", letting dialogue provide options for thinking reminded me of the social-psychology of John Dewey, a passage which struck a resonance with my thinking as I see myself as a pragmatist of sorts: action and practice have the power to shift belief once we become conscious of the often contradictory dynamics between the two. In “The Nature of Deliberation” originally published in 1922, after discussing the importance of play in releasing energy into constructive forms, Dewey explains that impulse and habit carry us along until a
disruption creates a need to harmonize, to unify our responses. What is, is the fragmentary real, and thus we are thrust into conscious decision-making. Dewey affirms that the act of conscious decision-making is one of “dramatic rehearsal” (p. 190) through imagination – choices rehearsed and chosen from the point of “always biased beings” that, out of conflicting desires and disrupted habit, need some choice of action (p.198). Reasoning is not at war with emotion; instead, reason harmonizes the conflict of desires when impulse and habit are disrupted, and is “a quality of an effective relationship among desires” (p. 194). What is needed to make more consciousness of this deliberation is delay and forcefulness to bring alternatives into view.

Deliberation by delay and forcefulness raises the question of how we think – how to bring alternatives into view. It is reasonable that thinking move from feelings of conflict, arousal, and shock of recognition and turn to polyphony, to recognizing voices among us which offer us their options and allow us a kind of rehearsal and delay until we find a path open for adoption, for choice or reconciliation with our experience and a developing sense of ethical behavior, just as these actors literally take on voices and stances and learn to negotiate paths among them. I can see the negotiation working from outside in. “Thought and Word,” the concluding chapter of L. S. Vygotsky’s collection of essays, *Thought and Language* (1971), gives insight into how we think. Published in 1934, but not translated into English until the 1960s, Vygotsky offers an understanding of what occurs as we learn to think using language. Vygotsky recognizes the primacy of pre-linguistic thinking, which becomes interdependent with verbal thinking as we learn to speak. Verbal thinking is done first out loud, as “egocentric speech”—the self-talk of young children investigated both by Vygotsky and Piaget. Speech takes on significance through meaning-making, and meaning-making originates through social interaction. Vygotsky notes that ego-centric speech quiets when no other person is in the room to listen to it, even when the
child is not speaking to another child or adult. Thinking in language starts from exposure to social talk, moves into externalized egocentric talk, and then moves into inner thinking, “narrating” through language. But thought itself is also changed by concepts as they manifest themselves in language, facilitating some concepts, and decentering others. Whether we “dramatically rehearse” in inner speech, or alter the language we speak to ourselves in thinking through our “rehearsals,” we alter those concepts and rehearsals through their very thinking when they emerge in language. “Thought is born through words,” writes Vygotsky (p. 153). But what comes before the voices that make thought possible moves us with an urgency to the birth of negotiating that path by words and social meanings.

Sara, majoring in theatre, emerged from the Troupe only a year ago at the time of our interview. She sums up the way the Troupe works as she sees it, her words using metaphors that are richly pre-verbal and embody experience like the beat of the drum of the heart, counting coup on the unsuspecting:

The Tolerance Troupe is a very kind of subtle kind of thing. It sneaks into your life, and you don’t realize it’s doing the sneaking until it kind of almost smacks you in the face. It’s kind of like the sound effects in a movie, where the drums are very soft in the background, but they’re doing this boom-boom, boom-boom, and the audience’s heart is going boom-boom-boom-boom in response. It’s almost that kind of effect. It’s subtle but very, very magnified on a level that is so awesome, it’s the only way I can describe it. The beat of the drum of the heart sneaks up first on its actors and gives them options for thought.
ACT SEVEN: "Nobody's Perfect..." Constraints of Scope, Methods, and Discourses

It's "the least we can do": Problematic tolerance, what can -- and can't -- be changed, audiences, adults, and denials, and the illusion of the individual as tipping point

We've seen how Troupe members teach one another and learn: how they come to articulate what they could not speak or see before through repeated "rehearsal" that aids their development of thought, and how experience of being in the Troupe sensitizes them to repeated collective, purposeful, and confident action. But nobody's perfect, as one Troupe alumna attests to the fallibility of her fellow cast members:

You help each other out because nobody's perfect. You're having a bad day or something -- you might accidentally say something, you're short tempered, or, you know, just normal mistakes. But it helps you keep each other in check. I mean really it has an impact eventually on how you think. (Ariel)

Keeping oneself aware of comments about others or putting a check on stereotypic thinking, on judgmentalism, is what the members learn; hence, what they expect from others, tolerance, is expected at a minimum since "nobody's perfect."

That goes too for the limitations on the scope, methods, and discourses used by the Tolerance Troupe itself. One can see limitations in the terms frequently repeated: that "Tolerance means we can disagree but don't have to fight," and in the kind of altruism expressed as helping others, found in the statements of all the students and alumni interviewed largely in terms of "making a difference." Not incidentally, the regional conference which ran for ten years, 1997-2007, initiated by the regional Council of Governments (SEDA-COG) and held for high school sophomores and juniors which included Tolerance Troupe performances, was called
the "Make A Difference" youth leadership conference (Forum for Pennsylvania's Heartland, 2010). The Troupe's objective of tolerance is framed as an uncomplicated, sufficient social good.

I witnessed three areas of potential constraint on the Troupe's effectiveness that will be discussed in the following Scenes of Act Seven. The first limitation is that of scope, in Scene 1, and has been discussed briefly before, as the "one-and-done" nature of a performance for others. Sometimes the Troupe visits another school or district's classrooms and has an extra day to talk with students in their smaller classrooms and engage them in creating characters and skits themselves. Again, even though young audiences might feel a classroom visit is pure play, in this kind of play, students are asked to improvise and make up, through their own language, and to express a range of alternative positions in scenarios of conflict. Turning former large assembly spectators into engaged "spectactors" in small classes fosters more students to think out loud and examine positions and ideas for themselves. But more often, money to sponsor the Troupe becomes more scarce and limits the Troupe's travel time away. More often, skits are performed only in large assembly, and the Troupe goes on its way with fewer small class visits and fewer overnights to listen and talk intimately with audiences.

I wondered what would become of the Troupe if it were more than just an annual event for freshmen and a one-time "outside" event for everyone else. Positive school climate advocated by the Troupe yearly in-house and hosted by other schools and organizations sporadically becomes limited to this literal, one-shot "show" of good will. Unexpectedly, I encountered a contrasting story of contemporaneous, Boal-style troupe in a neighboring district. In Scene 1, recount the origin and trajectory of two troupes, to see what becomes of a problem-
posing troupe of quite different student actors whose ongoing work was perceived as a challenge to its administration.

Scene 2 addresses the ad hoc method of generating bare bones scripts and improvisations which meant that performances are rushed into manifestation without a lot of build into the student actor's self-reflective practice. Pressures of time and space to produce skits in one afternoon's rehearsal and the longer time needed to develop insight may be one reason that alumni recollection is more expressive and densely reflective than in the remarks of many current student members. The last, Scene 3 of this Act, looks at the discourses of tolerance and making a difference, used frequently by members and alumni. Younger students are unaware that toleration is a contested concept although alumni do address the problematic nature of tolerance as a goal. Finally, at the end of Scene 3, is the bitterest pill to swallow, as Troupe members and alumni report the behavior of students and especially of adults they have encountered who resist, refuse, and deny concern over issues that the Troupe raise in performance, and the limited kind of hope of intervention one can seem to expect. What does that mismatch of intent of the Troupe and denial in the audience teach the actors and the young adults, except to continue to reaffirm and put up some counter discourse?

ACT SEVEN, Scene 1, A Tale of Two Troupes: "It's still hard to talk about."-- Constraint by scope

What if a program like the Tolerance Troupe were integrated structurally at a school, intended to facilitate learning and leadership for non-traditional students, so called "at-risk" or underachieving students instead of the Tolerance Troupe's adequately academic-achieving ones? What would become of support for such a performance-based pedagogy? To continue with my own metaphor, what would become of this living tree if it were planted in a different
environment? A good way to demonstrate the potential for danger and the relative safety of the Selinsgrove troupe is to contrast it with a troupe inspired by Edwards and the Tolerance Troupe but begun in a school district adjoining, just a few miles north.

My project included a search for the precedents or origins of the Tolerance Troupe, yet everyone I talked to had a somewhat hazy take on these origins. Edwards would know best, of course, yet it started over fourteen years ago, and details are scarce. He was inspired by witnessing a group of college actors demonstrating this kind of problem-posing skit in which the college actors stayed in character and interacted with the audience. I sought out just who these actors might be, and as close as I could come to pinpointing the origins of Boal-style drama in the Susquehanna Valley was to locate Jason Milner, now Box Office Manager of the Woolly Mammoth Theatre Company of Washington, D.C., who, as a drama major at Susquehanna University in the early 1990s, remembers going into local Selinsgrove schools and performing these kinds of skits with fellow college actors. I asked Milner if Edwards had come up after their performance to ask questions of the college actors, but Milner could not recall further details either. Clearly, however, Edwards saw such a performance and recognized the need to address issues of prejudice and social aggression, and he had the background as an actor and the will as a teacher-leader to try it himself.

As discussed previously, Edwards had experience in theatre, influenced by high school teachers who brought out his introspective and theatrical side. One high school teacher, whom Edwards remained particularly close to even after graduation, tapped him for "off-off Broadway" and outdoor summer productions. Edwards does not specify the roles or plays in which he was cast, nor mentions directorial or theoretical approaches like Boal's or Brecht's with whom these techniques originate. Edwards traces the Tolerance Troupe origins to his attending an
unspecified assembly where college students staged interactive skits, and thinks he witnessed the skits in Selinsgrove, but couldn't remember the date he saw them. Edwards decided later that he could use this theatrical approach for a "home economics" conference at Selinsgrove Area High School, where he had been invited to present. Edwards remembers:

[Because] the students [at the conference] had demanded a break-out session or a workshop on diversity, [...] I gathered together a handful of students, about 5 or 6, and we enacted skits that depicted situations of intolerance, and they stayed in character and interacted with the audience. And it was so successful that we were actually asked if we traveled to other schools. And I said 'No, this is the first time we’ve ever done this.' And a couple of schools expressed interest in having us come, and from that, the Tolerance Troupe was born.

Remember that Edwards' first Troupe was drawn from Student Council members and students of color he could recruit so that the group could include greater racial diversity. Edwards could not recall where he had seen the skits that inspired him, who those college actors were, or when he had seen the college actors perform interactive, Forum-style skits.

So I was intrigued when a member of the second year cohort of the Troupe, Helena, mentioned that she had already been part of a similar improvisational group at another local high school, a troupe initiated and mentored by Frank Corbin. I thought it quite interesting that there were once two similar problem-posing improvisational troupes in the same area, so I sought out Frank Corbin and Barbara Corbin. Barbara Corbin is a Spanish teacher at Selinsgrove Area High School (SAHS) and a colleague of Edwards. Her husband, Frank Corbin, had indeed started an improv group at the neighboring district high school to examine issues of racism, gender, class
discrimination and bullying. His story is very different from Edwards' reputation of approval and support that Selinsgrove's Troupe enjoys.

While working on his Masters in Counseling, Corbin was assigned to teach in the alternative "in school suspension program." He attempted to make this compulsory, disciplinary program into a more progressive, problem-solving session for students who were placed there because of their behavior. After three or four years in the temporary, compulsory placement classroom, said Corbin, he petitioned the school to create a real alternative program as an avenue for students to continue their studies outside of the regular classroom environment. The program flourished for about four years. During this time, as part of developing peer-leadership with his students, Corbin initiated an improvisational troupe similar to Edwards' to deal with issues like racism and bullying in their school. But instead of preceding the Tolerance Troupe, as the alumna had reported, said Corbin, "I got a spark by seeing what Harvey did." Speaking about his district's students:

We have a very un-diverse community, but perhaps it would help in the [...] area if these kids had an outlet to talk about these kinds of things. Even if the minority students weren't in great numbers, there was the social divergence here. You have two groups: the kids from [university] parents, and then the kids who were the [...] penitentiary children, really a dichotomy of kids. This could be one way of getting across how kids feel.

Corbin also credits the Interact Club with encouraging and helping recruit students to participate in this troupe. The Interact Club, the youth organization of the Rotary Club, says Corbin, supported the development of "kids who wouldn't be seen that way,"—meaning as positive youth leaders, except for their participation in the club. Corbin had heard enthusiastic claims about the peer leadership conference which involved Selinsgrove Area High and Edwards' first Troupe
performance. Describing the spirited endorsement of his son who attended an earlier peer leadership conference at Selinsgrove, Corbin remarks, "When a kid comes home and talks about something that happens at school so positively, it is well-worth investigating and supporting."

So Corbin inquired about the conference to Edwards and another teacher, and Corbin subsequently recruited a contingent of his own high school students to attend the next peer leadership conference.

Corbin's approach for recruitment to his troupe was to seek recommendations from teachers of both positive leaders in school like Student Council members, and of leaders from groups considered negative or rebellious – because he saw that those pro-socially compliant and "trouble-makers" both demonstrate initiative and leadership. Arriving at their first meeting together, the two groups found themselves facing one another, confused to be included in the peer leadership contingent from the high school. After a weekend of team building, the walls of the cliques had broken down, said Corbin, and students became supportive of one another. They performed their first skit at the peer leadership conference, and as part of ongoing community service, Corbin's version of the Tolerance Troupe continued to operate after the conference.

Skit topics were picked by the students and characters answered audience questions, said Corbin, allowing audiences "to see what discrimination can do," exploring viewpoints and attitudes through audience interaction. But what happened to Corbin's alternative troupe was quite the opposite of the long run of Selinsgrove's Tolerance Troupe.

A new administration voted into that district disapproved of the alternative education program Corbin had been developing for over four years, and his program was terminated without debate. "The kids were so devastated, as was I," reported Corbin. "They [the school's administration] told us on the afternoon the school board was going to vote on it. It was a done
deal." Corbin called the students and their parents together, to attend the meeting that evening, but no one was allowed to speak until the vote was taken to eliminate the program. Students and parents stayed until the end of the meeting into the night and spoke in favor of Corbin's alternative program, but were only permitted to weigh in after the board's vote. It is hard to convince some educators, said Corbin, "that some children are going to get 'left behind' and alternative education is the place to handle some of those children who would get behind or fall between the cracks." He was completing his Masters in Counseling, designing and teaching in an alternative to the regular classroom, and his program was working – "keeping kids off the street, keeping them in school and out of jail, and they were graduating," said Corbin, clearly upset more than a decade after the program and his oversight of the student actors drawn from this group was terminated. His program closed by board fiat, Corbin resigned from the district a year later.

Perhaps it is inappropriate to contrast these two improvisational, problem-posing student theatrical groups, comparing apples to pomegranates, but it is instructive that Corbin set out to institutionalize an alternative program, and along with his program, his troupe was an outgrowth of a larger, structural change that he attempted to secure as part of the school on behalf of less-valued, marginalized students. After all, the district where Corbin set out to provide an alternative for "troublemaker" students who did not do well in the traditional high school classes is a more affluent one than Selinsgrove's, one with greater disparity between highest and lowest incomes. Clearly this community and its politics are not the same as Selinsgrove's, where Edwards enjoys the support of his district and school, and where the Tolerance Troupe has functioned and flourished for fourteen years running and more since the years this study was conducted. Said Edwards of his district and administration:
I’m very blessed to be a teacher in a school district that is very supportive for one, and I think the other thing is that because I am a teacher who is liked pretty well by the students and the community, some people look past the color issue. However, that’s always on my mind just like it’s always on my skin so rather than thinking about it, I just realize that that is what it is and I need to convey to people how important it is that they look at individuals not by their skin color or by their sexual orientation or anything other than how that individual interacts with you. [...] It’s about 'What is this individual doing in a sense, in a positive way, to make the world a better place' or just to make people’s lives less hassled than is typical. [...] 

And people are going to make judgments about me based on my color, based on my gender, or what have you, but I’m still going to be focused on doing the best that I can to make this world a little more hassle free because goodness knows, we all have problems that we have to face every day.

I have italicized above what I believe typifies the way the ethic of tolerance is framed by Edwards and his message transmitted through his audience debriefings: the individual may either choose to inflict pain, remain uninvolved, or reach out and stand up in the face of uncalled-for aggression. The idea of individualized choice dominates and goes no further into cultures or structures of power or privilege which might shape such a choice among these basic options necessary. And all one can do is to make life a little easier for one another given the conditions in which we locally must live. It's a humble, do-able mission that fits in just that frame.

Continued support is given for Edwards and the Troupe including release time to travel and perform. In exchange, the Troupe has affected school climate positively, as adults, students, and administrators attest. One study-participant's mother has taught at the school for over thirty
years and lauded Edwards and the Troupe's work in its effect on student conduct; in my interview with Barbara Corbin, a longtime teacher at SAHS, she also attests that the climate at Selinsgrove Area High has improved since Edwards instituted the Tolerance Troupe (Kimberly; B. Corbin). Spoken on record for a film produced by the Pennsylvania Human Rights Commission, former SAHS Vice Principal Chad Coors attested that, because of the Troupe's work, he has seen "a much higher level of respect between students-and-staff, and students-and-students" in terms of awareness of speech and actions that could be taken as offensive speech and behavior" (as cited in Cort, 1999). With administrative endorsement, the Troupe serves as ambassadors for the school, district, and the larger community. However, except for one performance in freshman assembly, they do more work outside the school, and their work does not appear to threaten their board or administration; it does not challenge or propose change in any institution. Their level of challenge in issues of bias and social aggression is limited enough to bring home a message of respect but not to shake any windows or rattle any walls.

ACT SEVEN, Scene 2, "Something would fall out of my mouth, and I'd be like, 'I don't know where that came from.'" Constraint by method

Improvisation should be spontaneous, a product of speaking one's subconscious when it comes to voicing one's character, as Chelsea saw it, judging by the above quotation which speaks to her dismay. As for the consciously-crafted skit and consciously assigned role, students need structure and prompting to come up with dialogue, particularly for the least stage-experienced students just beginning involvement with the Troupe.

But there isn't much time to come up with the skits. Edwards usually receives communication from a school or organization asking for help addressing some specific issue; as mentor and director, he sets up the scenarios for the Troupe performances. Rehearsals are held
typically on late Sunday afternoons, and the performance is generally held that same week, with perhaps six to eight rehearsals, and may include one other after-school rehearsal to memorize a rough, basic sequence of lines and minimal blocking. Furthermore, student actors gather in the hallway foyer to the auditorium to rehearse, or if the weather is good, practice outside on the steps; there is no designated space, which contributes to the ad hoc nature of rehearsals. There are some adequate justifications for this: students would need key access to the building, so rehearsals are held in the hallway where others can see students arrive and open the doors for them. The pressure is on Edwards to produce two coherent skits in a couple of hours, and he creates two scenarios, directs them, and with input from more experienced actors, creates a basic sequence of dialogue, sequences, and movements.

The pressure to produce these scenarios in a day or two's rehearsal means that students have little time, or perhaps see little need to prepare themselves as scripted actors might ahead of time, little need or time to reflect on the character they play and what that character might say in the skit portion of performance. Students do report that, outside of the skit, in dialogue with the audience, they do think about how their character might react, but paradoxically, do so by relying on stereotypes. What would "a bully" say? What would "a target" say? How would an indifferent bystander react and why? Some students' perception is that they provide half of the "script" although one student estimated, more accurately to my observation, that perhaps one quarter of the skit dialogue is student initiated while Edwards provides 75% (Ileana). In some cases, her estimate might be generous.

It was my perception that the skits were rushed into an arc so quickly that students process only minimally either the character or the conflict. For example, when asked if she could remember her most difficult skit, one member who played a target of homophobia had a
hard time knowing how to interact with the audience because Edwards' point was that one's sexuality should make no difference in how one is treated, and therefore, she was told that understanding her character's sexuality wouldn't matter. As a character, however, the student actor felt that she needed to know her sexuality so that she could respond self-knowingly as that character to the audience. She wanted Edwards to tell her definitively the character's sexual orientation; as a character, she could not remain cut off from knowing her own sexuality which would then affect her answer to an audience. Without developing her own insight about what the aggression would mean to her, she accepted the given position of "don't tell" which might have short-circuited thinking and speaking about that character's identity and what the homophobia directed to her character would mean:

We didn't let the students know if she [the skit character] was a lesbian or not [...] so I found it hard to answer questions -- because I didn't even know if I was supposed to be playing a lesbian or a straight person, so I didn't know how to answer. [...] If you're a racist, that is easy. You just say 'black people' or 'Mexicans' [...] and just be a racist, ignorant person, and that's pretty easy. You just tap into your inner being. But if you are playing a same-sex character, it is much harder. (Gracie)

How could this student actor process those "inner being" feelings if she cannot let them enter as her sexual identity or as an ally for gay students? Not knowing is a disservice, like claiming "color-blindness" when it comes to race, when similarly, reliance on being told if one's character is gay or straight removes some of that actor's agency which youth too easily relinquish. More difficult subjects including homosexuality and abortion create more inner conflict for some students than racism. Not being able to answer during audience participation made for an embarrassing performance, said Gracie, but with only days between practice and performance, I
had to wonder why she didn't solicit more support, going a little deeper into her character or dilemma, and if she were challenged to keep the focus on homophobia, not on sexuality as the point of the skit was intended, and if she could focus of her answers likewise to the audience without more support. More exploration and information might have made the interaction easier for her and increase her insight into the issues that gay, lesbian, and non-conforming straight youth face as well.

For my participants, audience interaction is their greatest challenge in creating character, motivation, and understanding of the imagined Other. Drew acknowledges that the interactive dialogue requires much more from the actor because:

You basically get told your lines before you do the performance, so it’s a lot less improv in the skit as it is after the skit when they ask you questions. [...That’s] where you have to start thinking differently about other people, where again the tolerance comes in. You have got to understand the people for who they are, and you have got to understand what their life is like.

If the actor cannot imagine that character’s life, said Drew, then it is too easy to slip out of character and not be convincing. Individuals who have done the most stage-acting (Drew; Sara; Max; Dylan; Cassandra) had the most to say about importance of researching a character in more depth by preparation or rehearsing the improvised questions and answers. I would add that unless that quality of reflection isn't given time and emphasis, playing that character without insight would be less of an educative experience for the actor, "where the tolerance comes in" when playing the Other. Audience and actors alike need time to imagine motivations. Olivia discussed mixed feelings about her and her fellow actors not processing their own assumptions in
the first year of the Troupe. "I don't remember being challenged to open up my own head; obviously, everyone does [...] I hope there is a better process for that now."

Not the least contradiction in creating this Other is how the scenarios depend on stereotypes to combat stereotyping. To create the aggressor or bully Other, "you had to draw on past experiences and what you heard other people say, and what you heard in the news, and sadly, sometimes you have to draw off of stereotypes" (Chelsea). Many participants found the exaggeration of playing stereotyped bullies or racists quite laughable, but instrumental in heightening conflict and justifiable in putting the point across. No bully or racist likes to see how ridiculous he or she appears, participants noted (Theo; Tasha) or experiences what it is like to see their "opposite" (Danielle); or feel another's pain (Jeanette; Cassandra). Processing in any formal way with a mentor or elder that would address who a character is imagined to be and how one deals with insights from such a projection, reflecting on one's own biases, still appears to depend on how experienced the actors are, and no processing time is built into the rush to create and deliver a scenario within the week with a shifting cast of young actors.

Other limitations create constraints on what this particular performance pedagogy can accomplish. The annual freshman performance does express the intent and dedication of the administration at SAHS to create a positive school climate, and the board and district is supportive. The Troupe draws its actors from high-achieving students who must keep up their academic standing the same as student athletes. But some student actors mention that since social aggression and racism continues in their school, they wonder why the Troupe does not present additional performances or interventions throughout the school year, apart from the freshman skit, for a higher profile. They understand, as does Edwards, that the student body outside of the newcomer freshman class would know the actors too well as individuals to believe
in their characters, and so not take the skit seriously. But the actors also see the need for Troupe's message in their own school as ongoing and inadequately addressed by that single freshman performance. Interestingly it was male actors who expressed this need (Justin; Max; Dylan).

**ACT SEVEN, Scene 3: Tolerance discourse and denial** --"I always hated the name. I always hated the name *Tolerance Troupe*. It had that nice 'TT.' I just don’t like the word *tolerance*. I never did."

Olivia of the original Troupe spoke of her regret that the Troupe as it was constituted in the early days did not do enough. A teacher now herself, she wonders about the way her students would understand tolerance:

I guess it was *pretty safe* starting out to call it the Tolerance Troupe and to promote not being a bigot, but that doesn’t make it the right name. I think *it was pretty safe* at first to be starting with awareness raising in the schools in the area, in this conservative area, this kind of closed-to-other-parts-of-the-world area.

I wonder if the discussion has opened up more since then, or if that’s something that high school kids would recognize more easily today. I wonder [about] the *difference between tolerance and acceptance*. I was considering being a teacher in a similar area.

Actually, although I would say where I work there is a more liberal political trend, but it’s still a very rural white area, and there’s been quite a bit of racism bubble up with this [Presidential] election. I think a lot of my students -- they’re a little bit younger, they’re in middle school -- but I think *a lot of them would recognize the difference*. I have high expectations.
Olivia admits that "tolerance" is only a stop-gap, an inadequate partial step to acceptance. She wonders aloud if others would know that more could be asked from people than to accept the discourse of tolerance. She was in line with many of the alumni who found tolerance inadequate for the task. She spoke of an angry African American teen friend, frequently a target of racist harassment, who was in the audience for a Tolerance Troupe skit. Olivia recalled, "I remember his feedback being sort of, 'So what? No one ever calls it like it is. It’s a good step, but it’s not like we had a better solution.' It did get a conversation going," she remarked, "but stopping short of violence, didn't change anything." Olivia speculated that this young man and Edwards would have a heated dispute over the Tolerance Troupe's moderate approach:

I feel like he and Harvey [Edwards] would have totally clashed because he [her peer] wanted all the issues to really be radicalized and people to feel uncomfortable, and I don’t think Harvey [Edwards] wanted people to feel uncomfortable. [... Edwards] just wanted to slightly step out of the zone of what was already going on and what was already happening in schools, so just slightly step out and not make too many people uncomfortable. [...] I think it was done pretty safely. It definitely was stirring up things that hadn’t been stirred up, but at the same time, I think at first he didn’t want it to stir things up too much. Energizing but safe.

Olivia notes that the Troupe's approach was not to instigate or institutionalize reform or redress inequalities but address the issue of misuse of social power within the intimacy of the school world and the individuals who must navigate it.

Hank, U.S. Naval officer and character representative for his company of enlisted sailors also comments upon the limits of the term *tolerance*. I have added italics in the excerpts that follow: "I think *acceptance* is a better term. Simply tolerating another person can lead to other
conflicts down the road. Truly accepting other people makes negotiating differences." Alumni, including Olivia and Hank appear particularly sensitized to the importance of language, context, and meaning.

Aside from remarking on the pleasing alliteration of the two "T's", seven alumni also mentioned explicitly that either acceptance would be a term of preference over tolerance or that tolerance should equate with acceptance, indicating that over 40% of the alumni interviewed regard using the discourse of tolerance as problematic. Some of their definitions and explications follow:

When it first came to be, [Tolerance Troupe] had a nice ring to it, and it still does. Over time, we've recognized that tolerance is a disappointing word. I think we'd rather truly accept, or maybe something that surpasses that type of word. (Larkin)

I think the word acceptance is a little broader. When I think of the word tolerance I think of putting up with. [...] We're not about putting up with; we're about changing and about acceptance of people who are exactly like yourself. Acceptance Troupe. (Caroline)

Tolerance means being accepting of others even if you don't necessarily agree with them [...]. In order for society to function, you have to accept it. You have to tolerate it because there will always be somebody who has a different opinion from you. [...] So maybe the only other word I could see being used is acceptance. Accept and agree to disagree. (Chelsea)
Tolerance should be a bare minimum; acceptance and appreciation of differences is what is needed. (Lara)

Antonia understands tolerance as being inclusive of acceptance also. She mentions acceptance in defining tolerance, yet essentializes those categories of self into a "what" one may be:

You’re accepting and you’re living with the differences, and it’s okay. But you accept it. [...] like you don’t have a problem with it, you’re accepting it. [...] in a way, opening up to saying, 'Hey, it's okay: whatever religion you may be, or sexual orientation, or nationality, it's okay to be what you are.'

Below, Kimberly brings up a distinction which becomes salient in the controversy over the concept of tolerance, should it supersede or whitewash justice or fairness.

Tolerance kind of means separating people from the things that they do, I guess. Appreciating them as people instead of looking at how they live their lives. [...] Of course, [...] if we just tolerate the other points of view, then we are not really fighting for what we believe in, so I think tolerance is better as it applies to people [...] accepting people rather than accepting situations and the way things are. (Kimberly)

I have italicized her distinction between human imperfection and intolerable injustice. Kimberly later calls the conflict between tolerance and justice "a difficult balance" to respect others, but to fight for justice and equity.

I have framed tolerance in this Act's opening quotation as the least one can do, since many alumni remark on the limitations of the discourse of toleration, but to quote Antonia whose quotation opens this section more fully and more fairly, she said that "standing up is the least one can do." Standing up for fair treatment marks the distinction between the passivity of tolerance and resistance against injustice. Tolerance is not enough when justice and equity is at stake, and
passive tolerance complicates this seemingly benign concept. Nevertheless, trumpeting tolerance without a need for resistance to injustice is perhaps the least one can do. Tolerance, as the least one can do, can be understood literally as the least effort one can make, or worse, it can be employed as a slippery smokescreen. In some ways, one can make an analogy to the way Martin Luther King spoke of non-violent resistance, and others only glowingly repeat his approach of non-violence yet gloss over the need for resistance.

Advocated as a wider, political or institutional concept, toleration appears to allow difference but from a position of privilege. Tolerance has generated increased discussion after the terror attacks of 9/11/2001 as a strategy for maintaining cultural hegemony (van Dijk, 1992; Blommaert & Verschueren, 2002) and uncritical paternalism (Macedo & Bartoleme' 2001). Wendy Brown (2008) traces the development of tolerance from a code word for reproducing white supremacy in America in the sixties and seventies to an international, empty, floating signifier today (with apologies to Stuart Hall), a feel good, de-politicizing discourse which "signifies differently and attaches to different objects in different national contexts" (p. 3), a "retreat from stronger ideals of justice" (p. 5). Argues Brown, when elevated to political principle, tolerance at its most benign is used as a substitute for the harder work of creating equity or insuring freedoms, and employed insidiously, it is a whitewashed discourse for cultural imperialism. As Elizabeth Spellman (1988) wrote much earlier, "Tolerance is easy if those who are asked to express it need not change a whit" (p. 183). Such a bland appeal neither offers a promise of reform nor any magical tipping point toward greater equity or peace.
A New (and limited) Hope: "When you say 'one person at a time,' that’s what makes it so cliché. [...] People just have to be open and willing to learn, and again, be realist -- a lot of people aren’t. That’s why I say one at a time, because that’s all you can hope for." (Alex)

Alex, author of the quotation for this section's discussion, calls himself a realist, and limits any change of heart to the individual level, forget structural reforms. Even as Brown and others critique politicians and institutions that risk nothing by touting tolerance, doing nothing to further redistribution of social power or goods, Brown acknowledges too that on a personal level, tolerance is essential to peacefully getting along (audio interview, November 23, 2008). The personal level is precisely the scale of Edward's and the Troupe's work in the schools. Perhaps it is wisdom to keep it small although the approach is limited, individualized. Perhaps the age of the actors and audience makes that limitation a necessary one. The world of the adolescent is frequently circumscribed by family, neighborhood and town, school, religious congregation, and peer group, and so, individuals in these are more prominently seen than are invisible institutions. Perhaps our American culture of individualism frustrates a broader understanding of institutionalizing structural necessities to insure equity or provide greater freedoms with protections against abuses of those less powerful.

When I asked current Troupe actors if there were limits to agreeing to disagree and letting live, if individual tolerance were best choice of designation for the Troupe and message, and if tolerance were the best course of action to recommend rather than changing larger structures, they repeatedly did not understand my question. During interviews, I used the example of the Civil Rights movement: for example, would it be enough for a white person to be nicer to individual black people, rather than challenge their own privilege and agitate for equal legal protection and against segregation? Even after giving my example, younger students
returned to the importance of personal choice. The largest structural entity implicated with possible creating a broader policy that could expand the work of tolerance or equity as they understood it was the size of a school which might institute another troupe modeled on their own. (Ileana). With only one exception, Cassandra, who discussed legislation to allow gay marriage, discussion of ways to expand both peacekeeping and fairness beyond individual tolerance returned to the individual's choice to speak up, be kinder, and to disengage from active aggression against others.

Of course, these outcomes are laudable, the minimum path toward coexistence, but for the student actors, there was no awareness that tolerance as a concept could be problematic, either as a generalized discourse or that structure might facilitate peacemaking and negotiation, or might supersede or constrain an individual's choice. Only one current Troupe member spoke of understanding as being a better message or goal than tolerance, calling the new name "The Understanding Troupe" (Theo), which, without the alliteration, he said, "sounds terrible." Two students made clear distinctions between tolerance and acceptance (Justin; Dylan), tolerance being a "baby step" inclusive of all the skits and all issues and controversial moral positions, like abortion that the Troupe addresses. As Dylan aptly stated, tolerance is "the next step from ignorance." At least ignorance can no longer be used an excuse, as Edwards had said.

Only alumni, rather than current student actors, found any problem with tolerance as a discourse, yet the alumni also understood that tolerance as the least avenue is necessary to address a conflict, and may be what is called for by situations requiring cautious gradualism. Hank finds such discretion necessary; taking a flexible approach instead of a confrontational one, may be quite appropriate to change another's thinking about volatile issues:
Ideals take generations to change. Little by little a better environment can be created, and it is important to develop those foundations early in life. Everyday walking around, you hear comments – it is personal choice which to correct and which to let go.

Asked how he might describe himself, he adds cryptically, that he is "aware of the imperfection of myself and those around me." How one might see oneself and change, to become aware of the good and bad, and the extent to which one might attempt to change others is a difficult call. Tracy, the second member of the original Troupe who responded to the study, follows upon and deepens this insight:

At first I considered tolerance to mean the understanding and awareness of multiculturalism. However, the literal meaning of tolerance, which means to withstand or endure, is problematic. I think the reason it was able to work well, though, was because changing attitudes is not an overnight process. Baby steps are often taken in this kind of educational process. First comes tolerance, then acceptance – one hopes.

Again, many agreed that the scale had to be kept small; "The big picture is too big," Lara wrote. Although it sounds cliché, she added, "I think that's what the Tolerance Troupe tried to do -- bring these issues to small communities around PA, and take on one school at a time". "Telling your friends speaking with you what you will and what you will not accept is what one person can do," said Karen. "You can't really change their minds but you can influence them. You can let them know why you think what you think, and you can do it in a way that doesn't insult them" (Chelsea).

Other alumni, however, agreed on the need for structural guarantees for equal protection, including mention of limits on hate speech (Sharon). Kimberly hoped that exposure on a small scale like performances would "inspire people to look for bigger solutions." Kimberly's
comment fits with Edwards’ own objective in taking the Troupe to other schools and
organizations in hopes that adults with influence might see the Troupe and instill wider policies,
and if not, at the very least, use the power that teachers have in the halls and their classroom.
And this move to adults’ responsibility raises the importance of teacher agency.

Although students see themselves performing for peers, Edwards’ performances are not
just for young people, but for parents, civic group leaders, administrators, and teachers –
particularly for teachers as agents for change. Edwards affirms that teachers need to use that
power for creating more equity in the classroom, in the halls, and in their schools:

With all the power that we have in our classrooms as teachers -- when we shut that door,
we have, in a sense, absolute power in our classrooms. So I don’t buy that a teacher
cannot make a difference. Standing out on hall duty and making sure a person doesn’t
push another person, making sure that people don’t call each other names in your
classrooms, making sure that your classroom is a level playing field. That you’re not
playing favorites in the way that students see, and then they look at you and say, 'This
person is unjust or prejudiced.' I think that is the very least that teachers can do to make
the school environment better.

So I don’t really buy the notion that, 'Well, I won’t get support from my
administration,' or what have you. So many things could be handled in the classroom that
could stop people from carrying them outside of the classroom. If I say in my classroom
that, no, it’s unacceptable for you to say, 'Mr. Edwards, that test was gay.' That’s
unacceptable, and if I say that in my classroom then this should begin to resonate in the
head of that student that what he’s saying, or what she’s saying is inappropriate.
So I really don’t buy the notion that teachers don’t have the power or won’t get the support. I think we have enough power in the classroom to make a difference on that small scale that could ripple out.

Individual teachers do have power to create a safer school climate in their classrooms and in the halls. What indications do we have from the performances that this message of power is being amplified by faculty or administrators? Certainly, baby steps are as necessary for teachers as well as for students. Working the way up from baby steps so one can take a grown-up step may be expected of teachers and administrators also. Sadly, however, resistance through denial seems to be the toughest nut to crack, for students and even more so for adults.

"It is a good way to make a difference --Not only for teenagers, but for adults." Denial, resistance, and reaffirmation

The opening quotation from Jeanette addresses what she hopes, that the Troupe could expand communication between adolescents and adults. For this student, adults witnessing a Troupe performance might facilitate dialogue between the generations, demonstrating to elders that teens seriously do care about issues -- civility, justice, immigration, and the political process, including a Presidential election which became a focus for skits which addressed race and polarization of the electorate. Said Jeanette, not only would elders see that young people had concerns about the world they would soon enter, but parents and other elders would also understand the stresses on adolescents that their sons and daughters might not easily divulge to their parents or other adults. Maybe the skit would foster more involvement by adults into the inner worlds of their teens (Jeanette), a significant aspiration.

Unfortunately, not all adults will listen to kids or to Troupe performances. Here is what I saw during the twelve assemblies I attended held in public middle and high schools during one
school year. After the assembled students took their place on the floor, in chairs, or in bleachers of common rooms or auditoriums to watch the Troupe's sometimes shocking performances, a few teachers would leave the room. At one school, no principal or vice principal was present to greet the Troupe, to introduce them, or to comment on the performance or message of the Troupe; instead, an engaged teacher would receive and introduce the Troupe. For many visiting performances, a few adults had decided actively not to listen.

With teacher and administrative follow-up support, performances could be amplified by a school wide, classroom-wide discussion. I interpret the absence and disconnect of some teachers and some administrators with lacking commitment or responsibility for institutionalizing measures of equity and protection against bias-violence and social aggression in the very schools which invited the Tolerance Troupe to perform, as if the performance were a band-aid for a chronic condition. I cannot say which teachers did or did not discuss or expand on the performance when students returned to their classes, but I did see lack of engagement in some teachers and administrators who preferred to catch a forty minute break instead of being involved in the Troupe's performance. Not only is volitional adult participation part of the constraint of "one-and-done" one-shot show of good intentions by Edwards and the visiting actors, but it is part of the problem with the discourse of tolerance itself and confirmed by the experiences of alumni in their reports, but largely unnoticed by current student members.

Alumni mentioned incidents vividly remembered in which students and adults resisted the message of the Tolerance Troupe, and examples follow:

I remember this one school in particular. I can't remember where it was, but they would tell us what the main issues were, and we would base our skit on what was really going on there. [...] This [skit] was on racism, and a lot of their students were using the n-word,
and just comments that were completely inappropriate. [...] It was so funny because we knew this going into it, and we knew this is how a lot of their student body was speaking to each other regardless if they were white or black or Puerto Rican or Hispanic -- they were all speaking to each other this way. [...] 

We did the skit. We were so surprised because it involved one of the white members calling one of our black members the n-word, and that was hard for me too because we actually did use very vulgar language in the skit [...].

We said, 'This is what you guys are doing to each other.' And they would have a chance to talk to us while we were still in character. [...] It was funny because I’m pretty sure it was me with the white group that was calling the other students the n-word, and they [the audience] were just dive-bombing us and saying, 'I cannot believe you said that,' and really getting upset and angry. (Lori)

Lara remembers specifics from another performance:

During my sophomore or junior year, we had a performance at a high school near Gettysburg. A male student tried to protest that his school didn't have "those sorts" of problems: racism, prejudice, homophobia. [Another member of the Troupe] stood up and told him what she had found scrawled on a bathroom stall door: "This is a racist school." It was a chilling moment when he had nothing to say in return because his school did have those problems, but possibly as a young, white man, he didn't experience them himself.

Larkin remembers a particularly defiant brand of denial exhibited by a teacher in the front row.

I think race [got audiences the most upset]. I think when we went into schools, the idea of bullying -- people found that hard to believe that that [bullying] was really occurring at
their school, and maybe sometimes when we talked about underage drinking or drug use because that was also very hard to accept that maybe it was going on.

One time we were [at SK.] School District [which] had an Act 80 day. So we went there and performed *for the teachers*, and we did some skits about bullying and drugs and racism. And there was a teacher who sat in the front the whole time with a newspaper up on top of his face and [was] just so disrespectful. He never looked at us. We performed in the morning and went back to school, and Mr. Edwards said he called him out in the second half, and the guy's response was, 'Well, this doesn't pertain to us.'

I think that pretty much sums up some peoples' idea.

I guess some of it is [that] people really don’t see it. They don’t see their students or their children being a part of drug use or whatever other issues. Maybe also it’s a little bit easier if you don’t have to deal with these types of things. [Mr. Edwards] thought we’ve got to talk about things. We need education, and that really disrupted some people’s core ideas on the way things should work. (Larkin)

A teacher in the auditorium on staff development day with a newspaper over his face is a disturbing image of willful refusal, but consistent with the reception of much bad news or a challenge to any comfortable status quo, particularly when one can claim tolerance is sufficient for the dominant group, and given-for-granted. Lori, finishing a Masters in school counseling, described how some teachers she works with will ignore harassment in the halls where a teacher might intervene with a teachable moment:

I have already spoken to them about things that they should be aware of, or are happening in their own classrooms because I will have students come and tell me it is happening in their classrooms. Like this first grader who told me the kid behind her was saying the *f-
...word [...]. I brought it to the teacher's attention, and sometimes that doesn't go over very well, being younger, being an intern. 'This is my classroom, I can handle it' [...It's] not me trying to be a know-it-all, or me trying to tell the teacher how to run their classroom, just once again bringing it to your attention, the awareness piece of it. (Lori)

Awareness is how Lori sees the mission of the Troupe and she carries that awareness with her into her professional life, to find that even among other school professionals, awareness is sometimes unwelcome.

Denial is an energy saver, and at the same time, it preserves privilege and reinforces bias. In *Discourse and the Denial of Racism*, van Dijk (1992) advances the notion that denial is a strategy of racism reinforced in everyday institutional talk and texts as a way to keep face and project a positive self-presentation. Using his nation, the Netherlands, as an example, van Dijk asserts that the more "liberal" and diffuse the racism [or other bias against marginalized groups] in the society, the more denial is called upon to do its work, and the more any incident of bias is regarded as an incidental exception or the work of an occasional bad actor:

If tolerance is promoted as a national myth, [...] it is much more difficult for minority groups to challenge remaining inequalities, to take unified action, and to gain credibility and support among the (white) dominant group. Indeed, they may be seen as oversensitive, exaggerating, or overdemanding. The more flexible the system of inequality, the more difficult it is to fight it. (p. 96)

Simply put, this is the problem with everyone agreeing that tolerance is enough; it renders bigotry or marginalization a fluke, renders slights of privilege invisible, and individualizes the problem and its players. It makes blindness a virtue; tolerance when it denies systemic bias promotes agreement by over looking difference, calling it "colorblindness" or "not asking and
not telling” – which would likely whitewash differences in culture, ethnicity, or sexuality as well, perpetuating silencing and limiting correction of injustice. As alumna, Lori, perceptively said:

The issues and the topics and the things they are acting out is very prevalent in schools and things I think a lot of people shy away from… racism and prejudice [...] people try and act like [these things] aren’t going on.

One of the big ones we learned is when people say, ‘I don’t see color.’ That’s actually offensive because people want you to see them. They want you to see them for who they are and recognize their nationality or who they are. So that was something I actually used to say. I used to say, 'I have lots of different friends, I don’t judge them because I don’t see color, I’m colorblind.’ You learn about that saying and how it actually is offensive because we shouldn’t be colorblind. We should be learning and accepting.

Learning means exposure, dialogue, negotiation, and setting out to upset the status quo, including the status quo of assumptions about tolerance when it is used as a proxy for democratic debate or for advocating and establishing equity. Alumni see tolerance discourse as insufficient and problematic, but I believe that more disturbing still is inaction and denial that they report when lip-service delivers no service at all.

"You have to be willing to make that change, to have it spread" — "Tolerance" and "make-a-difference" discourses, as understood by the Troupe

Since younger, student Troupe members do not see tolerance as a contested rhetoric, what do the younger actors learn about others and about themselves, when asked to interpret the meaning of tolerance? How do they interpret the secondary discourse spoken along with and closely related to the way tolerance is used, that of making a difference? Current members offer
the following in rough aggregate, although there is variation in their responses: 1.) tolerance
means differences and disagreement which might or might not ever be resolved. Thus, tolerance
is about adaptation. 2.) Tolerance as change for the better is not conversion against another's
beliefs or will; only those who want to be changed will be changed; 3.) That change in attitudes
may happen over time, or may not; and 4.) Pro-social "making a difference" is necessarily small
and needs to be, in order to be accomplishable. Again all of four tropes are understood on an
individual and not on a systemic basis.

1. "You're just not going to change the entire world's beliefs": There will be disagreement,
so tolerance is adaptability.

Most students acknowledge heterogenic beliefs and practices — the kind of differences in
that disagreements are a given. Not everybody is the same; thus, not everybody will have the
same views, and there will be disputes over ideas, values, or practices. Drew expresses the most
common theme in this way:

If everybody were the same and had the same beliefs, we wouldn't have the issues of
cyber-bullying [...] but that will never happen, so I just think there is a limit [...]. You're
just not going to change the entire world's beliefs on what you do."

Similar to Drew's acknowledgment of the limitation of agreement and belief, Justin agrees, "I
know I'm not going to change their [bigots'] minds just by talking to them, but I try to do what I
can. Just saying something makes a difference."

Justin's comment shows how the rhetoric of "making a difference" threads through the
discourse of tolerance used here and how the Troupe defines its mission. But Justin also
emphasizes taking action in the passage that follows, indicating as others have, that tolerance is
not conversion to any "enlightened" point of view, but a means to control one's expression of
beliefs, to use that "filter" that Helena had spoken of. Yes, the Troupe does want a change in people, admits Justin, but only a change of behavior toward others, not to change their inner feelings or biases. The emphasis is on learning to cope with differences despite one's biases.

Justin explains:

It's [Tolerance] more conflicts. I think we deal with more conflicts. Tolerance is not about acceptance so much because you can hate a person, but just don't act upon it. You don't have to say this stuff, so if you can, just keep it to yourself. So we try to promote tolerance rather than acceptance. [...] It's about just trying to allow people to have their own feelings about whatever the issue, but to accept that other people all have different ideas, and tolerate the ideas. [...] I think people are free to think what they want to think. But when you act upon these feelings or voice them in a way that is not positive [...] I think that's where it begins to be wrong.

To Justin, acceptance is not at issue, but "It's about actions," indicating that acting --behaving in finding a better way to cope with disagreement is the point of tolerance, including the mission of the Troupe. Cassandra and Gracie define tolerance as acceptance and as coping with disputes over irreconcilable core convictions; "Tolerance is just dealing with people" (Cassandra).

Jeanette also speaks about adjusting and moving forward. "When people say 'tolerate something', you don't have to believe in it. You don't even have to think about how everyone else thinks about it. You just have to adjust, in a way."

I look at Danielle's responses that follow in some detail about tolerance and what it has taught her since her responses encompass many students and alumni responses, from the most superficial reference to tolerance to a more nuanced understanding that includes a growing ethos of self. At first, Danielle spoke of tolerance as sufficient, provoking thought in the audience,
using the question "what is tolerance?" as a way of creating audience receptivity. But as she continued to speak, Danielle's extended definition also addresses adjustment and includes an implication of equal treatment with the capacity to change:

To me, tolerance means holding everyone on the same pedestal you put yourself on, not looking at people by the color of their skin but their person or personality they have. Not judging the book by its cover -- by getting to know the book, getting to understand the book or the person. Tolerance also means dealing with situations open mindedly, without just being, 'This is how I'm going to think, and this is how it is – I'm right, you're wrong.'

In addition to Danielle, two other students also referred to tolerance through the metaphor of not judging a book by its cover (Raj; Theo). Although Danielle feels the message of tolerance in the skits is to encourage flexibility of viewpoint, she recognizes that when racism comes up, she "automatically [goes] on defense mode, just because I am Puerto Rican," but she also defends her ethical stance more broadly if she would be assailed by disagreement over core values of fairness or justice. She frames the conflict as a standing-for-something in resistance to group-think. For instance, if confronted by a racist she is:

[N]ot going to treat them any differently just because they have a different way of thinking, but I'm not going to [let a racist] influence me in any way, if they do try. I'm not going to allow them to have me think a certain way like a group of people just because of how they feel. I know how I feel in a sense of not allowing ...or seeing people [as] littler than I am in the sense of race and nationality and sexuality.

In this way, she and other students and alumni speak of becoming more sure of their ethos as they mature, including contributions made by participating in the Troupe, solidifying a sense of values and justly treating others: "It's allowed me to see who I was and change [...] It's shown me
that I can have my point of view and have it brought up to the front. And it's okay for me to be who I am without having to please everyone else" (Danielle). Tolerance, here understood as openness to change and openness to others, is also extended to a self that makes self-knowledge of one's values more distinct and more affirmed, and this is overwhelmingly the case for the participants, both younger and older.

Only one current Troupe member saw tolerance as a quality which unified, similar to the collective unity of the Troupe itself. "When I think of tolerance, I think of unity. Unity of kids and people with different views, all getting together and seeing things in different ways, and tolerating different situations, opinions, people" (Leila). This student addresses a sort of pluralism or heterogeneity in this comment, and she also addresses adjustment, included in the comment which followed, that, "You can't expect someone to change how you want them to, but if you can get along, and if you can change for the better, that's good. But also, who is to say, what's 'the better'?" She answers her question, saying, "It depends. It's all in the inside of the individual and what they care about." Again, issues of fairness come down to individual's beliefs as if these were core, "inside", yet all individuals are not held to a "one-way" measure. Leila summarized the work of the troupe, explaining that "The Troupe isn't really about teaching you what to say in a situation. It's just exposing you and making you think about what you would do in this situation." Such a comment includes the modeling of many positions as an aid to deliberation and underscores the focus on taking action, rather than requiring belief.

2. "Tolerance has its place, but it doesn't solve everything." Tolerance is not conversion against someone's core beliefs or will. Only those who want to be changed will change

The way that younger actors addressed denial was more accepting than their older counterparts; they insisted that people are different, no matter why, what, or how. This
sentiment reiterates the first major theme but includes a reluctance to coerce change in another. Changing those who refuse to change isn’t going to work, said Theo:

You can't fight who they are, and I wouldn't want anybody to try to do that to me. And I actually tried to do that, to make people be who I am because people thought I was good, and I tried to make those people see that. But you can't make somebody see what they don't want to, even if it's right in front of them. You can't make people see it. You can try to help, but you can't force them to it.

In discussing her old ways of trying to convert or persuade others, Gracie finds that, "You can't change a person [...] It's up to them what they are going to be or what they believe." Max advises that the limit to tolerance is: "When you start trying to change other people's opinions and points is where I think it crosses the line, and where I would step in and say, 'Hey, that's not right. Keep your opinions to yourself – Don't try to impose them on other people.'"

From these comments and those that follow as student actors see it, tolerance defined as the Troupe's message is challenging assumptions and belief, but is a message that could only reach those receptive to it. The message is not directed toward converting those who would refuse to allow it an opening. Said Ileana, if someone is negative, "I can't help you if that is just the way you are. I'll say something, but I can't make you change. [...] I can't go into your brain and say, 'Here, change.'" The Troupe’s purpose, said Ileana, is to provoke thought only: "we can go out and make people think." And Cassandra agrees, saying succinctly that the Troupe’s objective is to challenge people to question belief.

If the purpose of the Troupe is to question belief and incite ethical action, then "the middle man" becomes the most important actor in the skit and in the audience. "If the bully doesn't want to change," said Theo, "we have that middle person who has to change, or who I
think we should change." The middle man is also a victim because the bully gives the indifferent or middle man a choice, said Theo, "and there are decisions we have to make." Tasha agrees that the indifferent character is pivotal. With encouragement to speak up: "The kid in the middle won't be the kid in the middle any more. He'll be the one saying, "I think you [the aggressor] should stop, and maybe we should go do something else." Justin also said in his interview, "The indifferent ones are the ones with power. They're the ones who can stand up and say, 'That's not right,'" and these indifferent ones represent the majority of the Troupe's audience. Ultimately, the indifferent audience member is asked to "make the difference" by arousing his or her outrage or empathy and providing a model for action. These student responses make most sense if the Troupe message of tolerance is taken at the level of individual choice.

Emma made a remarkable Peircian comment: "We gave them the doubt that they needed to start to change, even if it takes a long time. It may be the first step in a process of changing." Emma even stated that tolerance seems so unthreatening a message that using tolerance in the name of the Troupe lowers expectations of an audience, who do not expect any message more than "making nice" and when audiences arrive looking forward to getting out of class, disarming by the bland word tolerance makes the shock value of performances of conflict unresolved even more potent and unexpected, and increases the involvement of the audience. Tasha added that, although tolerance is used inoffensively in the name of the Troupe, "We perform with those words ['justice' and 'diversity'] in mind."

3. "If not now, maybe later." Making a difference happens over time -- or it may not

Students agreed with Emma above, that change doesn't happen all at once, and it may not for a long time. Therefore, when Troupe members perform or "walk the walk" as part of their daily school interaction, all they expect is for the challenge to belief to result in a little more
consideration, to raise awareness. Cassandra described a heated debate about homosexuality with a classmate that began in the classroom and carried over into the lunch line and cafeteria. Did she change anyone's mind? Cassandra says of her heated conversation with a friend as unconvincing, "I don't think I did [change her classmate's view]. But maybe she thought about it a little bit later," said Cassandra. Danielle also speculates that audiences may see a conflict in a skit that day and encounter a similar conflict in daily life later: "whether it will affect them now or if they grow up and think back [...] it will affect them some way – if not now, maybe later." In explaining why tolerance is "a perfect word" for the group, Jeanette said, "If you could understand someone -- and you could just change one person -- that could change a whole bunch of other people," and change might spread. This kind of pay-it-forward, tipping-point thinking seems to be the dominant belief of how behavioral and attitudinal change spreads, by contact individually and gradually.

4.) "Making a difference is not saying to change a person; it's saying to stand up for what is right." --Individualized difference is small, local, and beautiful.

Like tolerance, a concept assumed to have shared meaning in students' common discourse, making a difference is another ambiguous term. After all, acting-out some senseless, cruel offense certainly will "make a difference" in a perpetrator's life and a target's as well. In the context of the mission of the Troupe and student leadership, one assumes that the difference made is going to be positive, pro-social or altruistic, and that is what the students assume. Outside of this assumption held in common, there is some variation in how the students understand the making of this difference.

Ileana first conflated the terms: "the word tolerance basically sums it up, like making a difference." But Ileana then developed the "difference" made as improving one's attitude to be
more helpful and to overcome one's own negativity. For her, one makes a difference in one's attitude, and not necessarily for the sake of others. Other student actors regard making a difference as becoming more outspoken against unfair treatment (Emma; Danielle; Jeanette). Most agree that the audience is most important; that is, although one may hope to change the behavior of any individual in the audience for a Troupe performance, one may "make a difference" most by speaking up against injustice around friends' damaging or thoughtless remarks. (Justin; Jodi; Leila; Dylan; Danielle). The one-and-done performance has less impact; more influential is the impact one has with friends and family.

By their words, these young actors demonstrate that they have considered the importance of their peer groups and an awareness of performativity as "acting" or behaving in certain ways in front of friends that belie their feelings, including their sense of fairness. Regarding peers who might appear to act one way in school and behave another way outside of school, Drew speculates that one may come to see others with more compassion and understanding when "not under the watching eye of other people, being criticized all the time [...It] just made me more insightful about the way people, I think, really would be like." He was speaking in the context of seeing fellow actors with their own peer group in school and then getting to know actors he didn't know socially more intimately on an away Troupe trip. His observation makes a distinction about "acting" one way for the eyes of others and then letting one's guard down and behaving differently in a different context. He generalized this insight: perhaps seeing behavior in another context is sufficient "difference" made to change one's opinion of another who had been judged previously unfairly or unflatteringly.

"Acting on what you believe in" is how Dylan understands making that difference. On the importance of speaking up with people one knows, Dylan says, "It's more likely to stick if
someone you know or care about says, 'This isn't right.' I think it's more likely to have a profound effect. If we could find a way to have that profound personal effect in larger scope -- that would be great." The Troupe attempts to do so in performances, but students recognize that speaking up for the just treatment of others can be more significant in smaller peer groups.

Participants agreed changes are gradual and cumulative but must be initiated first. "One person can make all the difference. It takes one person to inspire others [...]. That one individual person flips it around and gets other people to say, 'Maybe they are right and what I'm doing is wrong.' And it takes that one person" (Emma). The assumption for the majority overall is that one change for the better will affect many down the line, and that is how change starts: "It takes one person to make others change," said Tasha. Their belief heard over and over is that one agent of change will have a kind of "Hundredth Monkey," tipping point effect, and a kind of improved adaptation follows. As Max said about provoking the audience into strong reactions by giving them a model, even a negative one, as a character they do not want to be. But someone in the cast then speaks up and models doing the right thing: "They see us making that difference, and think, 'Hey, why can't I do that?'"(Max). Can one, really?

After all, Edwards' message is that people are to be seen in all of their heterogeny and diversity as persons, not as a kind of metonymy of surfaces and stereotype. His point makes a crucial recognition of real differences, intersectionality, and individuation. Unfortunately, that tipping point of inspiration and ground-swell behavior change may not be reached one by one. Idealizing the lone individual who stands up and speaks out is necessary but not sufficient to make a change in school climate or local culture. When I think of the faith the students place in the individual who seeks another way peacefully to act or react to stop oppression, I'm reminded of the image on the poster of the sole Chinese student protester standing in front of a column of
tanks in Tiananmen Square in 1989 that was celebrated as the image of standing up to totalitarian power. School bullies, racists, and homophobes are not antidemocratic states. Individualizing acts of resistance ignores the kind of organization and the support it takes to make changes in policy and institutional behavior that would protect those individuals after they make that choice to dissent or to champion. Thus there is the necessity for autonomy and to stand for others, but a misleading assumption that individuals rather than collective action are powers sufficient to make that difference, so valued.

**Importance of adult support:** "A lot of people believe in you. I never knew that."

**Warmth, involvement, challenge -- when a teacher (or parent or clergy) asks how you are, he or she really means it.**

Overall, what becomes part of these students' experience is Edward's closing message that the Troupe performance delivers, a message that members and many alumni have integrated into their take on standing up for themselves and for others, in offering others models for making better choices, and again, in seeing a spectrum of subject positions within themselves, rendering for them a thoughtful ethical center and simultaneously more open view.

But what took me several readings to notice was that these students and alumni made reference to a variety of positive relationships with authority figures supportive of them. Even though the peer-to-peer, interactive message makes up a large portion of the effectiveness of Troupe performance pedagogy, students and alumni have been supported and give weight to positive relationships with the adults in their lives. No matter what the content of the skit, part of Edward's message in the didactic lecture given at the end of each performance is for troubled students and their allies to seek out help, to use the resources of adults, teachers, and the schools. In so many words, Edwards ends with a speech like the one given at freshman performance:
There needs to be some outside help. There is always outside help. There is always somebody you can go to -- a parent, a counselor, a teacher -- is always someone you can go to. And if you are afraid for somebody who’s getting hurt, then you go get some help for that person. You don’t have to solve the problem, find somebody who can help.

All participants as youths have participated in some kind of community service or volunteered their assistance to others, from babysitting and helping the elderly, to "Walk for Life" and AIDS fundraising events, to community organizing and political canvassing, all of which involved encouragement and involvement of trusted adults. A degree of trust in adult support has played a significant part in the continued growth in participants' values, in the outlook of the younger students and in the agency of these young adults.

Current and former Troupe members speak favorably of continued involvement with family and/or faith traditions and values of adult family (Alex; Danielle; Jeanette; Ariel; Jodi; Larkin; Ariel; Chelsea). Many credit the values learned at home and through religious institutions even when they have had conflict, disagreements, or questioned attitudes and beliefs, family faith, or faith leaders on issues important to them (Gracie; Emma; Ileana; Becky; Lori; Julie; Kimberly) Some see uninterrupted continuity between their performance in the Troupe and their earliest values; particularly, they credit parents and religious youth groups with raising issues of social justice and community service (Dylan; Drew; Olivia; Max). Several mention going to teachers and professors to ask for trusted adult guidance (Tasha, Sara; Theo; Leila; Antonia; Trina) when a dilemma might be too much for them to handle individually. One mentioned the influence of Scouting in service to others (Drew), and all point to the ongoing importance of adult guidance and support in their development and individuation.
Some participants have not spoken specifically or favorably of religious or parental attitudes but made sole reference to their own struggles in forming their ethical stance (Raj, Justin, Caroline; Tracy, Helena; Karen, Sharon, Hank, Lara) – yet all participants expressed respect for Edwards as mentor and model, for keeping them connected and involved. He is a skillful facilitator and more; he does not let any conflict or dispute within the Troupe or in an audience go untended. All say that his actions helped them "walk the walk." Ultimately Edwards' message is about taking action, and his warmth and involvement shapes those responsive to his philosophy who carry the message off stage and into continued practice and into reflection and a more mature praxis.

Even though tolerance is a problematic discourse, and the action to be taken is cast as an autonomous, individualized choice of response, the Tolerance Troupe offers a discourse and model of doing to counter the biased messages of many a conservative message taken for granted in this conservative rural area of the state, typical of the country's center-right Anglo mainstream. One must offer young people a message of conscience that Kumashiro (2000) calls an "Education that Changes Students and Society," (p. 40), as one that addresses the multiplicity and situatedness of oppression. The Troupe provides such an education through Edwards' support and the Troupe's internal cohesion -- to raise questions and issues, cultivate repeated opportunity for leadership for its participants to act on a counter-discourse of values of acceptance, and hold out the possibility of meaningful behavior change. Dylan summed it up, "If there's nothing to hear, then they [students] are not going to change the way they act."

Augusto Boal (2002) shares a parable, "The Political Master Swimmer," (cited in Schutzman & Cohen-Cruz) about a famous, powerful swimmer, a skilled lifeguard, who, passing by, sees one man struggling in a pool and who cries for help. The political master swimmer
considers rescuing the hapless drowning man, but defers, saying, "[You] are a single individual. When there are at least twenty of you, drowning together, then I will be at your service, ready to help you and save your life" (p. 134). Boal intends to mock the Marxist's arrogance of those with knowledge, power, and skillful means to share but who discount an individual's pain and withhold solution or succor because to rescue one life without ushering in full-scale revolution may be ideologically flawed. It is an individualistic culture we Americans share, taught to scorn collective need and collective solution. Whatever its limits in scope, method, or discourse, I would not be so arrogant to believe that the Troupe's counter-discourse would cease to matter if received by one individual in need of it.
ACT EIGHT: High School Musical, Conclusion, and Coda

Conclusion: Making belief, making hope

The use of theatre as pedagogy is nothing new. David Hornbrook (1998) writes as a historian of the Drama in the Schools movement, a movement in schools which took shape in the United Kingdom in the 1950s, itself a development from progressive assumptions about the healing and uplifting qualities of play in artistic expression in the development of young people. Hornbrook identifies Caldwell Cook as the Cambridge schoolman whose 1917 book, *The Play Way* introduced a program in which drama was intended as a more profound way to teach literature. Hornbrook credits Cook as one who sought to fuse "play ('the only work worth doing') with the idea of the player on the stage" (p.7). Dorothy Heathcote, writing from the heyday of Drama-in-Education movement, also called the Theatre-in-Education movement, (1970) and of progressive, expressivist pedagogy generally, asserted that drama "stands up" while agreeing to pretence, confronting players and audience with their own thinking and behaving, "whether at 'creating' or 'coping' level" (p. 1079), surprising an individual into new awareness. I believe a great deal more happens for the actors when the surprises are repeatedly sustained.

I suggest that awareness deepens from improvisation and practice, including practice at identification with multiple roles, as the actors in them create opportunities to see the constructedness of bias, of identities, and of rationalizations associated with these narratives and behaviors. I do not wish to underplay the importance of empathy that goes along with that recognition, but while actors become more aware of narratives as constructed, invented, and those as lived-in as well, awareness becomes less about imagined empathy, and more about seeing differences realistically, encountering and negotiating them. Returning to Alex's words,
"People have to open and willing to learn, and again, be realist – a lot of people aren't." In that way, for its audience, the needle of the gauge can only be pushed toward change a degree at a time, but the internal pressure in the actors is sustained and sustaining, to pushing them to change outwardly, dedicatedly. To employ the metaphor of living tree, growth for the actors is slow over time, but ongoing and transformative.

Furthermore, to examine what may be "real" about an obviously fictionalized, generalized performance of an "Other" requires taking some "standpoint," an accountable, functional, achieved position, aware of its own situation in interstices of class, race, gender, sexuality, ethnicity, language – its place in every intersection of power relationship which precedes us, those which we both challenge, re-construct, and sometimes reproduce (Haraway 1988; Harding, 1992). It appears that in the imagined encounter with even an ersatz Other -- as much as encounter and negotiation with an actual Other, unlike us and coming from a very different standpoint – either an imagined or real encounter -- may create a shift in self-making, rendering ethical deliberations about self and other into an avenue of agency and hope. Butler (2005) drawing from Foucault's techniques of the self and Levinas' encounter, argues that as we try to make ourselves intelligible or recognizable to one another, we come to interrogate our and another's norms and conduct, and cultivate responsibility for one another.

So here we are, current and former members of the Tolerance Troupe and me, the interpreter of their self-reported, narrated experience. We are living in "already" discourses of gender, race, class, relative privilege or disadvantage, experiencing and encountering intersectionalities in the singular. Although we experience such convergences in first person singular, we do not live solitarily. We are social beings, community-makers and partakers, always in contact and negotiation. Our social worlds -- and the language we use to shape it and
that shapes us -- are experienced through plurals, plural histories, cultures, and values accorded discourses that pre-exist us. We act and speak through them, a performance, and we inscribe meaningful kinds of "identity," "self," or "voice," but it is a mistake to think of identity, self, or voice as being unified or taken in the singular. Identity, self, or voice are not fixed once-and-for-all, not static achievements, but are those always in play, in process of being achieved, broken and slipping apart, and reconstructed, in the process of becoming as several and multiple – sometimes coherent and sometimes in contradiction.

In this denouement, the final Act, it is difficult to come up with one, final meaning of all that happens through the complex experience of the Tolerance Troupe. Nevertheless here is what comes through the members and alumni’s words. The members come to the Troupe with experiences of injustice, feelings of ambivalence, pain, or shame, and convictions about fairness, and leave their association with the Troupe more convicted in their beliefs, yet the quality they cite most about themselves and their convictions is openness. They attest that issues of bias and power stay foremost in their minds because of constant practice and talk. I interpret this is so because dialogue, debate, and imaginative play reiterates the language they can use and offers a range of models of alternatives for behavior. In Bakhtin's words, they hear and practice in many voices, engage in heteroglossia, and reenact rehearsals for ethical behavior, thereby "authoring" themselves. They suspend their own biases, however temporarily, and absorb more positions, paradoxically, using them to create for themselves identities as anti-racists and advocates for justice, identities which include greater certainty about equity as ethical behavior and greater openness to others. Within a community of learning, they work a praxis of problem-posing, acting and reflecting on action, a praxis that invites them and others to imagine and provoke themselves and others to think more deeply by feeling. The skits "make you think" and do so
from a critical distance while stirring up passion and memory, including a mix of guilt and ambivalence in awareness, through an artful, ideological, and a pleasurable pedagogy.

In rereading Vygotsky's essay, "The Role of Play in Development," I was struck by passages I had taken for granted but saw in a new way when I thought about Edwards' incantatory, standard introduction to the Troupe's skit: "Imagine...". "Imagine, we are in a locker room and the boys are on one side and the girls are on another," or he will say, "Imagine that it's right after lunch, and two groups of students are congregating in the hallway waiting for the bell to ring." Then Edwards calls, "Action," and dialogue begins. The skit is called into conscious, willed imagining and into concretization. Imagine this.

The development from games with an overt imaginary situation and covert rules to games with overt rules and a covert imaginary situation outlines the evolution of children's play," writes Vygotsky (p. 96). Participation in the imaginary situation is fulfilling an essential developmental need for children; the imaginary situation has rules, and in abiding by the rules, the participant in play delays gratification and, with self-control, directs willpower to the creation of the imagined world and abides by its rules, learning to see a "field of meaning" instead of objects, "acting independently of what he sees" (p. 97). Imaginative play develops abstract thought as well as moral reasoning: "In short," theorizes Vygotsky, "play gives a child a new form of desires. It teaches her to desire by relating her desires to a fictitious 'I' to her role in the game and its rules. In this way, a child's greatest achievements are possible in play, achievements that tomorrow will become her basic level of real action and morality" (p.100). Development through an imagined situation teaches the imaginer how to guide his or her actions by meaning, and this what both actors -- and audience -- are being asked to do.
The audience sits together and collectively observes and participates in "an overt imaginary situation with covert rules" in the mini-drama of bullying or bias. The covert rules of situations simulated in the skit seem to be "don't speak against your friends or they'll turn on you next," or "what's does a stupid name really matter anyway," or "she must have deserved it," and so on. When the action is cut at the point of crisis, the action unfinished, and no judgment is supplied until the audience asks questions or speaks out from a position of relative safety, often asking 'why' and looking for meaning, then the drama game changes. Students are then taken back into a position of an audience, as participants in a covert game – the Troupe mission -- with overt rules, those given of tolerance as allowing difference, explained as non-violence, -- and they are given options for action, "using their filters," speaking out as allies, seeking help, and so on.

And the actors, they trace and retrace this development repeatedly as they discuss the skits informally, formally create dialogue, rehearse repeatedly, anticipate audience questions and think of their answers, and in improvisation while they remain in character, abiding by the rules that frequently frustrate their real beliefs and goals. They are being brought back to the time of "let's imagine" and enacting that self control again and again, learning the language for speaking up, and rehearsing or imagining options for ethical behavior again and again. The skits they enact serve as games of self-control and abstract thought about these imaginary situations, and they consider their own covert rules. The message of the performances that make the rules of non-violent tolerance begins with their own experiences and those "rules" are reinforced explicitly at the debriefing at the end of every skit. As for the audience, judging from the experiences in which an audience frequently confuses the actors' positions with their fictional
characters’, the skit is a conscious game that audiences need to be reminded of its overtness from time to time.

Members of the Troupe all start from somewhere: those who volunteer for the Troupe have self-selected long before they spoke with me. Members of the Troupe self-select by the time they arrive at audition and return time and again to give performances so frequently that they become part of the core of actors, unlike those students whose interest fades or cannot make enough practices. Of these, I spoke briefly with a couple of alumni who did not interview with me because they attested that they felt their participation in the Troupe was cursory at best. Those I interviewed, I think, represent the best in the idealism and energy of youth, and in practice of a pedagogy of hope. As Freire explains, hope is an ontological need. "Without a minimum of hope, we cannot so much as start the struggle. But without the struggle, hope, as an ontological need, dissipates, loses its bearings, and turns into hopelessness. And hopelessness can turn into tragic despair." Hopelessness and despair are both cause and result of inaction, and therefore, writes Freire, and the task of the progressive educator "is to unveil opportunities for hope, no matter what the obstacles may be" (p. 3). To unveil opportunities for hope is what Edwards has done in his creation and sustaining of the Tolerance Troupe. So even if I do not believe in a hundred enlightened monkeys washing sweet potatoes or at their typewriters picking out King Lear, much less in the millennial Revolution for liberation, I do believe that these individuals will spread compassion and work the skills of critique and questioning they practiced in the Tolerance Troupe and use them throughout their lives. The already have, and they already do. They speak first and foremost as subjects of what they know and what they've done. Of joining the Troupe, "That's why I chose it, said Ileana. "It's my way of speaking out, not physically, but emotionally.” Enactment also physicalizes, even if students and alumni are not
aware of how it does so. By speaking and being, by "representing" as Ileana calls it, the body in
presence and practice deepens both range of options to consider and the taking of an ethical
standpoint which translates into the embodied metaphor of "walking the walk." They speak of
actions taken as deepening what they know and believe is right.

**ACT EIGHT, Scene 1: Action requires intervention --"My worst enemy is probably the
person who needs the most help"** (Theo).

What actions do they take? Fourteen of seventeen current Troupe members recount
stories when they have intervened in incidents of conflict or bias at school, at times spoken up
among their peers against rumor-mongering against others (Danielle; Jodi); they have come to
another's physical aid when others would not intervene (Theo); and spoken up to peers against
using slurs (Dylan). Some have told friends seen fighting in the hallways how their behavior is
seen by others: "Hey, that's not right, that's not cool,' and [that] others see them, and they look
like complete jerks" (Tasha) while several students have taken aside and counseled or mediated
with others more discreetly (Emma; Becky; Drew; Raj). Others have spoken up against racist
comments of elders (Max; Leila) and homophobia of their peers (Cassandra). Some students
have spoken up for themselves to stop others from stereotyping and making assumptions about
them, as well as having stopped a public conflict between rivals (Ileana). In all, 82%, from
freshmen to seniors have a story to tell about standing up, speaking out, and attempting to make
their school environment or social circle a little more just and a little more peaceful.

Although alumni recount fewer specific incidents of speaking up for friends or strangers
needing advocates, alumni make general reference to hard conversations they have had that
carried higher stakes that include getting along with roommates or in marriages, in their families,
including raising children, setting limits with in-laws, or dealing employers' prejudices in a more
diverse world than Selinsgrove's. Twenty-three percent of the alumni (4 of 17) told tales of
current conflicts over race, ethnicity, and contentious words exchanged over their outspokenness
against biased behavior in their circles. In addition to these, two additional alumni spoke of
recently letting go of acquaintances, too reminiscent of cliques they tried to fit in with as younger
students, their twenties' deja vu (Julie), or of rising to debates with friends and family in a highly
racially charged year of the Presidential election (Larkin). Including these sacrifices of
friendship, 35% of alumni had a specific story of a recent encounter with bigotry which required
intervention, intervention which they credited to heightened consciousness and problem solving
practiced in their Troupe experience.

All of the alumni I spoke to attest that the work of awareness -- awareness about oneself
and speaking to the awareness of others -- goes on. One still has to speak up when there is
racism or homophobia among one's family members (Kimberly; Sara), teach one's own children
respect for others and self-respect not to be victimized by others (Karen; Helena). Those
resolutions to teach one's children do not only include present parents; Sara does not yet have a
child, but speaking of a racist and homophobic relative whom she says that she cannot fault for
his way of looking at the world because of his era and upbringing, Sara resolved, "I will never do
that to my children." Just as in high school, there continue to be cases in which friends need
their consciousness raised and one risks the friendship. "To stop saying 'That's gay' or 'You're
such a fag' as friends in passing," said Sharon. Or as Alex said, "A lot of times, your biggest
conflicts [are] with your buddies or someone you care about, one of your friends, and that's
where it got tough for people: 'how do I tell this person? I don't agree with that – I don't know
how we'll get past it." The struggle too is ongoing for alumni.
"Getting past it" means risking relationships, but deciding what is abusive and what is just is more important. Antonia speaks of a time she had to sever ties when she and a former friend entertained visitors new to their largely African American neighborhood. Her friend had remarked to their visitors:

'Well, you know, this is a dark neighborhood,' and at first, I was like, "Oh, you mean like it's darker outside?" and then I got it. [...] she made comments, and I'm like, 'That's not cool.' [...].

She's a very judgmental person, a very close-minded person, and I got to the point 'enough-is-enough.' I don't want to tolerate you any more. If you're going to talk to me like this [...] I can't be your friend anymore.

These incidents demarcate the limits of tolerance for bigotry. I heard similar stories; for example, Caroline went clubbing in Philadelphia with a Middle Eastern friend, and had to leave in a hurry when her friend was called an Arab and insulted worse. "It turned into a race thing" she said:

He and his friends are not white, and he says that is an issue because they're always together in a group, and sometimes people will be really close minded. [...] all these people were screaming at him and his group of friends and stuff -- because he left his car keys back in the building where we were at, and we went back to get them. The bouncer threw them in the middle of the street. And Ahmad said, 'I'm really sorry you had to see that, but that's just the way it is here.'

Caroline concluded that this close-mindedness does not come only from rural or small town mid-state. She also intervenes with her roommates who make racist comments and declare
themselves unbiased. "Sometimes it's tough, but they know not to bring that stuff up like that in front of me. [...] It definitely affects me more now than it ever did in high school."

The Troupe brings up hard topics and practices hard conversations, including finding one's limits of what is acceptable and what is unacceptable, and this modeling and acquiring the discrimination to speak and act ethically continues to be valuable for young adults as well as for adolescents. Young people who practiced raising these conflicts, witnessing and sometimes conducting these conversations integrate those skills as much as they stay aware of their necessity of having to use them.

I feel that Olivia from the cast of the original Troupe should have the last word about becoming conscious about speaking up and speaking out, particularly with family and friends, but to anyone:

You can be doing the same thing, back and forth, in a very judgmental way, and that doesn't get you anywhere. So that's really what I'm still learning, and it's a lifelong learning, to have these conversations human-to-human, and not be afraid that people are going to get offended...but also, not do it in such a way that you're just shutting someone off because you're offending them.

There is a sense of keeping the pressure on and doing so gently. The good part about the Troupe's work is that it is relatively non-threatening, but its position is resilient and consistent as is the encouragement for those who share those values to keep up the communication.

Or as Kimberly mused about her Troupe rehearsals, "You never know when different things that happened in the past will pop up and help you change," indicating that self-change is ongoing, as well as is their learning to address interpersonal conflict. Troupe members and former members are telling me that the change they see inside of themselves is cumulative.
Maturation does have a lot to do with it, but where would their level of maturation be without the practice of acknowledging or even arguing those multiple points of view? The older students speak of integrating the experiences of the Troupe with their independence of thinking for (and voting for) themselves. Kimberly, continued, explains that "when I do encounter different prejudices now [...] I can draw on different things that we discussed in the Troupe while I'm trying to reason with them." Or as Alex said, "I still carry it with me, and I'm sure everyone else does."

ACT EIGHT, Scene Two: "What is to be done?"

This question for me reiterates the "nesting doll" metaphor of folding the smaller into the greater without losing the meaning and potency of relevance and scale. This wooden metaphor appears to work best dealing with authored documents and other writers' commentaries on them, best for artifacts and not processes. Specifically, I have Russian nesting dolls in mind, and the question here in quotations comes from Lenin who borrowed it from the utopian novel by Nikolai Chernyshevsky. Lenin wrote his pamphlet of the same name (1902/1999), whose content is still controversial, in which Lenin argued that for his movement to be successful, a separate class of leaders had to be cultivated independent of labor or student groups engaged in spontaneous strikes and uprisings. I use his question in this context because I also ask how is it that a dedicated group of people can make real cultural change against racism, classism, sexism, heterosexism, ableism and more. Can one effect change without being part of an organized cadre or collective of activists? Does real change come one by one, each person affecting another, standing up and speaking up as the students and alumni believe? Is change possible just by providing a counter-discourse in schools, delivered individual to individual? That is how Troupe members see it. Can one, speaking out, lead the many? If so, how does a leader gather
and move the many? How about a group of leaders –how can they come together and work together? And how can people educate to change attitudes so long ingrained through a history and an individual's lifetime? Must justice and equity move so glacially?

And if this appeal to more justice and greater equity rests on non-foundationalist, contingent morality, there is still powerful hope and powerful desire, as Michael Berube (2000) asserts: "what matters for a democratic political praxis is the creation of social spaces for noncoercive public deliberation" (as cited in Butler, Guillory, and Thomas, p. 149). We can construct a world with social facts that have real consequences for those who need and can benefit from strategic essentialism.

There is another reason I use the quotation and question, "What is there to be done?" There is a very compelling passage in Lenin's pamphlet about the role of vision in his political movement, of dreams of a better world, in which Lenin employs a passage by the writer Pisarev:

If man [universal humanity gendered] were completely deprived of the ability to dream in this way, if he could not from time to time, run ahead and mentally conceive, [...] the product to which his hands are only just beginning to lend shape, then I cannot at all imagine what stimulus there would be to induce man to undertake and complete extensive and strenuous work in the sphere of art, science and practical endeavor ... The rift between dreams and reality causes no harm if only the person dreaming believes seriously in his dream. If he attentively observes life, compares his observations with his castles in the air, and if, generally speaking, he works conscientiously for the achievement of his fantasies. If there is some connection between dreams and life, then all is well. (as cited in Lenin, 1902/1999, p. 110)
I have italicized the action that Pisarev says the dreamer must take to connect one's dreams with one's life. Stretch a little into another century and connect this talk of working with the imagination, observing, and taking one's dream seriously, extending human possibility by reconceptualizing and revisualizing it in the writing of Maxine Greene (1995):

   We also involve our social imagination, our capacity to invent visions of what should be and what might be in our deficient society, on the streets where we live, in our schools. [...].

   What I am describing here is a mode of utopian thinking, thinking that refuses mere compliance, that looks down roads not yet taken to the shapes of a more fulfilling social order, to more vibrant ways of being in the world. This kind of reshaping imagination may be release through many sorts of dialogue [...]. (p. 5)

Utopian imaginings involve aspiration as well as taking action, engagement; Greene specifically addresses dialogue, the play of voices, the multiple positions of debate, the imagining of seeing other and seeing self with consequences that go beyond yet include the individual grappling with what they experience, what they see IS and what could better BE.

**A Coda in two songs:**

   Sounds familiar: if you don't have a dream, how are you going to make a dream come true? In 1949, Rogers and Hammerstein penned another song, "You've Got to be Carefully Taught" debuted in Act Two of *South Pacific*, and the song was attacked immediately by critics as too political, unacceptable as musical entertainment, and to some, downright Marxist. The lyrics are quite simple and plain:

   You've got to be taught

   To hate and fear,
You've got to be taught
From year to year,
It's got to be drummed
In your dear little ear
You've got to be carefully taught.

You've got to be taught to be afraid
Of people whose eyes are oddly made,
And people whose skin is a diff'rent shade,
You've got to be carefully taught.

You've got to be taught before it's too late,
Before you are six or seven or eight,
To hate all the people your relatives hate,
You've got to be carefully taught!  (Rogers & Hammerstein, 1949/2008)

Troupe members understand this. Several times Alex, at the beginning of this Act, called himself a realist, saying that the problem with rigid biases and old hatreds would be with us always. In performing for people who would cling to their old hatreds and stereotypes, he said:

"I feel bad for them, I don't want to hurt them, and it's not what you're there for. [...]"

There's a lot of narrow-minded people who weren't taught properly growing up, I guess. [...] Nobody is born a racist. It's a vicious cycle. That's me being a realist again. Racist people are going to have kids and tell them racist things, and the kids are going to grow up racist. It's the same with me. I'm going to teach my kids how to be a good person,
kind of like the battle between good and evil. It's part of life, and that's what I mean by 'I understand it.' There's no way around it. [...].

Any one can be changed, but not all of them. [...] Again, I hate to sound negative, but that's just how it is. Those [who can be changed] are the people I prefer to go after because we give them our point of view [...] likely they haven't heard the other side of the story. [...] I like to assume we're kind of given the opportunity to say, 'Well, hey, I don't think that's funny.' I don't want to be a racist. My parents taught me that's not the right way to be, and that's how I live my life. People aren't born racist; it's all in how they are raised. (Alex)

The message of Richard Rogers' lyric is not lost on Tolerance Troupe members. Nobody is born a racist, and what is learned can be unlearned, perhaps unlearned individual by individual as it is learned first on a parent's knee. One hopes the culture and its institutions will act to undo racism, bias and unequal treatment on the basis of class, gender, sexuality, ability and appearance -- that invested authorities of community and state will do more than mouth nice words. But just as hatred is carefully taught, it need be untaught, carefully, and this takes effort. Unlearning takes champions, takes getting the message out, supporting word with deed, and Edwards' project plays a part -- being a player, and a doer, taking action. Within the Troupe, positive relationships between students-and-students and students-and-adults are fostered, and the latter are specifically important in the support of leadership among youth, listening and collaborating (Jones & Perkins, 2005; Mitra, 2005). How much more profound then is "acting," or taking action with young people, how more profound as well? This is what teachers do and can do every day to support the potential of young people. Students become leaders, champions of their own ethical learning and unlearning of cultural bias and of others' by using their voices and
actions to substantiate their ethical convictions. Through participation, they are encouraged to ask themselves how they have constructed themselves as ethical actors.

Toward the end of this project, Selinsgrove Area High School staged Oscar and Hammerstein's, *South Pacific* for their spring musical. Justin, Max, Drew, and Dylan, some of those Troupe members among the "theatre geeks," were acting in the cast and attending the last Tolerance Troupe performance of the year, fitting it around their classes and rehearsal schedules. It would be Max's last year in the Troupe; Raj had won a prestigious choral award, and both would be graduating and heading to college. Ileana was off to college to study design, and Theo was accepted to study music at a university in the north tier of the state. Obama had won the election, and the local Ramirez verdict was being appealed and moving its way up to federal court as a hate crime. Our trip on the bus to that northern rural high school was that year's last performance for the Troupe.

Ariel, the first alumna I interviewed, had said that it was a rare but always remarkable, teachable moment for the Troupe when a student would stand up at a performance and declare that he or she was a target of harassment at school, and that was just what happened at this last performance. For a student to speak up about harassment in school was rare indeed; I had seen a total of sixteen performances that year taking place in schools, in a church, and in two community centers, and this was the first time a student, targeted by her peers, had stood up and called them out. The Troupe did the "Immigrant" Skit, in which one group of actors accuses ethnically different, mixed race students of bringing down the school and ruining their neighborhood. The facing group of actors includes Tasha, a Latina, and Raj who is bi-racial. Raj complains to his friends that he will be taunted one-too-many times. The two actors confront one another passing in the imaginary "hall"; the skit action is frozen at the point at which Max,
playing the racist, calls to Raj, "Watch where you're going, you stupid Zebra!" and Raj jumps on Max's back and begins to throw a punch. Edwards yells, "Cut!" He explains the Shenandoah case and asks if there are any comments.

One young woman in ninth grade class, stood up during the question-and-answer period after the skit, her voice full of hurt and anger getting stronger and louder as she spoke:

I have no problem with people of different races in my school because I'm not white – I'm tan. I'm light and my brothers are Chicano; we're mixed. And yeah, I agree with you, they [illegal immigrants] are crossing our borders and taking our jobs. But people who are born here and still picked on them for who they are? That is rude, that is ignorant. That is so not what you should do. Because I get picked on, and I'm not even that dark. I get called 'Spic,' and when I tell the school, they don't do nothin'. They say, 'Oh well, we'll give them a warning,' but it's out there, and it's getting worse.

She was one of the very few faces of even slight color in a town far more rural and more remote than Selinsgrove, a town known for its rodeo and annual bluegrass festival. Edwards praised her for her honesty and her courage, and the ninth grade class gave a round of applause.

"If you know her, and you didn't hear the hurt in her voice...if you are one of the people saying 'Spic' or 'Nigger' or whatever, you now know you are hurting people. You now know you are hurting people, saying it hurts to be here every day." Again, Edwards asks who has heard the hurtful words said in their school. Nearly all the assembly raises their hands, and Edwards asks, "Again, what did you do? What did you do?"

There are obvious, painful contradictions here; our Latina student-target sides against undocumented immigrants, claiming to share a point of view with the most economically distressed rural Anglo-Americans who hold anti-Latino sentiments. To compound with irony, at
this performance, when the Troupe members were allowed to let go of their masked personae, Justin asked the ninth graders why many of the students showed traces of sparkly glitter on their hair and clothes. The audience replied that they had just been celebrating Cinco de Mayo. The contradiction astounded me. How can a school and student body celebrate a day of Mexican pride and not step in to listen to, intervene, and stop harassment of a person from a Hispanic culture one is supposedly celebrating? What sense does it make to proclaim the worth of multicultural diversity at the level of heroes and holidays yet ignore marginalization of local people in its own student body? What is to be done: what kind of action would be needed to reconcile this contradiction? I asked the Troupe if they saw that disconnect, and Edwards and the students shrugged it off. They found it unremarkable, as just-what-happens. Change takes more than one-by-one restraint, kindness, or even defense, but change must start somewhere. Perhaps something subtle changed for this young woman by speaking out during the performance, though the inaction of the school was made quite plain, silently complicit in a hostile school climate by lack of structural procedure or policy coupled with action. Certainly, the incident of speaking out will affect this year's set of actors, since alumni recall those incidents vividly and speak of them, years later. The Troupe players will remember the girl in the audience, but exactly how the incident will affect them or when it will affect them is unknowable. The memory will, however, become part of their future practice too. I hope the contradictions will lodge there to disturb that memory also.

Nobody's perfect, everyone has bad days, and everyone falls short of one's ideals. But this kind of blindness requires continued vigilance, a marshalling of sensitivity and plain sight before one gets to insight. The Tolerance Troupe is a counter discourse which remains open and accessible for children, adolescents, and adults, sometimes with mixed results, but its very
openness remains a symbolic tool for growth. When the promise of changed behavior is made as a commitment and internalized in the actors, it packs a power that lasts in word and deed as they mature and come into their own. This is a legacy of which Edwards can be proud, and school and district can share in also. Why shouldn't we hope as we continue to struggle too?

I wanted to include one more musical coda to this play, much as the high school musical ends the school year. Elvis Costello laments: "Where are the strong,/And who are the trusted?/

Is everything/
Pain and hatred and misery?" He answers these questions with the song-title question: "What's so funny about peace, love, and understanding?" Hope and struggle take both aspiration and effort. And solutions to a more just world in the microcosm of the classroom involve pleasure as well as seriousness. In the words of a favorite curmudgeonly critic of mine, Terry Eagleton (2003) "finding out how life can be more pleasant for more people is a serious business. Traditionally, it is known as moral discourse" (p. 5). That is not to say that moral imperatives for more justice and imperatives against the resort to violence have fixed foundations, or they are not historically contingent, but they are strategic in making the world a better place. Even an anti-essentialist -- the anti-Eagleton, if you will -- Michael Berube (2000) contemplates the basis of human moral codes as social facts and concludes that although we do not have recourse to objective grounds for these values without faith or religious belief, poststructural progressives have an obligation to advance an agreement of ethical justification that will withstand coercion and assaults on justice. Given that people come to any symbolic engagement like a theatrical production (or re-production) like the Troupe's, meeting it with their own concerns, writes Roger Simon, the task for the progressive educator "is to engage such people so as to provoke their inquiry into and challenge of their existing views" and offer "questions, analyses, visions, and practical options" (p. 47) so that more persons may fully
participate in their own lives as subjects and agents. Rehearsal of these options shapes the actors profoundly in that way as well. When hopelessness and despair threaten to overcome those who value justice and compassion, aspiration must be coupled with effort, and Edwards' and his students' pedagogy of hope, of branching growth, and in an open ground of unfinished possibility, holds out possibility for redoubling both.
References


Appendix: Interview Questions for Members
& Prior Members of the Tolerance Troupe

1a. (For current members:) Please tell me your name, age, school, place in school now, years in the Tolerance Troupe.

1b. (Additional for former members:) If you are a former member of the Tolerance Troupe, what are you doing now?

2.) Are you involved in the arts now? Are you involved other activities like clubs, social issues, or volunteering now?

3a.) How long have you been in Selinsgrove?
3b. (If not raised in local area:) When did you first come to Selinsgrove? If you are not from Selinsgrove, what was it like to come here? What memories do you have of living other places before moving to Selinsgrove?

4.) Why did you join the Tolerance Troupe? What was it like when you first became part of the Tolerance Troupe? Tell me the process you went through to become part of the Troupe.

5.) Tell me of a memory of a skit performance that really stuck with you.

6.) Did you ever experience a personal incidence of bias, prejudice, or bullying? Did you ever experience any pressure or harassment similar to the issues addressed by the Troupe?

7.) Had you done any acting or performing before? What interested you in performing on stage with the Tolerance Troupe?

9.) How do you think using skits teaches young people about issues and ideas?

10.) Have you seen any of your ideas and attitudes change from the time you first became a part of the Troupe to having been involved in the troupe for a while? Have you see other Troupe members' ideas or attitudes change? Have you ever heard other students say that this experience has affected them?

11.) Can you express in your own words what the word "tolerance" means to you? Is that the best word to use? What is your personal understanding of "making a difference"?

12.) Which skit topics are the hardest to do? Why?

13.) What do you draw upon when you stay in character and the audience directs their questions to you? What do you imagine about your character? What is it like to have the audience question you? Can you tell me about a memorable audience interaction?
14.) As a solution to bias or violence, are there limits to individuals just being nicer to each other? What are some other things that could be done to change abuse of the strong by the weak or attitudes of prejudice?

15.) What is it like to play the role of a character who holds very opposite views from what you do believe? Do you ever find that you share those beliefs sometime?

16.) What is it like when you play a character whose attitudes conflict with your own beliefs or feelings? How do you understand how that character sees the conflict in the skit?

17.) Tell me how you see the work of Mr. Edwards: what does his work mean to you as a student?

18.) What are some of the more difficult topics you have been asked to act out in a skit.

19.) Have you ever seen some of your own personal history or conflicts mirrored in some of the skits?

20.) Do you feel empathic for your characters or do you feel at a distance from them?

21.) How do you see moving ahead with your life after your experience in the Tolerance Troupe?

22.) Give me at least ten adjectives you would use to describe yourself.
Curriculum Vitae
Sharlene E. Gilman, PhD.
106 Park Ave.
Selinsgrove, PA 17870
(570) 743-3018
seg220@psu.edu

Degrees Received:
PhD. Education, Curriculum and Instruction, Language, Culture, and Society,
   Dissertation title: You Never Undo that Promise to Yourself: Identities and agency in an
   anti-bias, interactive theatrical troupe.
   Thesis: One Double’s Distortions: The Trickster in Melville’s The Confidence Man and
   Mann’s Confessions of Felix Krull, Confidence Man
B.A. Psychology, Cum Laude, University of Texas, 1975.

Credential and Certifications:
IRB Training, Office for Research Protections, Institutional Review Board, Penn State Univ.
Lifetime Credential, Language Arts & Literature, California Community Colleges,
Adult Basic ESL certificate, Outreach & Technical Services, La Puente, CA.

Professional Experience:
Instructor, Fixed Term (Spring, 2011) Department of Curriculum & Instruction, Penn State Univ.
Adjunct Faculty (2004-2010), Department of English & Creative Writing; Continuing Education,
   Susquehanna University
Adjunct Faculty (2006-2009), Department of Developmental Instruction, Bloomsburg University
Adjunct Faculty (2008), Department of Education, Susquehanna University
Instructor (2006-2008), Department of Education, Pennsylvania State University
Consultant, Professional Development School (2006-2008), Pennsylvania State University
GED Instructor (2005), Snyder County Prison, Central Susquehanna Intermediate Unit
Senior Academic Skills Consultant (1996-2003), Special Transitional Enrichment Program,
   University of California, Davis
Lecturer (1994-2004), Subject A Program/University Writing Program, University of California,
   Davis in cooperation with Sacramento City College
Adjunct Faculty (1996-2004), Department of English, Solano Community College
Adjunct Faculty (1993-2004), Department of English, Sacramento City College

Publications:
Articles and chapters
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