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Talking About Learning:

The Role of Student-teacher Dialogue in Increasing Authenticity and Validity in Assessment of Student Learning in Secondary School Drama

A thesis submitted for the degree of
Doctor Of Education
Durham University, School of Education

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January 2007
Dr. Michael Fleming, supervisor

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Talking About Learning: The Role of Student-teacher Dialogue in Increasing Authenticity and Validity in Assessment of Student Learning in Secondary School Drama

Abstract

The intention of this work is to argue that if assessment in secondary school drama classes is to achieve any reasonable measure of authenticity and validity, student self-assessment and student/teacher dialogue must be a vital part of that assessment. The first four chapters comprise an overview covering five major concept areas: the current trends in assessment towards standardization and quantification and the problems inherent in those methods; the uniqueness of learning in the arts; definition of the various types of learning that occur during students' practice of drama and the difficulties of assessing them; an overview and analysis of recent practice in drama assessment; and a proposal for using self- and dialogic assessment including a literature review addressing the problems to be solved in utilizing those means for assessment.

The fifth chapter details and defends the methodology by which the data were collected and analyzed. The data were collected through Action Research using my classroom as laboratory and my students as subjects. Data were collected through four separate methods detailed in Chapter Five.

Chapter Six examines and analyzes the data. The chapter offers evidence of the various types of learning operationalized in Chapter Three, examines the language of self-assessment and the growth of students' self-assessment skills, and finally describes the effect of student/teacher and student/student dialogue in guiding and optimizing that self-assessment.

In the concluding chapter, I suggest that the practice of self- and dialogic assessment may be useful in increasing the validity and authenticity of assessment across the curriculum and propose some areas in which further research concerning the use of self-assessment and dialogue could be useful.

Notes on Language Choices

1. As this thesis is the work of an American educator engaging in dialogue with American high school students, American spelling, usage and punctuation conventions have been used throughout.

2. The pronouns *he* and *she* have been used interchangeably and no gender bias is intended. This has been done for two reasons: to maintain fluency of style and because, in most cases, the pronouns are being used to refer to specific students in the study.

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Talking About Learning: The Role of Student-teacher Dialogue in Increasing Authenticity and Validity in Assessment of Student Learning in Secondary School Drama

Chapter One – Historical, Cultural and Educational Context

Introduction: Through the Looking Glass

Two things must be said at the very beginning of a thesis concerning secondary school drama written by an American educator studying in the UK. First, in the US, the philosophical debate over the role of drama in the curriculum and the nature of learning in drama could never have reached the proportions it did in the UK. The reason for this is that drama, and the arts in general, are marginalized in American high schools, thought of as perhaps enriching but of dubious academic value and, because of the difficulties inherent in assessing learning in any artistic endeavor, out of the grasp of the standardized testing which now drives American education. Viewed as elitist and unnecessary by some influential elements of American political, economic and educational structures that are suspicious of the subjectivity inherent in the arts, the arts are inevitably among the first programs targeted for budget cuts in American schools. It was therefore somewhat shocking when I first discovered the wide range of theories and philosophical positions posited and defended – sometimes ferociously – by educators in the UK, ranging from Dorothy Heathcote and Gavin Bolton to Peter Abbs to David Hornbrook. That said, the second thing that strikes the outside observer of the debate in the UK (and this observer has been both a theatre professional and a drama educator for over 25 years) is that it raises the question: What's all the fuss about?



In laying the foundation of this thesis, I will argue that process and product, creation and interpretation, objective and subjective, drama and theatre not only can but should coexist and complement each other in secondary drama classes. Once an explicit and inclusive definition of learning in drama has been established, I will turn my attention to a critical issue in establishing a vital place for drama in the curriculum: the question of how to assess learning in drama. There are those who argue that learning in drama is so personal and affective (Heathcote 1973: 81, Bolton 1979: 133) that assessment is of minimal importance, while others would argue that learning in drama can be broken down into observable learning outcomes with competence statements and that those outcomes are the sum total of learning in drama (Hornbrook). This thesis recognizes the need to reconcile two problems:

- That standard, instructor-centered assessment relies on observable performance and, as a result, tends to assess only student achievement of skills. I will argue that those skills comprise less than half of the learning that is taking place and that any assessment of learning that is experiential or affective in nature requires the participation of the student in the assessment.
- That unguided “self-expression” has as little to do with understanding learning as summative, standardized testing does. Assessing experiential and affective learning requires both teaching students the skills of self-assessment and an ongoing dialogue between student and teacher about the development of the student’s work.

While the central focus of the thesis is drama, we need to begin with a much broader picture of assessment theory and practice in order to establish foundations for the argument for dialogic assessment. Specific areas requiring attention are: the motives and methodologies of assessment currently in favor in secondary education, especially the impulse toward standardization; the arguments to be made against standardized assessment; and the particular problems inherent in assessing learning

in more creative subjects such as writing, music, drama and the visual arts. It is also true that a great deal of curriculum and assessment practice in arts education is focused on what Malcolm Ross calls “the productive mode of the pupil’s experience: making art and grading what has been made” (Ross, et al. 1993: x). Therefore, definitions will need to be established in order to make clear the nature of the learning that is being assessed so that we do not confuse evaluating the quality of an artistic product with assessing the progress of the student’s learning process in the creation of that product.

The remainder of Chapter One presents a brief overview of the place of drama in the secondary school curriculum, focusing on the contrast between the US and the UK and the reasons for drama’s marginalization in the US.

Chapter Two will lay the broader foundations of issues in assessment, beginning with the “quantification fetish” currently fashionable in academic assessment, before discussing the purposes of assessment, analyzing the limitations of objectivity in assessing more creative subject areas, and examining the literature of arguments against quantification and standardization. Finally, Chapter Two will also detail, through the literature, the ways in which learning in the arts differs from standard academic areas such as reading and computation and therefore demands alternative means of assessment. (*Note: Because of the need to address the literature of several discreet fields [assessment, arts education, drama, language theory, action research methodology], literature review will be incorporated into several of the individual chapters.*)

Following from the discussion of the nature of learning in the arts, Chapter Three refocuses on drama and the purposes of learning in drama. The bulk of Chapter Three is devoted to the definition of three separate types of learning that

occur through students' drama activities: *the skills of the theatre*, *experiential learning*, and *affective learning*. Understanding the differences among the three types of learning is essential to the argument for a new methodology for assessment in drama.

Chapter Four contains an extensive review and analysis of the literature of assessment in drama, highlighting the debates between process drama and performance and objectivity versus subjectivity in evaluating student achievement. The chapter also presents literature that will serve as a theoretical foundation for addressing several of the problems inherent in assessing experiential and affective learning: the problem of language, the problem of self-assessment, and the nature of dialogue.

Having established the foundations and parameters of the argument, Chapter Five discusses the methodology of the research, presenting a theoretical basis for action research, describing the make-up of the student sample, and explaining the methods and purposes of data collection.

Chapter Six is an extensive analysis of the data, using examples of student self-assessments and student-teacher dialogue to accomplish several purposes:

- to illustrate the working method of self- and dialogic assessment
- to demonstrate the fact of experiential and affective learning in drama
- to analyze the development of students' self-assessment skills
- to demonstrate how student self-assessment makes experiential and effective learning transparent and therefore assessable
- to show that student-teacher dialogue can give shape to students' self-assessment in ways that broaden and deepen student learning
- to examine language patterns in self- and dialogic assessment that may lead to a vocabulary for assessing all types of learning in drama.

As I will explain in Chapter Five, there is no pretension to reliability in the examination of the vocabulary of dialogic assessment. While patterns of language and some common vocabulary do occur, the data collected from my drama classes focuses on formative assessment and dialogue concerning the development of individual learning. However, it is the central argument of the thesis that having a means for discussing experiential and affective learning greatly enhances the validity and authenticity of assessment.

Finally, in Chapter Seven I will argue that some of the conclusions concerning the value of dialogic assessment in drama may be generalized to assessing the learning of students in other arts disciplines and, beyond that that dialogically guided self-assessment may increase the validity and authenticity of assessment across the curriculum.

II. Drama's place in the curriculum

Before commencing the larger discussion of assessment – in general and as specifically applied to drama – it is necessary to clarify what precisely is meant by *drama*, or *drama education*, or *learning in drama* in the context of the thesis. I came to drama teaching from a career in the professional theatre, and I came to this research with fifteen years experience in teaching the skills of the theatre to high school students. The research grew out of my desire to find out what *else*, beyond those skills, students were learning through the experience of drama. I will detail in the sections below how the term *drama* is applied in different senses in different educational contexts, but the primary focus of the thesis is drama as an art form rather than a pedagogical method.

A. *British conflict*

Much of the contention in the UK in the 1970s and 1980s concerned the precise role of drama in the school curriculum. Should drama be taught as an artistic discipline, including the goal of a final product – a theatrical performance before an audience? Or did its primary educational value lie in pedagogical process – utilizing drama in lessons in all manner of subject areas to promote self-development and to allow students to creatively approach learning by personally “living through” lesson content (Heathcote 1967: 48)? Or was there a happy balance to be achieved between drama as a learning process and drama as a rich artistic discipline and cultural foundation? Certainly the drama-in-education faction triumphed in the early rounds over the more traditional drama-as-cultural-heritage approach, but that was in the 1960s-70s heyday of progressive, child-centered educational philosophy.

The climax of the conflict came with the implementation of the National Curriculum in 1988. Unlike music and the visual arts, drama was not included as a separate subject in the National Curriculum. Opinions concerning the reason for this exclusion ranged across the political spectrum. Hornbrook (1991) and Abbs (1994) argued that it was the fault of the drama-in-education practitioners who had diluted drama, spreading it across the curriculum as a teaching method while devaluing it as an art form. David Davies saw the exclusion of drama as a more menacing attempt to strip the curriculum of the creative and subversive tendencies of dramatic expression (Davies and Byron 1988:6). The truth probably lies closer to a less contentious notion: drama had long been grouped with English and the designers of the National Curriculum gave little thought to breaking with that tradition (Fleming 1994:34). In any case, although the debate raised a valuable examination of the purposes of drama in schools, it was mainly philosophical and political and had little to say about the learning objectives of drama, and even less about how to assess that learning.

Despite its philosophical and political nature, it must be said that the debate over the role and status of drama in the curriculum in the UK – indeed the very existence of the conflict – makes clear that drama and indeed all the arts are considered to merit a significant place in British secondary education. As a drama educator in the United States, where the arts across the board are often considered at best a luxury, and where in some schools drama is only offered as an extracurricular activity, the seriousness with which drama is approached in schools was the primary motivating factor in my choice to pursue doctoral work in the UK.

In establishing the context of the thesis, attention will be devoted to the drama-in-education movement spearheaded by Heathcote and Bolton in the 1970s.

However, my intent in using the term “drama education” is to refer primarily to drama not as a pedagogical method, but as a discipline in which both process and product are valued. Conversely, while Hornbrook’s and Abbs’ critiques of the drama-in-education movement will also be given their due, it is my intent to advance proposals which show the value of balancing process and product in the drama classroom and for methods of assessment which are not constrained by the passion for quantification currently fashionable in educational evaluation. This work departs from Heathcote and Bolton in that its primary interest lies not in using drama as a tool in stimulating other forms of learning, but in exploring the varieties of learning that occur through the experience of creating and performing dramatic work. And while it does focus on the art form, unlike Hornbrook or Abbs it does so from the point of view (and temperament) of a practitioner rather than a critic. In any case, the dialectics between deep and surface learning, between the objective and the subjective, between process and product in both learning and its assessment form the foundations of this study and will be explored further in both the literature review and in analysis of the data.

B. American indifference

To begin this section with an anecdote: I recently Googled “drama curriculum” and got page after page of .co.uk hits. I then changed my search to “USA drama curriculum.” Upon doing so, I was able to access the New Jersey Department of Education Core Standards for Visual and Performing Arts, followed by dozens more .uk hits with references to the US. There are fifty states and thousands of schools and universities in the US, most offering students some opportunity to study drama, yet details of what those programs are like is hard to come by. There are a fair number of other states (though by no means a majority) with curriculum standards in drama, but what they have to say about either pedagogy or assessment is minimal.

Secondary drama education in the United States is highly stratified. Drama is taught either in “magnet” high schools specially dedicated to the performing arts with an eye to preparation for university/conservatory study and a career in the field, or (in the majority of secondary schools) as an elective course seen as tangential to the main curriculum and of marginal academic merit. One effect of this devaluation of drama as a subject is that drama, along with other arts classes, is often the first target of budget cuts as school districts become increasingly wary of “luxuries” in their curriculums. Further evidence of the devaluation of the arts can be observed in the fact that of the fifty states, only thirty-two require arts courses for any portion of their students in public schools and only eleven require that all students have an arts course in order to graduate (Fowler 1996: 187). While some private high schools and large, well-funded public school districts have Performing Arts departments that include drama, most public high schools group drama with the English department. In fact, the majority of those teaching drama in US public

high schools are not drama specialists. Barbara Salisbury Wills of the American Alliance for Theatre and Education has observed that teachers “do not view [drama] as a discipline in its own right, nor do they know how to assess it” (quoted in Fowler 1996: 90). This perception is not unique to those who teach arts courses. Students are aware of the devaluation as well. Citing Csikszentmihalyi and Schnieder (2000), Dorn, et al. (2004), note that students report that they “find school activities either challenging or enjoyable, but not both” (Dorn, Madeja and Sabol 2004: 39). Part of this impression is the result of the emphasis placed on “the basics” of academic study – reading, writing, computation – which receive premium value in secondary schools as a result of the increasing importance of standardized testing. Students learn that since ‘enjoyable’ subjects such as drama, music or technology are not given the status of tested subjects, they are not worth the students’ time or, more importantly in many American high schools, do not “look good” on the student’s high school transcript when viewed by universities considering the student for admission.

While it is certainly debatable whether the omission of arts courses from high-stakes tests is good or bad, it is hard to make the case for the inclusion of those subjects as an integral part of high school curriculums without a valid means of assessment. Studies (Dorn et al. 2004) have shown that there is a lack not only of testing methodology for the arts, but also a “lack of opportunities for training in art assessment and a lack of information on authentic means of assessment...” (Dorn, Madeja, and Sabol 2004: 4). What little work does go on in the US in terms of developing drama curriculum and assessment tends to take place in university schools of education, not among secondary arts educators (O’Neill 2002). This is evident in that those states that do have detailed standards documents in curriculum

and assessment for drama (including Oregon, Iowa, North Dakota, South Carolina and Texas) without exception turn to university schools of education to develop these documents. At one extreme, the Oregon standards were devised entirely at the university level as admissions requirements to university theatre programs (Oregon University System 1998). In that light, it is somewhat gratifying to see that the North Dakota secondary standards writing committee comprised 60% secondary educators and only 40% from higher education (North Dakota Department of Public Instruction 2000).

That gratification, however, is immediately followed by doubt, because of the deficiencies in teacher training in drama in the US. In stark contrast to prospective teachers of the visual arts, who may choose from among 500-600 undergraduate certification programs in art education (Galbraith and Grauer 2004: 420), quality teacher training for secondary drama is much less common. In the majority of American university theatre programs, teaching drama, especially below the university level, is not considered to be a legitimate career goal. Theatre majors and professors alike operate on the assumption that students are training for careers in professional theatre. Conversely, university schools of education may offer training in what is called “creative dramatics”, but those courses are designed for teachers who will work with younger children, not adolescents. The result, as mentioned above, is that many high school drama teachers, while well versed in Shakespearean literature (though that cannot be assumed either), have no experience of theatrical practice that enables them to train students in the skills of the art form. Indeed in many states, it is not possible to be certified to teach drama. (For example, because there is no drama certification in the state of Connecticut, my own certification is in English, even though I hold both Bachelor’s and Master

of Fine Arts degrees in theatre and was a theatre professional for ten years before I started teaching). While most states certify teachers in music and the visual arts and those disciplines are usually granted higher status in the curriculum than drama, there is an overall devaluing of the arts in contemporary American education. There are several reasons for this devaluation that will be explored in Chapter Two.

Chapter Two – Issues in Assessment

I. The forces impelling quantification and standardization

I acknowledge that the main thrust of the argument for assessment in drama advanced in the thesis goes against the trends in assessment currently in practice in both the US and the UK which are based on standardized, “high-stakes” tests. While paying lip-service to differing learning styles and alternative means of assessment, government mandated education “reform” has moved assessment away from the subjective and affective domains, away from authentic, performance-based assessment, away from student participation in assessment, and towards rigid standardization and towards the accumulation of quantifiable ‘data’ which may be used to judge and rank order individual students and teachers as well as entire schools and school districts.

Before developing the case against the weaknesses of standardized and quantifiable assessment, I want to be clear in defining these terms. Sometimes “standardized assessment” refers to multiple-choice, computer marked types of tests. This is sometimes the *format* of the type of assessment I refer to, but it is not the definition of *type* of assessment referred to as “standardized” or “quantifiable” in this work. As used here, some of the qualities of standardized assessment include:

- assessments that yield hard data or “scientifically rigorous evidence” (Taylor: 2006: xv)
- assessments that require all students to be assessed by the same instrument without regard to the student’s educational circumstances
- assessments that are based on a prescribed curriculum
- assessments that are mandated (usually at the state level in the US) and created by educational authorities rather than classroom teachers
- assessments that are concerned with measuring the student’s knowledge at the moment of assessment without regard to the personalized process leading to the comprehension of that knowledge (Wiggins 1993: 209)

There is much to debate about assessment theory and practice, but that is outside the scope of this thesis. For a useful discussion of the factors that drive standardized assessment as well as of its dangers, see Ridgway, McClusker, and Pead (2004).

It should be understood that it is not my intention to dismiss this type of assessment as useless. It is, however, the argument of this thesis that standardized assessment is *less* useful if we believe the true purpose of assessment is for the interested parties – primarily teacher and student – to gauge what has been learned and to facilitate what might yet be learned.

In the UK, this trend results largely from the standardization required by the National Curriculum (which does *not* use the multiple-choice, 100% reliable format for assessment) and the level of accountability demanded in the Ofsted-fostered “culture of inspection”. However, as a practicing drama educator in the US, I will focus on perception and practice in our education system in analyzing the forces that have impelled American education to narrow rather than broaden its view of what learning is and how that learning might be assessed.

Art has never been highly valued in mainstream American culture and, if we accept the thesis that education is largely an engine of cultural reproduction and that

the education system privileges certain socially-condoned forms of what Bourdieu called “cultural capital” in order to “maintain pre-existing social differences” (Bourdieu 1991: 644) it follows that the American education system has always given low status to the arts. Bourdieu also suggests that the social capital that is valued by institutions of social reproduction (i.e. schools) can influence not only individual habits of mind but also those of entire generations or social classes (Nash 1999: 178), in which case the marginalization of the arts becomes more than just a careless oversight in curriculum development. Certainly, the majority of middle- and upper middle class American secondary schools have choirs, drama clubs, and classes in drawing and other visual arts (and I say “the majority” without any specific statistics because the number is decreasing as the pressure of high-stakes testing increases and, simultaneously, education budgets are tightened from coast to coast). Students in schools in impoverished districts may have even less exposure to the arts as a result of both budgetary limitations and more draconian curriculum requirements resulting from the pressure of state-mandated tests. Apart from this obvious inequality however, there is a more egregious result of devaluing the status of the arts as “cultural capital” nationwide. Allowing students to engage in artistic activities, while positive in its effect, falls far short of teaching those students to view their world through an aesthetic perspective to problem solving or to imagine how their lives might be transformed by taking the chances that creative activity requires. Taking a critical view of American values, we see there are several causes for the “ghettoization” of the arts.

A. The cultural imperative

Contemporary American culture, so strongly based on consumerism, entertainment, immediate gratification and anti-intellectualism, does not sufficiently value the arts, and the American educational system reinforces this bias. In the existing culture of education – one that insists on quantification, that is driven by standardized outcomes and assessment, and that glibly proclaims that no child should be left behind – the arts are marginalized. This is, at best, a misguided educational policy. Continued neglect of arts education will guarantee that only a limited number of children will realize their educational potential, and that the multiple perspectives needed to make individual and societal choices about the future will be limited by education's quantification fetish. If we truly mean to maximize the learning potential of every student so that no child is left behind, then curriculum and assessment will need to expand beyond "the basics", which focus on logic and language only, and consider a broader concept of intelligence (Gardner 1993: x). Further, with the arts devalued, the debasement of culture, public discourse, and even language itself will continue. At worst, the policy of excluding an aesthetic perspective from the curriculum seems willfully designed to insure that passivity and narrow-mindedness are part of the educational process.

Lack of respect – even contempt – for education is observable in every corner of popular culture. We expect students to value what's on offer in the classroom – art, literature, philosophy, history, scientific method – when the moment they leave school they are immersed in a market-worshipping, media-driven culture that values youth over experience, appearance and affability over intelligence, style over substance, and celebrity and material acquisition over everything. If one takes as an aesthetic foundation the idea that "what is artistically

good is what people value” (Eisner 2002: 30), the value of American art will be determined largely by materialistic standards according to the whim of the market.

B. The economic imperative

As postmodern philosophy has sought to negate both the concept of knowable truth and the validity of value judgment, schools, for better or worse, have turned from the business of cultural reproduction and taken up the function of providing producers and consumers for the free market. “Back to basics,” “high stakes testing,” “data” and “accountability” have become education’s buzzwords, leading the aesthetician and educational philosopher Peter Abbs to decry the “language of visionless control” (Abbs 1994: 2) that has spread from government to business to education. In all walks of society, even teaching and teacher training, we find the uncritical perspective of managerial language pervasive (Ibid: 4). As economic pragmatism becomes the defining goal of education, schools adapt curriculums to the practical. Arts are marginalized or excluded altogether because, in the market model, aesthetics serve no useful human need (Fowler 1996: 37).

C. The standardization imperative

Because of the seeming impossibility of having positive cultural influence, schools have retreated behind another managerial strategy – what I referred to earlier as “the quantification fetish.” We can’t influence students’ lives or minds or characters, say the quantifiers, so we’ll define “learning” by what we can measure. This is evident in both educational methodology and assessment. Methodology across the curriculum tends to be geared to what Howard Gardner calls “an ensemble of practices for dealing with... decontextualized materials – for example,

the kinds of items routinely measured on standardized tests” (Gardner 1990: 4). Likewise, assessment of students remains objective and quantifiable because it’s easier – both in teacher man-hours and in statistical reliability; the more quantifiable the data, the easier it is to compare students and schools. As standardized tests become more and more “high stakes”, with the futures of individual students and entire schools depending on the results, assessment increasingly drives curriculum delivery rather than developing out of it. Teachers plan their lessons around assessment, not around learning objectives (Birenbaum, et al. 2006:61). Thus, curriculum delivery and assessment of both student performance as well as the curriculum’s efficacy remains a closed system and substantive change rarely occurs. The standardization imperative has also led to the deskilling of teachers. Prefabricated, rigidly methodical curriculums are available for purchase by schools and require minimal skill for a teacher to “deliver the product”. Likewise in assessment, the obsession with measurement works against the “reflective conversation” advocated by Schon (1983) and other forms of assessment which are more authentic, more valid, and which would be alternatives to the deprofessionalizing of teachers that is encouraged by standardization (Ross, et al. 1993: 17).

There is an even darker motive behind the marginalization of the arts as well. It has always been the role of art to stimulate the imagination – to suggest how things might be other than they are (Greene 1995: 22). The market model of constant mandated testing and inspection in the name of accountability allow students and teachers no time for artistic work to develop the way creativity needs to (Abbs 2003: 59). By engineering imagination out of the education process, the dominant culture prevents young people from imagining it can be any other way.

The results of this poverty of imagination are already evident in both our students and in the popular media in which those students are immersed. Small wonder then that the education establishment pays lip service to “the value of the arts” while relentlessly cutting programs in favor of those that are more in line with the economic imperative (Fowler 1996: 9). The market model both distorts the educational process and dictates its goals.

Thus we see that the cults of practicality, standardization, and quantification that have become characteristic of American education reject the arts for three reasons. The arts are marginalized as academic disciplines because they are not perceived as part of the job training that American education now considers its primary purpose. And because the arts, in practice, demand formative rather than summative assessment, they fall outside the realm of the standardized test and are further marginalized. (This may in fact be a blessing for arts educators). More egregiously, because the arts foster imagination and individualism while encouraging collaboration instead of competition, they run afoul of the schools’ role as breeding grounds of cultural conformity. If we are to change this anti-art paradigm, the first step is to make the argument that the arts perform a vital educational function that cannot be encompassed by “the basics”. In order to accomplish this, it is necessary to discuss the unique types of learning that the practice, perception and understanding of art provide for students. Further, it is necessary to make the case that, contrary to the advocates of standardized testing who devalue learning in the arts as being too subjective, it is possible to know about that learning and to discuss it in ways that can legitimately be called valid assessment.

II. Validity and the limitations of objectivity

Before exploring new and more authentic means of assessment, it is necessary to demonstrate the limitations of objectivity in assessing student learning. With the trend in educational assessment more and more obsessed with concepts imported from the business world – “measurement”, “data”, “accountability” – it is perhaps time for someone to say the emperor has no clothes. Many have made the argument, whether related to education in general (Vygotsky 1978, Wiggins 1993) or to the arts in particular (Neelands 1998, Harland, et al. 2000, Eisner 2002), that if we intend the term *validity* to mean that an assessment tool is actually telling us something useful about *what, how much* and *how well* students have learned (as opposed to simply yielding comparative statistics about students’ test-taking skills), standardized, objective assessment will not do. It is easiest to demonstrate this by examining the kinds of learning that take place in arts classes, though it is also the contention of this thesis that objectivity limits the validity of assessment across the curriculum. It is not within the scope nor the topic area of this study to demonstrate the myriad ways in which the data accumulated from myriad state-mandated, high-stakes standardized tests has almost no validity beyond the creation of league tables to show “who did better and who did worse” during any given school year. Even the claim to reliability can be questioned. There are such a great number of variables that cannot be controlled for in the sample of students nationwide as to render standardized test scores of little value. Research in the US (Linn 2000; Klein, Hamilton, McCaffrey and Stecher 2000) has even shown some of the ways that assessment data from high-stakes, standardized assessments have been manipulated

for political gain and to the detriment of students (cited in Ridgway, McClusker, and Pead 2004: 4).

The great flaw of standardized objective assessment is that it operates, despite vast evidence to the contrary, on the premise that all students can provide evidence of their learning the same way. If aesthetic ways of knowing are inherently subjective, are much more likely to manifest themselves in the experiential or affective domains, and cannot be “measured” in the quantifiable sense, traditional objective means of assessment are inadequate for one simple reason: they *prescribe* the knowledge that a student is expected to show evidence of (Ross, et al. 1993: 58). In the arts, so much of what impels learning occurs in the *process* – something not visible in the way a sculpture or a story or even a performance is. If we want to assess that learning, we must turn to the individual who experienced the process (Puurula and Karppinen 2000: 10).

Hope (1991) posited that there are three states of mind: historical, scientific, and artistic. While history is deductive and science is inductive, art combines the two to move toward creativity (Hope 1991:78). If we accept Hope’s premise, then a single point of reference – that is to say, an objective means of assessment – is inadequate to understand the interplay of multiple *types* of thinking and multiple *intelligences* (see Ch.2: IV) engaged by learning in the arts. The argument for the positive influence on the growth of student learning of formative assessment also requires the transcendence of the objective/observer model of assessment. Assessment becomes an ongoing, two-way process, not a final mark. In this spirit, Paul (1990) insisted that assessment must be philosophical rather than scientific because it is by nature “a) individualistic...b) a means of critical discussion, rational

cross-examination, and dialectical exchange, and c) a metacognitive mode forming a framework for thought about thinking” (Paul 1990: 446).

Paul’s statement has many implications for a new methodology for assessment that is essentially formative, that includes the student, and that engages the student in dialogue as a means of understanding what he has learned. Criterion *a* obviates the value of standardization while *b* points us toward the value of dialogue. Finally, criterion *c* hints at a method for accessing elements of learning that are not observable by objective assessment because they are bound up in personal experience or affective response (further discussion of these types of learning follows in Chapter 3).

III. The purposes of assessment

While sooner or later, each student in a class needs some final evaluative statement of what he or she has achieved, it is one of the central assumptions of this thesis that the true purpose of assessment is for all interested parties – student, teacher, parent, administrator – to know as much as possible about what and how much the student is learning in the class *during* the process as well as at its conclusion. One of my principal concerns in this research is how we (the student and teacher as individuals) may best understand the *what*, and how we (the student and teacher working together, in this instance) may optimize the *how much* through an ongoing process of formative assessment. Before proceeding with exploration and discussion of the assessment methods used in the research, it is necessary to

define some terms as they are used in this work as well as to make some distinctions concerning the different purposes of and audiences for assessment.

A. Summative assessment

It is the contention of this thesis that assessment that occurs in nearest proximity to the learning process provides the greatest authenticity. Nevertheless, it is necessary to remain aware that any legitimate component of the curriculum must be able to provide some sense of accountability to an audience outside the process (Ridgway, McClusker, and Pead 2004: 5).

The term *summative* applies to an assessment of a final product. Ideally, summative assessment does not occur until the student is ready to present the final product of his learning, whether that is a performance in drama, a critical essay in a literature class, or an objective examination in chemistry. In most cases in the “real world”, however, we see that summative assessments fall on prescribed days on a timetable and we know that students tend to “cram” in preparation rather than making the summative assessment the true culmination of a learning process. The term also applies to standardized, “high-stakes” state-wide or nationwide tests where the purpose of assessment is essentially *normative* – that is, assessment serves as a means of rank-ordering individual students’ or schools’ performances in comparison with others. For this reason, most standardized tests seek a high level of reliability through using instruments that are substantially objective. In the US, statewide mandated tests rely heavily on multiple-choice questions which are machine scorable. The common principle of summative assessment, whether in class or on standardized tests, is that it gives little or no feedback to the student

beyond a numerical or letter grade and it is not expected that further learning will result from that assessment.

Without dismissing summative assessment out of hand, it is important to acknowledge that its purposes differ from types of assessment that give the best available description of a student's progress through any learning experience. The audiences for any form of summative assessment tend to be at some remove from the student-teacher relationship that is at the heart of assessment for learning. Students do, of course, care “what they got” on an assignment or in a course, but they view these results as final and detached from the learning process. Parents are interested in being informed about their children's progress and school administrators monitor the results of what is taking place in classrooms. Local, state, and federal governments are all interested in being able to see data that suggest whether schools are succeeding or failing, and the media also finds summative data useful for the establishment of league tables purporting to compare school performance from community to community.

Finally, while acknowledging the different points of view and the ongoing debate concerning the purpose and value of summative assessment, it should be noted that the primary concern of the research described later in the thesis is with formative assessment of student learning that results from experience in drama classes.

B. Formative assessment

The term *formative assessment* is sometimes erroneously used to refer to simply measuring student progress at the beginning, middle, and end of a particular

learning unit and to the adjusting of teaching methods based on the outcomes of the initial and medial assessments. A more useful definition calls formative assessment “assessment *for* learning” rather than “assessment *of* learning” (Birenbaum, et al. 2006: 2). As used in this thesis, *formative* refers to assessment that involves frequent feedback to the student during the process of his work in drama. This feedback enables him to build on work he has already done, extend knowledge he has already acquired, understand gaps still to be filled prior to successfully completing his work, and to articulate experiential and affective insights that occur during the process of his work.

Feedback, Grant Wiggins reminds us, “is commentary, not measurement” (Wiggins 1993: 188). Formative assessment is used to help students chart their own development. If it measures them at all, it measures them against set attainment criteria understood by the student (perhaps even set in dialogue with the student), not in competition for higher grades. For the teacher, formative assessment allows him to have a much better understanding of individual students’ progress through the learning experience, enabling him to adjust pedagogy not only for an entire class (as an objective assessment tool might suggest), but to better address the development of each individual student.

The nature of formative assessment causes its audience to be somewhat more limited. Parents and administrators may be interested in monitoring progress as well as results, but the critical audience for formative assessment is the student and the teacher. As I will argue later in this work, as the relationship between teacher and student becomes increasingly dialogic, both the validity of the assessment and its benefit to both parties is enhanced.

C. Authentic assessment

Wiggins defines authentic assessment clearly in his book, *Assessing Student Performance* (1993). Among the most important elements of his definition: any authentic assessment of student learning must involve “tasks that require the student to produce a quality product and/or performance; must allow for “thorough preparation as well as accurate self-assessment and self-adjustment by the student;” and must provide for “interactions between assessor and assessee” [sic] (Wiggins 1993: 229). This definition clearly emphasizes the need for “assessment for learning”, arguing that assessment ought to be as much of a process as learning is. Two additional things are clearly implied by Wiggins's statement: by those criteria, standardized testing severely limits authentic or valid assessment, and drama is a discipline conducive to precisely these criteria.

IV. The arguments against standardization

Two of the strongest negative forces in education today are standardization and a lack of equity. These go hand in hand in denying large numbers of students the opportunity to realize their full potential and to succeed academically. The arts have a lot to teach education about how to correct these problems (Eisner 2002: 196).

Why is it that in every group of students there are some who we, as classroom teachers, find insufficient as scholars – lacking in ability to express themselves in writing or to “get” the simplest equations in algebra? How many of us

have been momentarily taken aback to see one of those students craft a project in the wood shop that is both skillfully built and aesthetically beautiful, or had another move us with her portrayal of a character in the school play? Add to those immediate reactions the realization that these students must have persevered through long hours of hard work to achieve these results, and we as educators find ourselves face to face with what is wrong with standardized education, with the fatal flaw that makes the “No Child Left Behind” Act such bad educational policy – the compulsion to measure all students by the same criteria. While at first glance this may give the appearance of being democratic or “fair”, in fact it merely makes the schools reinforcers of inequity (Bourdieu 1976: 113). Kozol (1991, 2005) has amply documented the ways in which economic and cultural inequities that exist in society at large are replicated in schools through unequal allotment of resources and limitation of expectations. Ironically, it has become the case that students most in need of individualized opportunities often have the most rigidly imposed curriculums and the fewest resources for enrichment outside the curriculum (Kozol 2005).

In the past twenty years, a great deal of research has been published examining both the variety of ways in which people are predisposed to learn and the very nature of intelligence itself. If we give credence to the findings of Gardner (1983, 1990, 1994, 1999), Eisner (1998), Carr (1999, 2000), Claxton (1999) and others, it becomes evident that the way pedagogy and assessment are currently practiced in a majority of schools facilitates the success of only a certain percentage of students, while others, who may be equally able, are “left behind” by methodologies and means of evaluation that ignore their strengths. Research shows that many artistically inclined youngsters become disaffected at school early on

because their natural intelligences are discouraged and not rewarded, while the weaker facets of their cognitive processes are those most commonly rewarded (Harland, et al. 2000: 38).

Beginning with the publication of *Frames of Mind* (1983), the psychologist Howard Gardner has theorized the existence of multiple intelligences. The theory is rooted in rejecting the idea that intelligence “is a single general capacity that every human being possesses to a greater or lesser extent; and that... it can be measured by standardized verbal instruments” (Gardner 1993: x). Gardner defined seven types of intelligence: linguistic, logical-mathematical, musical, spatial, bodily-kinesthetic, intrapersonal, and interpersonal. He also argues that almost all modern education is directed toward only two of the seven intelligences he identifies: linguistic and logical-mathematical. Furthermore, almost all standard academic assessments focus on these two intelligences. But Gardner also points out that this is only true of what we have come to understand as “school.”

Much education, particularly in traditional societies, takes place on site.... [w]hen societies become more complex, they are likely to set up specialized institutions for learning [Gardner’s emphasis]. Schools are the most prominent instances; but ateliers, shops, or laboratories are also pertinent examples (Gardner 1993: 335-6).

There is an obvious correlation here between the kind of learning peculiar to the arts and the kind of learning environment that transcends the standard image of school. If we also consider that assessment of learning in the arts ought to include performance, the limitation of assessment to only linguistic and logical-mathematical intelligences is also transcended. The result would seem to be a broader and fairer means of determining success in the learning environment.

Gardner's taxonomy of intelligences has come under criticism (Sternberg 1985, 1996, 1998; White 1997), particularly for its lack of empirical support, and Gardner himself admits to a vagueness of objective criteria (Smith 2002). That, however, as we shall see in Chapter Four, is the same charge often laid against assessment in drama and the other arts as a way of relegating them to minor status in the curriculum. The criticism notwithstanding, Gardner's theory is a useful foundation for two ideas crucial to this thesis: 1) that the arts promote types of learning that are demonstrably different from those in typical academic disciplines; 2) that those types of learning elude assessment by the standard language or logic-based assessment tools.

It is not within the scope of this thesis to examine all the ways these various intelligences are both reflected in and developed by artistic activity. However, students whose musical, bodily, or spatial intelligences are proportionally stronger than their logical or linguistic intelligences are in danger of being "left behind" by the standardized, quantified model of school. Owing to the subjective nature of the way the arts communicate, they form a bridge between the affective and the cognitive, between feeling and thought (Gardner 1994: 36). There are two apparent educational benefits in this relationship. The first is that the way is opened for teaching through metaphor – there are affective experiences and responses that may help students grasp concepts cognitively that may have eluded them in a more traditionally academic form of expression. Secondly, both of what Gardner calls *personal intelligences* are engaged in the learning process. *Intrapersonal* intelligence, the capacity for self-reflection, is both developed and rewarded through the self-assessment that is such an important element of learning in the arts. *Interpersonal* intelligence, the ability to understand and work with others, is

developed, especially in performing arts such as drama, dance, and musical ensembles, because of the collaborative nature of those arts. We will see evidence of those personal intelligences being engaged in learning in drama in Chapter Six.

V. The uniqueness of learning in the arts

Aesthetic response is natural in humans. An infant reaches out towards a brightly colored drawing; a child marches or bounces to music (Lyas 1997: 1). Elaborating on Lyas, Michael Fleming has said that, “aesthetic creativity and response, no matter how sophisticated they become in artistic expression, are grounded in spontaneous, natural reactions” (Fleming 2000: 38). If the aesthetic response to both artistic expression and to creative problem solving are inherent in humans, and if this is especially true at an early age (Gardner 1990: 19), why then do children spend so much of their educations having this impulse minimized or even stifled in favor of logical-mathematic thinking? Why is assessment in schools so heavily weighted in favor of the objective “right” answer, and why does the limited subjectivity that is found in assessment rely on students’ aptitude with written language to articulate their understanding?

Since the publication of *Goals 2000* (1993), educational policy makers in the US have paid lip service to the inclusion of the arts in national educational goals, but this inclusion tends to grant the arts a subsidiary role in the larger educational schemes of economic competition and technological development (Greene 1995: 123-4). There are several arguments often advanced for placing more emphasis on arts in the curriculum that, while attractive and possessing a

certain amount of validity, are insufficient and, in some cases, actually counterproductive if the arts are to become truly valuable in the education of young people.

The first is the “art for art’s sake” argument – that students’ lives are enriched simply by exposure to artistic work. While harmless on the surface, the argument, at best, justifies a place for the arts in education as cultural reproduction. It is not hard to imagine someone creating, a la E.D. Hirsh’s *Cultural Literacy* (1987), a “list of 100 artworks every American student should know.” A more perilous question arises when we consider how this “Appreciation” curriculum will be chosen, and who will choose it. Will it focus only on works of Western culture? Will it give prominence of place to some art forms while marginalizing others? Will it simply take a “greatest hits” approach to exposing students to various artists and various forms, or will it seek to really examine the method, message, and cultural context of those works? In the present cultural climate, these are not simply rhetorical questions. The aesthete Colin Lyas defines cultural imperialism as the demand that all cultures’ art be judged by one culture’s values (Lyas 1997:112). In modern America, art is judged, if at all, by its commercial appeal, not by aesthetic criteria. Therefore, arguing for generic “art appreciation” would be counterproductive to the inclusion of the arts. That curriculum would simply be extending the market imperative to the arts. In addition to the taint of commercialism, there is at present a strong Puritanical moralism prevalent in American public policy so any art that was either morally or intellectually provocative would be unlikely to be included in the curriculum.

Another difficulty in arguing simply that the arts are *a priori* valuable is that, for better or worse, this is not a compelling argument in the current educational

climate. Justification of educational value needs to be made in such a way that concrete benefits to students can be shown (what Peter Abbs calls “art for meaning’s sake” [quoted in Drewe 1995: 1]). I do not mean to suggest here a need for quantifiable data, but for evidence that the arts can provide avenues of educational growth not accessible to students in more traditional academic disciplines, *and* that the arts provide educational opportunity for students who are not likely to succeed in traditional academic structure. This evidence is substantial and, as previously suggested, may be found in the work of Eisner, Gardner, Greene, Ross and others.

Another unconvincing argument is that exposure to the arts teaches valuable “life skills” that will serve students beyond their schooling. So little research has been undertaken in this field that there is no firm ground on which to make the claim. There has been more significant research (Jensen, 1998; Murfee, 1995) into how the arts teach “ancillary skills” – improving students’ academic achievement, even their SAT scores (Murfee 1995: 3), as a result of the critical thinking and aesthetic perception they acquire through arts courses. Elliot Eisner takes issue with this claim, however, showing much of the research data to be unreliable (Eisner 1998: 8-9). In addition to asserting that students’ selection of arts courses may already indicate superior motivation and ability, Eisner also makes clear that no subject, by its mere presence, improves academic performance. There needs to be a quality curriculum in place and quality teaching to deliver it, neither of which were considered in the research on increased academic performance (Ibid: 8). Even if it is demonstrable that arts programs raise academic performance in other areas, that gives rather tangential value to the arts, serving only as a methodology for a goal that could well be accomplished by more economic and efficient interventions

(Broudy 1978: 23). Also, the “ancillary skills” argument makes arts programs subservient to the current educational fashion, geared to technical mastery and economic competitiveness (Greene 1995: 124). Note these remarks by Alan Greenspan, former chairman of the Federal Reserve:

Viewing a great painting or listening to a profoundly moving piano concerto produces a sense of intellectual joy that is satisfying in and of itself. But, arguably, it also enhances and reinforces the conceptual process so essential to innovation.... [and] the potential for creative insights that, in the end, contribute to a more productive economy (quoted in Marshall 1999: 64).

Here we are left with the sinking feeling that the painting is just a little greater, the concerto more moving, because they *contribute to a more productive economy*.

In the end, trying to connect the value of the arts to other academic subjects robs the arts of one of their greatest strengths: that they teach both skills and means of perception and of making meaning that are fundamentally different from the academic disciplines (Fowler 1996: 11). The arts “liberate us from the literal” (Eisner 2002: 10), encouraging the questioning of unexamined assumptions and rewarding imaginative solutions to problems that had become accepted elements of the status quo. Barron’s (1969) research showed that there was a link between creative thinking and values, suggesting “artists have a high tolerance for ambiguity, disorganization, and asymmetry” (cited in Dorn, Madeja, and Sabol 2004: 77). Finally, most art requires us, whether we are making it or experiencing it, to enrich our humanity by utilizing our personal intelligences. It makes us see the world through the eyes of others while at the same time awakening our most subjective selves to full consciousness. It may be that making the arts equal partners in the curriculum is not only essential to the more complete development of every

student, it is in fact the antidote to the misguided emphasis on standardization and economic utility that spuriously go under the heading of education reform today.

Chapter 3 – Learning in Drama

I. The purpose of learning in secondary school drama

Drama in the primary school has long been focused on giving direction to children's creativity and expanding their expressive capabilities. What though does learning in drama mean for the secondary school student? Educational theorists from Abbs to Eisner to Gardner agree that, despite its subjective nature, learning in the arts is fully a cognitive process, not something esoteric that must remain shrouded in abstraction and private emotional response. This is evident in one respect – that dramatic activity requires the acquisition of a set of vocal, physical, linguistic, and critical skills in order to engage in the creation and performance of drama and to respond to dramatic performance as an audience member/critic. Those are skills that can be set out as learning objectives and assessed by the teacher observing the performance. (For details of these methodologies, see Chapter Four, Part I.) Beyond those physical and intellectual skills, however, drama requires that the student learn to use those skills in ways that make meaning, that communicate symbolically. Lyn McGregor has said that “getting better at drama means being able to use drama to penetrate reality and then find ways of symbolizing, through roles and situations, an interpretation of that reality” (McGregor 1983:127). She also implies that this is a two-way street – that students learn to use drama that they see to order and understand reality. This requires that adolescents operate at a fairly

sophisticated cognitive and affective level; the learning is much more complex than, for example, improving vocal projection. However, McGregor suggests that by the time students are 16 they have arrived at a “cognitive and affective” level (Ibid.) sufficient to both create and respond to symbolic meaning.

Furthermore, drama is an effective vehicle for promoting learning along the boundary (or perhaps more accurately, across the boundary) of the objective and the subjective. Citing Elliott’s (1975) idea of “the education of the natural understanding,” Bolton makes the point that drama fosters knowledge of human experience. Among these “natural understandings” that should be nurtured are synthesis and synopsis; the discernment of relations and discovery of structures; discovering the objects of feeling and impressions; pushing ideas to their limits; and shifting perspectives (Bolton 1984: 149). Elliot said that this learning ought to supersede the “bodies of knowledge” that are the primary focus of most academic subject areas (Ibid: 150). (And it hardly need be said that most standardized assessment is geared to tapping those “bodies of knowledge”.) The fact that this learning is highly subjective does not mean it is ethereal. These skills fall in the domain of cognition as surely as language and logic do (Eisner 2002: 9-10).

Affective modes of understanding and the ability to operate in the symbolic realm are thereby added to our definition of *learning in drama* for the secondary student; and while the creation of symbolic meaning is one of the skills of making theatre, as soon as adolescents are asked to make symbolic meaning the need to draw upon personal experience and cultural context, attitude and emotional response come into play. The purposes of learning in drama are expanded beyond both the creative free rein accorded the younger child and the strict discipline of basic skills of the craft. And as those purposes are expanded, so too what we mean

by *learning in drama* not only expands in substance, it branches into several interacting but nonetheless distinct domains.

II. Types of learning in drama

My interest in exploring the various types of learning in drama began from the simple realization that precious few high school students in my drama classes were interested in being trained for careers in theatre; indeed the great majority would not even take a theatre course at university. What then did they hope to gain from the drama class? That led to a more important question concerning the justification of drama (and indeed other arts) in the curriculum. It is safe to generalize that all arts teachers understand that there is valuable learning that takes place beyond the skills or techniques of the particular art form. But what is the nature of that learning, and, more importantly, how do we know that learning is taking place? To answer these questions, and to make a case for a more prominent place for drama and other arts disciplines in the curriculum, I set out to define these types of learning and develop methodologies for assessing them.

For the purposes of the thesis, I suggest that learning in drama can be divided into three domains: *the skills of the theatre*, *experiential learning*, and *affective learning*. Assessment of learning the skills of the theatre, while by no means a straightforward proposition (see Chapter 4), is the area that most easily lends itself to the setting of objective standards or performance targets which the teacher can make clear to students. However, the heart of this thesis concerns assessment in drama (and by extension in other artistic endeavors) that is of greater

validity and authenticity because it addresses types of learning whose assessment has proved problematic. I have chosen to call these *experiential learning* and *affective learning*. Taking heed of the warning “you have to know what learning is before you can look for it” (Edmiston 2002), it is necessary to at least categorize these types of learning prior to meaningful discussion of assessing them and examination of the data in Chapter Six. I have deliberately chosen the word “categorize” rather than “define” because, while experiential and affective learning doubtless *occur* in drama, how they *manifest* themselves in students’ own understanding of their learning remains theoretical until the data makes those manifestations transparent.

A. The skills of the theatre

The characteristics of learning concerned with the skills of the theatre ought to be fairly self-explanatory. These are skills, both physical and intellectual, that allow a student to engage in and develop ability at creating, performing, and responding to works that might in any of a number of ways, be called drama. Let us leave aside for a moment the distinctions between improvisational process drama and rehearsing a play for performance and agree that the entire spectrum of dramatic forms requires a certain set of skills that are definable, observable, and assessable. Chart I (page 40) shows an itemization of the learning objectives in my Intro to Drama and Advanced Acting classes. (No distinction is made in the chart as to which objectives apply to which course; some in fact are duplicated and all build toward an overall proficiency in creating, performing, and responding to drama.) While some of these skills require higher-order thinking, they all come under the heading of what Bolton called “learning about form” (Bolton 1979: 114). That said,

it should also be pointed out here that while the foundation of the learning objectives in these classes is skills-based, it is impossible to separate the majority of those skills from the content of dramatic activity. When students are creating their own scripts in Intro to Drama or interpreting Shakespeare or Tennessee Williams in Advanced Acting, they are employing the skills of creating, performing and responding in order to make meaning of those texts – both to themselves and to their audience. And, though many of them have learning implications beyond creating, performing or responding to drama extending into the areas of experiential and affective learning, they may all first be considered as fundamental skills of dramatic art. Furthermore, a student's achievement in each could easily be described in a competence statement or on a progression scale (see Kempe and Ashwell [2000], Neelands [1998] in Chapter 4, Part I). As comprehensive and specific as the list of skills seems, it remains the central contention of this thesis that it represents no more than half of the learning that takes place in drama classes, and that the remainder of the learning – the experiential and affective elements – requires a means of assessment not so easily rendered in objective statements.

Chart I
Curriculum Content-Intro to Drama and Advanced Acting
Ledyard High School

Creating**Ensemble****Building**

Collaboration
 Trust exercises
 Synchronized movement
 Improv skills

Creation of Content

Through brainstorming
 Through improv
 Through playwriting →
 Development of playwriting and script analysis skills

Development of Content

Use of plot, structure form, conflict
 Use of character and development of characterization

Understanding of Content → Communication of idea

Through structure
 Through form
 Through language
 Through movement
 Through image
 Through characterization

History of Forms**Creation of Character**

External approach
 Internal approach

Performing**Vocabulary of Theatre**

Acting techniques
 - Vocal
 - Physical
 Geography
 Use of space
 - Acting
 - Design

Voice

Production
 Projection
 Diction
 Variety
 Character
 Dialect
 Making meaning of language

Movement

Body awareness
 leading centers
 Physical conditions
 - external
 - internal
 Emotional conditions
 Synchronization/
 rhythm
 - one-on-one
 - group
 - tableaux vivants
 Blocking
 How does movement make meaning?
 Physicalization of character
 How do uses of technique alter meaning?

Responding**Critical response to Own Work**

Process
 Product

Critical response to Others' Work

In class critiques
 In partnership
 Viewing theatre

Analysis of Rehearsal Process

Spoken -in process
 Written -upon reflection

Interaction/ Collaboration**Responding to "Text"**

Scripts
 Various stimuli

Analysis of Performance

Of text
 Of interpretation/
 /concept/direction
 Of acting
 Of visual/aural elements/design

B. Experiential learning defined

Kolb's (1984) work on learning styles and learning cycles makes extensive reference to experiential learning, and Boud (1985, 1993, 1995, 1998) has written a great deal on experience-based learning for adults, to which he also applies the adjective *experiential*. This thesis, however, uses the term in a different sense. I use experiential learning to describe learning that occurs through the interaction of non-drama related knowledge or experience (in other words, not related to *the skills of the theatre*) with the student's work in drama. An obvious example would be when a student is developing a scene from a historical drama. Through either prior knowledge or research, she would need to know a good deal about social and cultural conventions of the time and place in question. Experiential learning would occur when the student made decisions about how to apply her knowledge of those conventions to her creation of character or to the blocking of a scene (see examples in Chapter 6). Assessing the *application* of that instance of experiential learning as it appears in the student's performance is possible through observation, but understanding the *process* of connecting experience to the dramatic problem by which the student developed the application requires a different kind of assessment.

There is another dimension to experiential learning that can be best understood from an intercultural perspective. Experiential learning may also involve a student's "decentering" -- questioning ingrained

cultural assumptions in light of differing perspectives (Fleming 2006: 58). Through the experience of drama, students may develop “willingness to relativize one's own values, beliefs and behaviours, not to assume they are the only possible and naturally correct ones” (Byram 1997). Evidence of students' experiential learning through the decentering necessary to make meaning of their work in drama will be examined in more detail in Chapter Six.

Experiential learning may also occur on a more personal level (indeed, experiential and affective learning sometimes occur side by side in what Gavin Bolton calls ‘the congruence between intellectual understanding and emotional response’ [Bolton 1979: 114]). For example, a student may be called upon to use a theatrical technique known as substitution (Hagen 1973: 35). What this means is when an actor is confronted by having to play an experience or emotional response with which he is unfamiliar, he is called upon to use an analogous personal experience to create the moment in character. Professional actors use substitution as a matter of course, but students need to do some exploring and when they do they are often informed by that experience beyond the needs of the performance (see example in Ch. 6).

C. Affective learning defined

Affective learning may be defined as learning that results from dramatic experience but that manifests itself in some form of personal

growth for the student. Bolton (1979) talked about learning of this nature and argued that it had a strong *cognitive* (as contrasted with *affective*) element, but it is important to make the distinction that Bolton, et al. in the drama-in-education movement were using drama as a pedagogical method to achieve other learning objectives. All of the examination of student learning in this thesis moves in the other direction. I intend *affective* to designate learning that grows out of an experience in dealing with a dramatic text or rehearsing or performing a theatrical piece, but which, for the student, transcends the theatrical context and results in personal insight. It may be a kind of intrapersonal awareness – as basic as an insight into one’s working method as a performer or as empowering as a growth in self-confidence. Other manifestations of affective learning are evident in the area of interpersonal dynamics – a student may experience empathy from having to play a character very different from himself, or may learn important lessons about leadership or cooperation resulting from the collaborative nature of work in drama.

The examples of affective learning above evolve organically from learning in *skills of the theatre*, but Haydn Davies (1983) has suggested that affective learning can have far-reaching outcomes across what Gardner calls the *personal intelligences*. These include self-confidence, emotional maturity, awareness of others, social awareness, growth of the imagination, sensitivity, leadership, clarity of thought, and vitality of speech (Davies 1983: 97). Can these outcomes be anticipated in learning objectives? How can they be assessed? These questions will be addressed

in Chapters Four and Six. However, Davies does articulate the central problem for the researcher of assessment in drama: “It would be useful to the teacher and the learner,” he suggests, “to know how a person who is sensitive, or socially aware, or emotionally mature is different from one who is not” (Ibid.).

D. The distinctions blurred

Most of the contemporary writings on teaching drama have agreed (along with the Arts Council of Great Britain) that identifying learning in drama through the separate categories of *making* (I prefer the term *creating*), *performing*, and *responding* is useful for assessment purposes. Hornbrook (1991) proposed that this division would maintain the balance amongst the three elements (lest a curriculum become too focused on drama *as pedagogy*). Michael Fleming (2001) dissents, arguing that “it is time to abandon the distinction between ‘performing’ and ‘making’ in the assessment of drama” (Fleming 2001: 72). His rationale is that “trying to assess ‘performing’ without some relationship to process will yield very little information about a pupil’s understanding” (Ibid: 66). This lack of discreet separation among the categories is important to note for several reasons. Since teachers really ought to be assessing development rather than raw talent, it is the process that will tell us much more about the student’s learning. The process not only integrates the three categories; we shall see in the discussion of the formative nature of assessment in Chapter Six that the process ought to be cyclical, with the student using formative

feedback to build on her learning in an integrated fashion. As the layout (Chart I, page 40) of my own curriculums demonstrates, both arguments contain valid claims. It *is* useful to delineate the specific skills (both technical and intellectual) that one is trying to teach and assess, but it is also the case that there is much crossover or interaction between skills in creating, performing and responding. Finally, it is crucial to point out that the interaction is not only among the skills of creating, performing, and responding; it may also be observed among the three *types* of learning. Obviously, no student begins a drama class with no life experience, prior knowledge or emotional context carried with her that will shape her work in drama. However, as student self-assessment will show (see Chapter Six), the activity of drama will also shape, even alter, those experiential and affective contexts, resulting in Dorothy Heathcote's elusive learning objective of *changed students* (Heathcote 1980: 48). How a drama teacher might find a useful point between intuition and behaviorism from which to effectively assess that type of learning is at the heart of this research.

III. The purpose of assessment in drama

In Chapter 2, I spoke of assessment of learning in "the arts" and in drama somewhat interchangeably, but before examining the literature or explaining the methodology of the thesis a *caveat* about this generic description is necessary. The thesis takes as one of its presuppositions that the educational value of "the arts" is not something that can be discussed

generically (Lyas 1997: 74). This means that each one of the arts, whether visual, literary, or performing, has unique educational benefits for students who engage in them (Gardner 1994: 42). Secondly, it is not within the scope of this study, nor within the author's area of expertise, to fully explore the types of learning that occur in each of the arts, nor to discuss the methods of assessing that learning. Thirdly, because the author's expertise is in the field of drama, that is the focus of the research on self- and dialogic assessment. These disclaimers in place, however, it is my hope to conclude the study by being able to make some generalizations about the value of dialogue in increasing the validity and authenticity of assessment in other arts disciplines as well as across the curriculum.

Assessment in drama of necessity eschews the standardization, quantification and competition that hamper the validity of most academic assessment. To quote Grant P. Wiggins: "assessment of thoughtful mastery should ask students to justify their understanding and craft, not merely to recite orthodox views or mindlessly employ techniques in a vacuum" (Wiggins 1993: 47). Indeed, this should go without saying in any discipline, but since drama is more concerned with process than product, its assessment is correspondingly more focused on consultation in the development of the process than on one-time evaluation of the product (e.g., the "unit test"). Formative assessment should be ongoing to maximize the breadth and depth of the student's learning in any particular piece of work. Despite having the final 'assessable evidence' of a performance, summative assessment becomes almost *pro forma*, a final

step in the formative process that has led the student to the performance. Likewise, because drama aims to broaden students' perspectives and build skills in collaboration, competitive testing and grading criteria are inappropriate. Most importantly, due to the subjective and personal nature of experiential and affective learning, assessment of a student's progress in drama must involve a high degree of self-assessment by the student, through reflective practice (Taylor 1996: 27) and through dialogue with the teacher. (The need for dialogue arises from shortcomings inherent in unguided student self-assessment, which will be discussed in detail in Chapter Four.) If all these characteristics are indeed true, they make drama arguably a different educational species from academic disciplines and therefore one that requires a different means of assessment.

The driving force behind this research is my belief that standardization and quantification, indeed even the pretension to objectivity in assessment, are antithetical to the true purpose of assessment which is to enable the teacher to monitor, assist and optimize student learning rather than simply "measuring" it. Whether the final assessment of a student's performance in a course is merely a letter or numerical grade or a more explicit and detailed evaluation, its real value is to tell the interested parties to what extent the student has learned in the course. As has been noted elsewhere, it is also my belief that in arts education in particular, these attempts at measurement by means of outside observation assess less than half of the learning that is taking place. Valid assessment of that learning requires the participation of the student.

There is much to be learned about the use of student self-assessment and student-teacher dialogue in the work of Malcolm Ross. Beginning with the assertion that the Latin roots of the word *assess* (*ad+sedere*) mean “to sit down together”, it was Ross who suggested that:

Largely absent from current assessment practice in the arts is any serious encouragement of the pupil’s own self-appraisal: it is not usual for teachers to make time to sit down with their pupils and to talk upon their making and help them weigh up their achievement (Ross, et al. 1993:xi).

The work of Cartwright (1989) also reveals that the notion of self- and dialogic assessment in arts education has been in play since at least 1987 (Cartwright 1989: 306).

However, my own work differs from Ross and Cartwright in two significant ways. First, while both of them suggest that there is great value to be gained from self- and dialogic assessment, neither proposes a vocabulary or methodology for teaching self-assessment skills and then using dialogue to focus that self-reflection into understanding of learning. Quoting a secondary school Head of Drama, Cartwright offers an example of how the lack of a vocabulary can make even a dialogic approach ineffective in assessing student learning:

I mean, when you’re actually directing a piece of work, and it doesn’t matter who you’re working with... they know constantly how you feel about it, and that’s subtext as well as text, and it’s osmosis; and a lot of it is very elliptical and oblique and subtle.... and you know from them how they’re taking it, how they’re working and what they think of it by

exactly similar sorts of processes you get those feedbacks, and you see the work (Cartwright 1989: 300).

It is understood that assessing all the creative learning that occurs in a drama activity will never be objective or easily described (Heathcote, cited in Johnson and O'Neill 1984: 67), but the “subtext of elliptical osmosis” shows just how insufficient the use of abstract, imprecise language is in understanding students’ learning.

The second and more important distinction to be made between this work and that of Ross, Cartwright, and other proponents of student participation in assessment is that their focus is on the artistic product, not on experiential or affective learning. Ross does argue that there is value in opening students to an aesthetic world view through their artistic creation (Ross, et al. 1993: 34), but those types of learning are not elaborated on in the dialogue. Indeed, Ross specifically told the teachers participating in his research to disregard dialogue that involved what he called “the instrumental functions of the arts in education” = life skills, historical connection, social, moral or philosophical learnings – and concentrate only on “creativity and expression: upon *aesthetic learning*” (Ross’s emphasis) (Ross, et al. 1993:36). In other words, the use of dialogue to expand on students’ self-assessment of experiential and affective learning was ignored.

IV. Assessing Affective and Experiential Learning

Those who devalue the arts in the curriculum tend to argue that assessment of student achievement is flawed because it is impossibly subjective – that only observable skills can be assessed (Hornbrook 1998). It is my intent to argue that those types of learning that we often ignore because we deem them “unobservable,” are in fact observable and therefore assessable (Fleming 2000: 42). The problem is that no method exists for helping students to articulate experiential and affective learning. It is one of the goals of this work to develop a methodology to enable students to a) articulate experiential and affective learning and b) engage in dialogue with their teachers resulting in formative assessment about that learning. This methodology, it is hoped, will accomplish two further goals: enabling teachers to have a more thorough understanding of student learning so that assessment will have greater validity; and enabling students to find greater value and authenticity in assessment because they have had a vital role in articulating the extent of their learning.

Despite my belief that assessment in the arts should be concerned solely with maximizing the learning potential of each individual student, I am aware that unguided “self-expression” has as little to do with understanding learning as summative, standardized testing does. Frequently, students are asked to write reflectively about their experiences, but no further formative use is made of that work. The student may be able to articulate a specific, momentary instance of *what* he learned, but

assessment, whether formative or summative, seeks to know *how much* the student has learned. Therefore it is not only necessary to engage students in an ongoing dialogue about the development of their work, it is essential to develop a vocabulary for that dialogue which will permit dialogic assessment to move towards some reliability as well as validity. In other words, teaching students self-assessment skills needed to precede the collection of any meaningful data.

Chapter Four – Assessing Drama: History and Analysis

Finding an historical foundation for defining authentic assessment of drama is difficult. Drama, as both a discipline and a pedagogical tool, grew out of progressive movements in education dating from Rousseau to John Dewey to Maria Montessori, all of which have regarded assessment with suspicion and which tended to consider any dimension of the child's personal development as valuable learning. It is with these rather discouraging words that McGregor, Tate and Robinson began the assessment chapter of *Learning Through Drama* (1977): "Not all teachers are convinced that drama can or should be assessed" (McGregor, Tate, and Robinson 1977:94). The reasons for the assertion will be examined and found to be not without some sincerity. Nevertheless, the idea that some aspects of learning in drama are beyond assessment must be countered if drama is to be granted its deserved place in the curriculum. The fact that some of the learning we hope to assess isn't readily "observable" by the teacher only means that an alternative means of assessment must be employed. Eliot Eisner has said that declining to evaluate students' work in arts classes is "irresponsible" because "education is a goal-directed activity, as teachers are concerned not simply with bringing about change, but with bringing about desirable change" (quoted in Cartwright 1989:288). In other words, if we accept that the primary purpose of assessment is to understand and optimize students' learning, it is insufficient to suggest that the learning is limited to or stops at the *act* of

creation (or, additionally, that no learning occurred *prior* to the act). Likewise, Haydn Davies (1983) suggested the following rationale for assessing drama through a non-traditional method: the goal of learning is a change in behavior (or, I would add, *perception*) and teachers are actively involved in facilitating that change. They do so in two ways: by creating learning objectives that are statements of the intended changes and by *intervening* to facilitate those changes. The teacher in fact, says Davies, “enters the environment of the learner with this express purpose” (Davies 1983:96). This highlights one of the things that differentiates drama and the other arts from more academic types of learning. While the academic curriculum lends itself to pre-determined learning objectives, in drama and other creative disciplines the teacher often discovers new, unplanned learning objectives once the work is in progress. Add to that the idea that much of what is learned through the creative process is internalized by the student and not readily observable. If we accept these premises, intervention into the environment of the learner is critical not only to teaching but to assessing learning as well.

Before beginning to explore the possibility of achieving greater authenticity and validity in assessing drama through the use of self-assessment and dialogue, it will be useful to examine in some detail the philosophies of pedagogy and assessment that fueled the debate in British drama education and to discuss some of the more recent methodologies of assessment that have been proposed.

I. History and Practice – An Analysis

A. Heathcote, Bolton, O'Neill – subjectivity and drama

Beginning with Peter Slade's work with Child Drama, there was already a philosophy which saw children's "achievement of 'high realms of drama' ... to be largely unconscious" with a "lack of contrived artistry that contributes to its beauty" (Bolton 1998: 125). Slade viewed Child Drama as "a natural activity, not a subject" (Ibid: 121), thereby creating a theoretical framework that is inherently inimical to any form of assessment. Indeed, according to Gavin Bolton, Slade's method "freed pupils from an immediate obligation to learn directly from whatever the content happened to be" (Ibid: 137). Drama pedagogy designed around child-centered theories of personal development continued through the work of Brian Way, Dorothy Heathcote and Gavin Bolton. Each of these progressive educators insisted on their work's focus on process, in many cases banishing even the word "acting" from classroom drama (Ibid: 148). There was, in short, very little left to assess in terms of the standard skills associated with dramatic art. It is telling, if somewhat ironic, that the chapter entitled "Assessment" in Bolton's *Towards a Theory of Drama Education* virtually concedes the impossibility of testing the behaviors called for by some of the objectives of the drama-in-education pedagogy (Bolton 1979: 133). Heathcote, for example, talked about difficulty of assessing her educational aim, which was *changed students* – "changed in that their areas of reference are widened, their growth as people is

furthered, their understanding of humanity is extended” (Heathcote 1980:48). And while the difficulty in assessing affective learning is in part a philosophical problem, Heathcote also understood how the nature of dramatic performance itself makes assessment problematic. Unlike the other forms of student artistic performance that may be preserved on tape recorders or hung on walls, drama, “because it is a transient medium, incapable of real preservation beyond the moment of its creation,” eludes attempts to identify learning outcomes (Heathcote 1973: 80). (There is an important distinction to be made here that the *actual art of the theatre* exists only during its performance, since interaction between the performers and between performers and audience is an intrinsic part of that art. This is at least as true of what students create in drama class as it is of professional performance. What is preserved on video lacks the spontaneity of creation that is essential to the art. Video is video; it is not theatrical performance.) Heathcote also believed that intuitive assessment techniques *could* be taught, but in the section on assessment in *Learning Through Drama* (1977), McGregor, Tate and Robinson expressed “genuine doubts about assessment which concerns value judgments round expressions of feeling.” They went on to concede that teachers made these types of intuitive judgments all the time, but insisted that they fell short of valid assessment of student learning (cited in Day and Norman 1983: 139).

Cecily O’Neill’s work in *process drama* grew out of the drama-in-education movement but was more strongly allied with standard theatrical practice. Nevertheless, due to the evolving and evanescent nature of

creating and performing that Heathcote also addressed, O'Neill found the value of process drama in the participants' experience (and, like Heathcote, in the changes that experience brings about) and paid minimal attention to evaluating the work itself (O'Neill 1995: xix).

While the concentration on process and pedagogy rather than content in no way lessened the significance of the work of drama-in-education theorists, the rejection of dramatic practice as a discipline and the surrender of the possibility of assessment kindled intense criticism.

B. Abbs, Hornbrook – objectivity and theatre

The reaction against the progressive ideas of drama-in-education has had two main avenues of argument. In his preface to Hornbrook's *Education in Drama* (1991), Peter Abbs decried the way that drama-in-education had divorced drama from its artistic foundation and made it solely into a pedagogical tool:

Drama was converted into an effective tool for enquiry which could be extended across the curriculum but, cut off from an aesthetic field, it forfeited any sense of intrinsic identity. Devoid of art, devoid of the practices of the theatre, devoid of artistic and critical terminology drama became a method of teaching without *a subject* (Abbs' emphasis) (Abbs 1994: 122).

Most contemporary assessment schemes seem to agree that the division of learning into creating/performing/responding categories is useful as a place to begin evaluating the acquisition of drama skills. Oddly,

the firmness with which this triumvirate is embedded in drama assessment philosophy traces its origins to the British debate of earlier days. Abbs (1994) accused the drama-in-education movement of totally ignoring the responding category (see quote above) and omitting the art and history of the theatre from the other two. Despite drama's exclusion from the National Curriculum, Abbs called for a reaffirmation of drama as an artistic discipline within the curriculum. He asked for "some agreement about the strengths and weaknesses of the drama in education tradition and a better understanding of the elements in the new configuration of drama as an arts discipline within the emerging arts paradigm" (Ibid: 119). (It is interesting to note that, writing in 2003, Abbs pronounced the "new arts paradigm" – one which sought to emphasize content and to unify the arts in the interest of heightening creativity and imbuing students with an aesthetic perspective [Abbs 2003: 57] – to have been killed in its infancy by the mandated curriculum, testing and inspection brought about by the culture of accountability).

Beyond Abbs' aesthetic argument, Hornbrook tended to see drama's value almost entirely in content and product (Hornbrook 1998: 109). Hornbrook pointedly criticized the drama-in-education movement for ignoring not only theatrical history and form, but also the "social and cultural context in which both knowledge is defined and drama made and performed" (Ibid: 79). He concluded that if drama teachers "...uncouple role-play from the distinctive concepts, procedures, knowledge and

traditions of the theatre arts... all that is left is a bag of pedagogical tricks..." (Ibid: 49).

As for assessing drama, Hornbrook (1991) offered a comprehensive system of attainment targets for achievement in drama from KS1 through KS4. Hornbrook was the first to use the Arts Council of Great Britain's division of drama into separate categories of making, performing and responding. The attainment targets are divided accordingly, and each is supported with an example of satisfactory attainment. For example, in performing at KS3, students should be able to "employ vocal and movement skills to portray convincingly a range of different characters." Evidence of attainment would be "switch[ing] smoothly from narrator to character while telling a story" (Hornbrook 1991: 146). Although Hornbrook is to be credited with attempting to give concrete definition to assessment of drama, two problems immediately arise. First, as we shall continue to see, is the problem of the language that defines attainment: what does "convincing" mean in the performance of a 14 year-old? There is also a second, more philosophical problem in Hornbrook's table of attainment targets. Progressive educators, notably Philip Taylor, have taken Hornbrook to task for the prescriptiveness of both his curriculum content and his methods of assessment. Taylor likens these to E.D. Hirsch's (1987) notorious "list of what every American student should know," published under the title *Cultural Literacy* (Taylor 2000:106). While Taylor's criticism is specifically post-modernist in attacking Hornbrook's enthusiasm for the Western canon of dramatic

literature, it is accurate in identifying Hornbrook's emphasis on objective curriculum content and quantifiable assessment.

C. Kempe and Ashwell, Neelands – practical applications

Rather than choosing between Heathcote's evanescent definition of learning and Hornbrook's pedantic pursuit of historical background and technique, perhaps it would be safest and most useful to explore a middle ground. Gavin Bolton helps us do this by delineating two objectives in teaching drama. The first is "change in understanding," by which Bolton is referring not just to understanding of content, but to more abstract issues concerning "group interest, stimulating or controlling emotional energy, and the achievement of congruence in response between quality of feeling and intellectual understanding" (Bolton 1979: 114). These are clearly not easily identifiable learning outcomes amenable to quantitative assessment and we will postpone the challenge of how to assess them until later in this study. However, the second objective, "learning about form" – the actual techniques of creating, performing, and evaluating drama – offers a range of possibilities for assessment.

Some of the most useful designs for assessment of this objective can be found in the work of Jonathan Neelands (1998), Andy Kempe and Marigold Ashwell (2000), and Michael Fleming (1997, 2000, 2001). All insist on the importance of formative assessment – observing student achievement longitudinally to evaluate the student's development – rather than a summative judgment about acquired skills or knowledge (a la

Hornbrook), and Fleming (2000, 2001) has written insightfully about possible solutions to what we shall see is “the problem of language” in assessment of drama.

There are numerous assessment schemes that have been advanced in the past decade. I have chosen to examine only two – Kempe and Ashwell (2000) and Neelands (1998) because, in my professional judgment, they offer the most effective solutions to effective assessment in drama while avoiding most of the pitfalls that result from being either too quantitative or too vague and subjective.

Kempe and Ashwell do a commendable job of designing a progression that thoroughly articulates desired student outcomes, rising through nine levels of proficiency. “Level 1” describes student participation at a minimal level of involvement and understanding, “Levels 5 and 6” begin to show the students’ ability to reflect on their own work and generalize the specific to a more universal context, and the highest level, “Exceptional Performance,” suggests the beginning of artistic achievement, using descriptors such as “perform drama which demonstrates insight, originality and inspiration” and “prepared to take risks and interpret” (Kempe and Ashwell 2000: 38-41). They also make the valuable suggestion of establishing a baseline assessment at the beginning of the course so that each student’s progression can be fairly assessed against this baseline instead of being measured against the performance of other students.

There are several positive effects of assessment based on progression. Jonathan Neelands has said that assessment must be “permanent, visible, and discussable” (Neelands 1998: 26) and Kempe and Ashwell’s design makes assessment of drama significantly less subjective, satisfying demands of parents and administrators for “accountability.”

Second, students have before them a set of attainment targets specifying what will be expected of them and the level to which they must perform to achieve success in the course. Most importantly, it gives the teacher and student a road map with which they can discuss the substantial gains the student has made, the areas in which the student may still be laboring to “change her understanding,” and what specifically the student must accomplish to be evaluated at a higher level. As with Hornbrook, however, there is a significant flaw in Kempe and Ashwell’s system – the abstract nature of some of the language they use to describe their assessment criteria. What is a teacher supposed to look for to assess whether a student is “making *an effective contribution* to the writing of an *imaginative* script” or is able to “interpret, shape, and structure *in imaginative ways*”? [emphasis added](Kempe and Ashwell 2000: 41-42).

While we need not abandon an assessment method simply because it isn’t quantifiable, it is difficult to adhere to Neelands’ advice to be “visible and discussable” when employing criteria that require the individual teacher’s subjective judgments as to just what is or isn’t imaginative.

Neelands also focuses on the idea of progression, both in determining curriculum and in assessing students’ development. In

addition, he brings assessment close to the border between “learning about form” and “changing understanding” by evaluating specific dramatic techniques (such as “physically playing text and subtext”) that give evidence of larger, more abstract progressions, such as those from “linear narrative” to “montage” in making, from “social actor” to “aesthetic actor” in performing, and from “teacher-centered” to “autonomous dramaturges” in responding (Neelands 1998: 20-21). These types of progressions would seem to have the best claim to authenticity in assessing growth in drama, yet they too come with a *caveat*: only a trained drama specialist would be able to assess the rather sophisticated development that Neelands outlines. For example, the ability to observe a student actor “playing subtext” requires training and experience in script analysis. Because of the deficiency in teacher training in the skills of the theatre, especially in the United States, this would limit the number of drama programs in which authentic assessment could take place.

D. American Standards

The marginalization of drama and other arts subjects in US education has been discussed earlier, but after analyzing the debate about the philosophy and methodology of drama assessment in the UK, it is worth reiterating that American drama educators are much more in the wilderness than those in the UK. Even though drama was excluded from the National Curriculum, an overwhelming amount has been thought and written about drama curriculum and assessment in the UK in the last thirty

years. When I began my work, I had assumed that I just hadn't looked hard enough and would find an American Bolton and an American Hornbrook, but American arts educators have never approached that level of philosophical discussion. We tend to operate in isolation for most of the school year and when we do come together in groups, at the New England Theatre Conference or the National Choral Directors Association annual meeting, we generally agree that what we do is good for students, is underappreciated, and then get on with sharing how we do it. We enthusiastically learn from each other, but almost never engage in debate over the merits of those methods. Nor has there been much philosophical introspection about the nature or purpose of learning in drama. Looking back at the beginning of Chapter 3 ("The purpose of learning in secondary drama"), the reader will quickly observe that all the literature references are to either British practitioners (McGregor and Bolton) or American university educational philosophers (Eisner). What American literature as exists addresses matters of practice (skills and exercises with observable learning outcomes), not drama's role in the curriculum. And I know of no significant literature, beyond observable skills, from American secondary school practitioners concerning assessment.

It is possible that one reason for the low status granted to the purposes of learning and the validity of assessment in drama in the US is that no student is *required* to take drama, even if she plans to apply to a university theatre program. One source of debate about the place of drama in the UK would seem to be that students are required to participate in

drama (up to the age of 14 as part of the subject of English). While there are broad distribution requirements that students have some exposure to the arts, no American high school student has to take a drama class. All of my students have, regardless of the level of their enthusiasm in doing so, *chosen* to take a chance on performing. Some are more willing and daring than others, and many believe their natural ability or their enthusiasm will be sufficient to secure a good grade in the class. On the other hand, I've also had the experience of a student who would have preferred not to perform but who made the leap anyway. So with the very rare exception of a student who despite selecting the class lacks all motivation, I'm always working beyond the first marker of assessment in most British schemes – the willingness of the student to participate at all. And the leap made by the girl who would have preferred not to perform already indicates the need to incorporate assessment of personal growth when we talk about success in the drama class.

II. Problems of Assessing Experiential and Affective Learning

There are three issues complicating meaningful assessment in drama. The first is the truism, “you can't teach talent.” It is tempting for drama teachers, regardless of their expertise, to reward students who have a great deal of natural ability. However, we must remind ourselves that we are in the business of motivating and creating opportunities for learning and maximizing each individual student's potential for growth. That

learning is also what we seek to assess. Meaningful assessment must meet each student where he or she begins and then establish an environment in which that student's skills and personal growth will be nurtured as fully as possible. Setting attainment targets seems desirable, but has the timid and self-conscious student who attains Level 5 on Kempe and Ashwell's (2000) scale (see page 61) really learned less than the gifted performer who is content to rest on her natural talent?

Another problem concerns just how those attainment targets are to be set, who will set them, and what are their true objectives. Philip Taylor has observed a paradox in the feeling of arts educators about assessment. The results of his interviews (2004) reveal that, on the one hand, the teachers feel victimized by the trend toward standardized assessment that asks them to quantify creative growth. Ironically though, the responses showed that the teachers also had a strong desire to have rubrics by which they could evaluate their students' work (Taylor 2006b: 11). Any rubric for assessing learning in any of the arts leads into murky waters. One need merely look at some of the marking prospectuses for the GCSE in Drama to see that it aspires to simultaneously perform two completely different functions. It assesses individual student achievement (in performance as well as of written response to dramatic literature or performance) while at the same time serving as a standardized examination providing nationally recognized qualifications in drama. Fair enough – that is what most assessment does. Also, because the GCSE exam is performance based and “content free” (Edexcel 2003: 4) it is unarguably a more authentic and

valid assessment of achievement in drama than a set paper exam.

However, this causes two problems: the student is still being assessed by examiners operating on the most subjective of specifications and the work being assessed is in large part creative. The AQA marking specifications run 59 pages and require assessors to make meaning of language of this sort: “demonstrate excellent command of the appropriate movement and/or vocal skills” or “they will create a role with sensitivity, originality and flair” (AQA 2000: 44). While it is possible to assess movement and vocal skills objectively, the word “appropriate” calls for dramatic criticism on the part of the assessor rather than evaluation of student learning. “Flair” may be observable, but is it quantifiable? Finally, “sensitivity” is precisely the sort of quality that requires dialogue to assess. Further difficulty with the GCSE criteria can be observed when an assessor tries to make a distinction between “a high degree of creativity” (25-30 mark), “with creativity” (19-24 mark), and “show some creativity” (13-18 mark). These examples are offered not to mock the exam; the GCSE calls for teacher feedback during the development of the work and actually mandates self-assessment as part of the exam (In Objective 3, students are expected to “analyze and evaluate the effectiveness of their own and others’ work with sensitivity....” [AQA: 43]). The intention rather is to demonstrate the shortcomings of assessment that relies on outside observation of highly subjective criteria and to again call attention to the distinction between assessing the qualities of an artistic product and assessing the nature and progress of students’ learning.

Finally, one comes up against the problem that a great deal of learning in drama is purely internalized experience on the part of the student – back to the original concept of child-development and personal growth that fueled Slade, Way, and Heathcote in their early work. The student may feel that it is either too personal to share or, conversely, irrelevant (in his opinion) to his work in the class because it seems “off topic”. It may even be the case that the student has extreme difficulty in articulating what he has learned. How can we possibly assess that? How can a teacher hope to know anything about that type of learning that will enable him to assess it in a way that is authentic and formative, let alone summative? Here again, we come back to a problem of language. Michael Fleming suggests a possible answer to be found in the writing of Wittgenstein. Wittgenstein argued that even the most inward and private experience still requires language to articulate it (Fleming 2001: 63). Since language may be publicly understood, these experiences aren’t, after all, entirely private. If the experience can be discussed, it can be reflected upon, analyzed, assessed. (A fuller exploration of these philosophical and linguistic foundations follows in 4.II.A). At this point, the need for assessment to become an ongoing dialogue between student and teacher becomes even more evident – the student’s reflection on the internalized experience in tandem with the teacher’s expertise and sensitivity in guiding the reflection may lead to a new and more vital definition of learning. It seems singularly appropriate to attempt this form of assessment

in drama, which, like all the arts, has as its goal the communication of fresh ways of understanding.

A. The problem of language – Wittgenstein, Polanyi, Vygotsky

“An inner process stands in need of an outward criteria.”

– Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*

Language is at the heart of the problem of devising a means of assessing experiential and affective learning. Wittgenstein is useful in taking the first step away from quantitative assessment – accepting the value of a non-scientific way of understanding. Science orders experience through observation and at a level of generality that makes assessment of *affective* experiences problematic (Monk 2005: 101). If this is true, then understanding people can never be a science, and the logical corollary of that is that quantitative assessment of learning can also only tell us about learning on that general, scientific level.

Two Wittgensteinian concepts will be useful in developing a methodology for assessing experiential and affective learning. These are the concepts of “language games” and “family resemblances”. Those who say affective learning is not assessable because it is not observable assume that affective learning can only be articulated by the individual experiencing it through a language that is wholly private – whose objective meanings are understood only to the individual. Wittgenstein rejects the notion that all words must be tied directly to an object. Rather, he said, language operates through a mutually understood but flexible and fluid set of rules. Any private experience to which the individual attaches meaning through language must sooner or later become manifested through public

language or behavior; therefore the concept of a wholly private language is a myth. Wittgenstein makes the point in a humorous metaphor: “to *think* one is obeying a rule is not to obey a rule. Hence it is not possible to obey a rule ‘privately’: otherwise thinking one was obeying a rule would be the same thing as obeying it” (PI 202). Through what the individual says or does, he shows us he is obeying the rule. Many have mistaken Wittgenstein for a behaviorist in this respect, but Monk (2005) argues that subjectivists also make a mistake when they try to counter behaviorism with the suggestion that thoughts or feelings (affective response) are *nothing* and therefore beyond public understanding. Wittgenstein again illustrates with metaphor (and ironically, one that is relevant to acting – that is, making that which is imagined appear as real):

“But you will surely admit that there is a difference between pain-behavior accompanied by pain and pain-behavior without any pain?” Admit it? What greater difference could there be? –“And yet you again and again reach the conclusion that that the sensation itself is a *nothing*” (PI 304).

The observer cannot experience the actual sensation of pain that an individual in pain experiences; but can we not infer the nature and intensity of the pain from the expression (physical or verbal) the individual gives to that sensation? Sensations, emotions, intuitions – whatever we choose to call them – are not nothing, but neither are they behavior nor things (Monk 2005: 93). They are, however, given form through language. Wittgenstein’s concept of language games is predicated on the notion that

language is rule-governed. The rules are not strict and inflexible, but are indicative of the fact that human activity is ordered by convention (Biletzki and Matar 2002: 9).

Because the rules of so-called language games are fluid, Wittgenstein also proposed the metaphor of *family resemblances*. What this means in the practical sense is that words, detached from objects, can vary in meaning, but by conceptualizing them in context we see which family-resembled definitions apply. This ambiguity does not confuse us; rather, it opens the language and our thinking to the possibility of understanding (Hand-Boniakowski 2002).

It is worth remarking that coming to terms with ambiguity is one of the “natural understandings” alluded to in Chapter 3.I that are among the proper learning objectives in secondary drama. But what allows students to make meaning of ambiguous language in understanding and articulating their affective responses to dramatic experience? Polanyi’s (1958) concept of *tacit knowledge* will be of use. Polanyi says that “words convey nothing except a previously acquired meaning which may be somewhat modified by their present use.... Our knowledge of the things denoted by words will have been largely acquired by experience” (*PK*). In other words, individuals depend on their tacit knowledge, which cannot be taught but is gained through experience, to moderate the language that conveys what Polanyi calls *explicit knowledge*. The socially conveyed “language game” is given meaning by the experience of reality of the individual (Sveiby 1997). Polanyi uses the metaphor of learning to read the physiognomy of

others. An individual's affective mood may indeed be “read” in the face, but only by the “reader's” experiential understanding of individual clues. All comprehensive knowledge, Polanyi suggests, is assembled in this fashion (Polanyi 1969: 198). Because of the fluidity of language, tacit knowledge is crucial and indicates how each individual contributes to and participates in making meaning of what he comes to know (Doede 2003: 5). The concept of tacit knowledge obviously has numerous profound implications for the assessment of experiential and affective learning. Indeed, Polanyi is worth quoting at length in order to show the dilemma of attempting to assess these types of learning:

I shall suggest... that all communication relies, to a noticeable extent on evoking knowledge that we cannot tell, and that all our knowledge of mental processes, like feeling or conscious intellectual activities, is based on a knowledge which we cannot tell. And if we do recognize mental processes by noticing things we cannot tell, it follows that it is not possible to construct a machine which would give the same responses as those by which we recognize these mental processes (Polanyi 1969: 195).

Implied in Polanyi's suggestion are two ideas vital to the development of valid assessment of experiential and affective learning. First, Polanyi seems to confirm the idea that unguided student self-assessment may have limited validity until the student is aided, through dialogue, to make meaning of those “feelings or conscious intellectual activities” which he may be struggling to shape. Second, if we substitute “standardized test” for “machine” in Polanyi's statement, we are reminded again of the

shortcomings of a quantitative method for assessing learning in the arts. Further implications of the impact of tacit knowledge in helping students and teachers make meaning of learning experiences will be discussed in Chapter Six.

It will also be obvious that the linguistic ideas of Wittgenstein and Polanyi have implications not just for the individual's understanding of the world, but conversely for a social (or public) understanding of individual experience. To make this connection, I turn to the work of Vygotsky (1972). Vygotsky's views of language stem from his larger thesis that human thought process evolves from social interaction (Diaz and Berk 1992: 200). He suggested that "private utterances" (not to be confused with Wittgenstein's "private language"; this is language we use to make meaning of experiences as we're having them) cannot be analyzed in isolation, but must be viewed in *dialogic* context (Diaz and Berk 1992: 212). Vygotsky's insistence on the importance of social interaction in developing thought ties directly to concepts in sociolinguistics about the relationship between language, culture and community (Hitchcock and Hughes 1989:143) and in ethnomethodology, which stresses the idea of shared meanings (Ibid: 158).

The path from Wittgenstein to Polanyi to more recent language theory is a key part of the theoretical basis on which the thesis hopes to build a methodology for establishing and teaching a vocabulary of self-assessment and for using dialogue to build on students' understanding of their experiential and affective learning.

B. The problem of self-assessment

One of the initial premises of this thesis is that, while the participation of the student is vital to valid assessment of learning in drama, to simply ask students to “discuss their experience” or to write about “what you felt” tells as little about what the student has learned as a standardized test would. Some of the most appealing and yet least useful arguments for the arts having prominence in the curriculum are those that champion the value of young people’s “self-expression.” Many students and arts educators report that arts classes enable students to release tension, “go into their own little world,” or “escape from the real world” (Harland, et al. 2000: 33). (To see the weakness of the self-expression argument, one may substitute “drinking to excess” for “arts classes” in the previous sentence). Creative self-expression without guidance has severely limited and short-lived educational value. Quite contrary to “escaping from the real world,” to be valuable, arts education must go beyond self-expression for its own sake and help the student make meaning of the world and his or her feelings about it. The landmark Gulbenkian report, *The Arts in Schools* (1982), contains a trenchant comment on this need:

The arts are not outpourings of emotion. They are disciplined forms of inquiry and expression through which to organize feelings and ideas about experience. The need for young people to do this, rather than just give vent to emotions or to have them ignored, must be responded to in the schools. The arts provide a natural means for this (Robinson, ed. 1982: 11).

The student's creativity should certainly be given a forum in which to flourish, but without feedback from a teacher with sufficient expertise in the art form, there is no inherent connection between the creative act and learning. It was on this point that much of the feud over drama in education in the UK hinged. In his "Open Letter to Gavin Bolton," (1992), Peter Abbs accused those who emphasized the intrinsic value of a child's self-expression of denying "the aesthetic field of drama, the symbolic field of its own form. It elevated one valuable genre, *improvisation*, and made it a totality" [Abbs' emphasis] (Abbs 1994: 134). This lack of concern for giving form to students' expression through technique or context led to, in Abbs' words, a sort of 'cultural autism' (Ibid: 183) in which any creative expression, regardless of quality of insight or relevance was deemed to be "learning".

The self-expression argument is seductive because, as artists and as educators, we do believe that the ability of children and adolescents to express themselves is valuable, and that there is a role for artistic pursuits in self-discovery, even as a kind of therapy. However, Aristotle said that all learning is metaphor – the making of connections between the unfamiliar and the familiar, between the abstract and the concrete. The arts offer humans unique and effective means for making these connections, and if we claim to be teaching the arts, students must learn to make those connections as well. This is certainly where the role of dialogue becomes paramount, but before that dialogue can begin to shape the understanding

of student learning in drama for all interested parties, there must be a primary insight into that learning. Regardless of whether we are taking about the skills of the theatre, or experiential and affective learning, student self expression remains at arms length from assessment without the participation of the student.

C. The problem of dialogue

The National Oracy Project (1991) posited that student-teacher dialogue increased the educational validity of assessment “by providing pupils with a way of revealing their abilities that can closely match the way talk is used outside of school” (quoted in Ross, et al. 1993: xi). If it is true that students feel more able to express their learning experiences through oral dialogue as opposed to written assessments (Ibid.), then it stands to reason that two factors serve to increase validity: diminishing the prevalent view that students have concerning assessment that there is a “right answer” that the teacher is “expecting”; and validating the language patterns and habits with which adolescents are more comfortable.

Contrary to the postmodern view of the constraints imposed upon the action researcher by inherited tradition and language (for discussion, see Gadamer 1975), action research and the exploration of dialogic assessment go hand in hand. I include the following extended quote from Brown and Jones’ *Action Research and Postmodernism* because it explicitly details the way in which dialogue can lead to enhanced understanding of learning:

In conversing with others, resonance is important and feedback is valuable in building one's research findings with an audience in mind. I show my understanding of your story by offering a related story. I substitute your example for another in an attempt to emphasize and extend your point, but also to see how it fits into my own experience. In doing this I bring meaning to your story for myself and perhaps, *in revealing my perspective, shift the way in which you understand the significance of your own story* (emphasis added) (Brown and Jones 2001: 43).

In Vygotskian terms this sort of formative assessment through dialogue encourages the student to move towards “the zone of next development” (quoted in Ross, et al. 1993: 12). As the teacher engages the student in dialogue aimed at helping the student move towards a fuller ability to both understand and articulate his learning experience, Freire's advice (cited in Neelands 2006: 19) to be sensitive to the idea that teaching/learning occurs between teachers and student in a dialectic manner is important for two reasons. In the specific instance of a given learning experience dialogue could, if misused, become coercive, imposing the teacher's agenda on student work (Ross, et al. 1993: 29). The specific instance reveals another critical problem inherent in the use of dialogue as an assessment tool – the nature of student-teacher power relations. This is a legitimate concern for any teacher hoping to use dialogue to increase the validity of assessment and care must be taken to make students feel invested in the value of honest expression of their learning experiences. To do this, students must believe they are equal partners in those learning experiences (Taylor 2006a: 127). That, of course

is a philosophical statement; the methods by which that partnership is developed have much in common with the ensemble method typical of many theatre groups. These methods will be discussed at greater length in Chapter Five.

There is also the need to establish a theoretical and methodological basis for the use of dialogue in assessment. Goffman (1975) used the metaphor of theatrical performance in describing social interactions such as those implied by discussion of an idea between two participants. Similar to Wittgenstein's notion of language games establishing meaning through context, Goffman saw the self as a *character*, a “socialized entity, created in and through social interaction” (quoted in Cortazzi 1993: 37). Goffman's method, known as *frame analysis*, characterized narrative as a performance. Social interaction and audience (the other participant in the dialogue) define how the “character” will present his story. Interestingly, Heathcote also referenced Goffman in helping her to explain the educational value of the “living through” process that is intrinsic to her teaching, and which is also useful to this work in arguing for the necessity of including students in assessment of their learning in drama. Goffman saw narrative as a continuum: “I live... I show how life is lived” (cited in Johnson and O'Neill 1984: 104).

Cortazzi (1993) uses Goffman's model as a component of *narrative analysis* – a way of looking at dialogue to “try and understand how participants view their world” (Cortazzi 1993: 25). Burbules adds to this the concept that the purpose of dialogue is in itself affective rather than

designed as a “specific communicative form of question and answer” (Burbules 1993: 19). That is not to say that dialogue cannot be given direction that can be useful in enhancing students' comprehension of their affective learning experiences. Cortazzi considers the value of *adjacency pairs* (Sacks 1973; Schlegloff 1972) in increasing transparency in dialogue. Like language games and like tacit knowledge, these adjacency pairs make meaning through context. We might examine a dialogue and discover “a pair of utterances, produced successively by different speakers, which form an identifiable sequence” (Cortazzi 1993: 27). In recognizing these sequences, dialogue may be directed to “constrain a limited range of responses” (Ibid.). This sounds counterproductive at first, but it is a key component of the teacher's role in formative assessment. I have argued from the beginning that there is little value in undirected student self-assessment. Exploring methods of using dialogue to help students productively articulate experiences of experiential and affective learning is at the core of this work; therefore, methodologies such as narrative analysis can play a positive role. Finally, it is important to reiterate that the relevance of all aspects of language theory presented in this section has to do with notions of reflective practice and the interactive model of assessment, not with “teacher culture” or the virtue of narrative in its own right.

Chapter Five – Methodology

I. The research question

The question that motivates both the research and the examination of assessment methodologies, both in drama and from a more general perspective, is: *How do self-assessment and dialogue increase the ability of both student and teacher to understand, articulate, and assess the learning that occurs in drama classes?*

The central assumption underlying the research question is that only some of the learning that occurs (what is categorized in Chapter 3 as *the skills of the theatre*) can be assessed through teacher observation and performance objectives. The main hypothesis of the research is that significant learning of an experiential and affective nature also occurs and that assessment (particularly *formative* assessment) of that learning requires the student's participation to articulate it, followed by dialogue with the teacher to give shape and direction to the student's self-assessment in order to build on that learning. Furthermore, it is the contention of the thesis that assessment in drama that is authentic and valid involves students and teachers engaging in an ongoing cycle of dialogic assessment, up through the point when it becomes summative at the completion of a project.

There are several purposes of the research that were outlined in Chapter 1. Prior to discussion of methodology and examination of the data, they are reiterated here:

- to illustrate the working method of self- and dialogic assessment
- to demonstrate the fact of experiential and affective learning in drama
- to analyze the development of students' self-assessment skills
- to demonstrate how student self-assessment makes experiential and effective learning transparent and therefore assessable
- to show that student-teacher dialogue can give shape to students' self-assessment in ways that broaden and deepen student learning
- to examine language patterns in self- and dialogic assessment that may lead to a vocabulary for assessing all types of learning in drama.

These general statements of purpose were created *a priori* based on reflective practice during my fifteen years of experience teaching drama to secondary school students. The other *a priori* construct of the research was the three categories of learning in drama – skills of the theatre, experiential learning and affective learning – which are defined and detailed in Chapter 3. These were also the product of reflective practice in my own drama classes. The strategy for presenting the data, however, was developed *a posteriori* as patterns and recurring ideas began to emerge from examination of student self-assessments, dialogue with students, and observation of the results (in student performance and student articulation of learning) of the formative assessment that occurred in those student-teacher transactions. The presentation strategy will be presented and explained in greater detail in Chapter Six, but a brief summary is given here. There are four categories of discussion that emerged from analysis of the data:

- evidence of experiential and affective learning
- analysis of self-assessment vocabulary
- development of self-assessment skills
- the cycle of self-assessment → dialogue as formative assessment
→ reflective practice

It should be made clear that the student self-assessments and student-teacher dialogues that are presented in Chapter Six were not chosen simply because they illustrate the purposes outlined above. Rather, of the multiple implications of the hypotheses with which I began the research, these were patterns that emerged most clearly from the data. Other hypotheses were abandoned, or at least reduced in priority, either because they hindered the structure of work in the classes or because they were counterproductive to the theory underlying the research methodology. For example, I had hypothesized that, after some trial research, it might be possible to establish and teach a vocabulary for self-assessment *prior* to collecting the data to lend some reliability to the data. This however seemed to go against the qualitative methodology of action research: in the spirit of dialogue and the ensemble working method of the classes, I deemed it better to allow the vocabulary to emerge from students' reflections rather than impose one prior to the work. Likewise, it was a major goal of the research to achieve assessment of experiential and affective learning that was *authentic* (see definition that follows); therefore, any teacher-imposed components of the assessment method would have been counterproductive. The only vestiges of teacher-centered assessment are the writing prompts on the Advanced Acting semester assessments, and

even these leave the students substantial latitude to explore their work and the learning derived from it.

II. Authentic assessment

The first important challenge comes in defining what learning we intend to assess (see Chapter 3), then designing effective tools for assessing it. While conceding that the quest for reliability is always a necessary consideration in the design of assessment (indeed, in the design of research as well), because of the subjective nature of that learning, the unique interaction of student/teacher dialogue, and because we are not interested in designing standardized summative assessment tools, reliability (in the statistical sense) has little relevance to our present purposes. Increasing the reliability of dialogic assessment may well be a concern for future research, but at present I am inclined to agree with LeCompte and Preissle's (1984) view that no researcher studying these kinds of interactions can achieve total reliability if reliability "means that a researcher using the same methods can obtain the same results as a prior study. This poses an impossible task for any researcher studying naturalistic behavior or unique phenomena" (LeCompte and Preissle 1984: 332). We are, however, most concerned with the validity (that we are actually assessing the learning we consider valuable) and the authenticity of the assessment. To briefly reiterate Wiggins' definition of authentic assessment mentioned in Chapter 2: any authentic assessment of student

learning must involve “tasks that require the student to produce a quality product and/or performance;” must allow for “thorough preparation as well as accurate self-assessment and self-adjustment by the student;” and must provide for “interactions between assessor and assessee [sic]” (Wiggins 1993: 229). Clearly, because of the way drama is focused on learning through process mediated by formative assessment, it is a discipline conducive to precisely these criteria.

Up to this point, the focus has been on formative assessment but what Wiggins suggests here even offers authentic possibilities for summative assessment of a project in drama. The sensory elements (those grouped with *the skills of the theatre*) would in fact be assessable through observable data – e.g., does the student’s increased understanding of vocal variety or vocal rhythm – perhaps modified as a result of feedback from the instructor during formative dialogue – enable both her and her audience to make greater meaning of what is said? This might apply either to a dramatic text or the student’s discussion of performance – either her own or others’. It is when learning in drama moves from “learning about form” to “changing understanding” that the ability to discuss that learning becomes problematic. We are now in the realm of experiential and affective learning and no rubric of observable skills will suffice to help student or teacher understand it. The experiential and affective categories need to rely much more heavily on students’ self-assessment and dialogue with the teacher. Nevertheless, questioning strategies might emerge from those dialogues that would guide students in that self-assessment.

Questions would be related to the specific dramatic piece, but might these insights not be generalizable? For example, in my Advanced Acting class I ask students to write about one line or speech in their scene that gave them the most insight into their characters. By asking them to make meaning of language, transform that meaning into psychological or emotional connection, and then bring it to life through behavior (acting), the student is asked to address all categories of learning in a single process.

Another issue that must be dealt with in practicing authentic assessment is that drama is inherently a social activity involving collaboration, whereas assessment usually seeks to evaluate the individual student (Fleming 2001: 66). Therefore, another self-assessment prompt asks them to discuss one line reading or gesture by their scene partner that motivated a specific response. In both these instances, students are asked to make the jump from specific dramatic technique to their personal growth in understanding and interpreting language or in interpersonal communication. And in doing so, we can meet not only Wiggins's criteria but some of Gardner's as well, as students must exercise linguistic, spatial, bodily-kinesthetic, intrapersonal, and interpersonal intelligences in building understanding of their learning.

Before proceeding to a discussion of data collection, I feel some obligation to acknowledge an ironic truth about the nature of the data collection and analysis. In the previous paragraph, as well as in Chapter 2, I reference Howard Gardner's work on multiple intelligences in making the point that much of academic assessment is focused on only linguistic

and logico-mathematical intelligences. It will shortly become obvious that the data gathered through students' self-assessment and dialogue relies almost totally on using language to articulate learning experiences. Several things must be said in defense of this choice. The first is that two of the goals of the research were to develop a common vocabulary for self-assessment and dialogue, and to incorporate the teaching of self-assessment skills into the work of the classes. Yet another goal of the thesis is to make assessment in drama more "visible and discussable" (Neelands 1998: 26). To accomplish this, some sort of common ground must be established on which to create "visibility". Because of the way language may be used to access even the most private experiences (see Chapter 4: II.A), it seemed the best choice for both establishing commonality and building upon it. Furthermore, the type of self-assessment and dialogue that occur in the data differ from standard language-based assessment tools in three important ways:

- The goal of the circular process of activity/self-assessment/dialogue/learning is *formative* assessment. The student is not being asked, as he is in an essay examination, to commit words to paper to demonstrate the total of what he's learned for summative purposes
- The informal nature of dialogue likewise reduces the pressure of language use (The *quality* of the language used is not being assessed)
- Most importantly, the student understands that what she's being asked to use language for is to access learning that utilizes the other intelligences that are usually not taken into account *at all* in

assessment. (As we shall see in Chapter Six, this is particularly true of *inter- and intrapersonal* intelligences.)

III. Action research

The data were collected through Action Research. This methodology was chosen for two reasons. First, action research begins from the researcher's desire to engage in reflective practice to understand and improve teaching and learning in his own classroom (Neelands 2006: 16) – in this case my desire to explore and develop a means of assessment that was more meaningful, authentic, valid and *thorough* in articulating the entire spectrum of learning in drama. Beyond personal praxis, the purpose of most action research in education is two-fold: to improve upon existing educational practice and to generate new theory in the area of study (McNiff and Whitehead 2005: 3). Since the purpose of my research is to explore and develop a more authentic and valid form of assessment in drama, one that perhaps will be generalizable to other artistic and academic disciplines, the goals of the methodology are clearly in keeping with the goals of the project. Secondly, since the foundation of the thesis rests on students' involvement in assessing their own work through dialogue with the teacher, an interactive research method was desirable.

Just as one purpose of the thesis is to pursue a more authentic means of assessment through student/teacher interaction, the constructivist paradigm of research is considered to offer more authentic access to

knowledge by acknowledging the effect of the researcher on the world being researched. (Pring 2000: 44). Much has been written (Guba and Lincoln 1981, 1989; Greene 1997; Heron and Reason 1997; Greenwood and Levin 1998, 2000; Kemmis and McTaggart 2000) about the way that new research methodologies in the social sciences are perceived to address the problems they intend to investigate more effectively than conventional research. This is especially true in education where the immediate stakeholders in the process – students, teachers, administrators, and parents – have seldom had significant input in researching the causes and developing the solutions to the problems that affect them. Research tends to be conducted by university schools of education or government agencies, and it is the government, whether federal, state or local, that mandates the policies (Neelands 2006: 16). Kemmis and Taggart go as far as to suggest that the conventional paradigm in educational research goes so far as to “privilege the perspectives of professional researchers in favor of the perspectives of the ordinary participants in social settings” (quoted in Lincoln 2001: 125). Newer paradigms such as constructivism, critical theory and action research, however, share some characteristics that tend to make them more effective methodologies for educational research. Those characteristics most relevant to the study of affective learning through student self-assessment include a more transactional relationship between the researcher and his subjects and what Yvonna Lincoln refers to as “expanded epistemologies for *mutual* learning” (emphasis added)(Lincoln 2001: 126). In other words, action research enables the

researcher to discover and nurture knowledge as well as to engage in reflective practice, rather than simply gather data. The importance of this research paradigm to the development of dialogic assessment can be seen most clearly in this insight by Guba and Lincoln:

Evaluation outcomes are not descriptions of the ‘way things are’ or ‘really work’, or of some ‘true’ state of affairs, but instead represent meaningful constructions that individual actors or groups form to ‘make sense’ of the situations in which they find themselves. The findings are not ‘facts’ in some ultimate sense but are instead, literally *created* through an interactive process that *includes* the evaluator... (their emphasis)(Guba and Lincoln 1989: 8).

It has been noted earlier that, because of its collaborative nature, drama lends itself especially well to transactional formative assessment. The researcher/subject relationship was merely added to the director/performer, teacher/student, and performer/performer collaborations that are inherent to work in drama. Among the initial activities of any drama class are several exercises designed to 1) establish a common vocabulary of dramatic practice and 2) build a sense of *ensemble* – a collaborative, inclusive and democratic working method which strives to make students comfortable as equal participants in a creative endeavor. The establishment of a sense of ensemble is essential to the success of the dialogic method.

The vital connection between student self-assessment and student/teacher dialogue is based on the work of Vygotsky (1972), particularly in his contrasting of “inner” (private) speech and “external” (public) speech.

Because private speech is highly individualized, it is condensed and idiomatic, often seeming “disconnected and incomplete”. However, when both participants in a dialogue have sufficient knowledge, familiarity, or experience of the matter under discussion, public and private speech can mingle when private speech is nurtured and given context (Ross, et al. 1993: 60).

This dialogic approach draws on the techniques of *dynamic assessment*, which also draw on Vygotsky in looking at the development of student learning “within the context of social interactions with others that are more capable” (“Dynamic Assessment” 2002). While designed for broader assessment parameters than the arts alone, dynamic assessment offers a methodology well suited to using dialogue to focus students’ self-assessment towards making their learning transparent. Dynamic assessment calls for elaborate feedback with the teacher continually asking the student to explain why his answers are correct (or for the purposes of drama, why he made the choices he made). This level of feedback is followed with a clinical interview in which the assessor generates questions designed to help the students “understand how they are thinking” (Ibid). Since one of the purposes of dialogic assessment is to increase the insight and depth with which students assess their own learning, a good deal of the teacher’s end of the dialogue will often involve an almost childlike, repetitive ‘but why?’ as the student explores his work. Here the teacher/researcher (as the one who is “more capable”) needs to tread a very fine line between helping the student focus her insights and

imposing his own insights or “leading” the student toward externally constructed knowledge.

Action researchers tend to know their subjects well, which poses obvious dangers for objectivity in collection and interpretation of data (Macintyre 2000: 5). The teacher/researcher must draw clear boundaries between familiarity and bias. This is not, however, substantially different from what every teacher does every time he assesses students – separate his regard for the student, be it positive or negative, from the student’s performance on the assessment. However, the dangers that arise from the dual role of teacher/researcher are substantially outweighed by the benefits. First and foremost, the close and trusting relationships that are formed between teacher and student in a performance class (through ensemble-building) serve the purposes of dialogic assessment by enabling the teacher to identify and explore the most useful questions to pose in response to students’ self-assessment and, through familiarity with the students’ work, to be keen observers of the strengths and weaknesses of each student’s development. Second, because of the very nature of the research (the type of assessment best suited to drama), statistical reliability is of almost no importance. This is justified theoretically by a rejection of positivist and behaviorist principles in favor of the principles of interpretivism and symbolic interactionism. Drawing on the work of Mead and Cooley, Blumer (1969) called for a method of social research based on self-reflection. In rejecting the behaviorist idea that humans simply react passively to stimuli, Hitchcock and Hughes insist that “social research...

has to confront directly the way in which individuals' subjective experience is manifested in what they do and say" (Hitchcock and Hughes 1989: 29). The opportunity for dialogue conducted in the spirit of dynamic assessment to explore and make meaning of that subjective experience should be self-evident.

On the other hand, because the thesis is deeply rooted in ideas of language based in Wittgenstein, Polanyi, and Vygotsky (see Chapter Four), the methodology also rejects the postmodernist view espoused from Foucault (1980) to Britzman (2000) that the meanings conveyed by language are essentially solipsistic (Britzman quotes Althusser: "there is no such thing as an innocent reading, we must ask what reading are we guilty of.") (cited in Gallagher 2006: 67) and that no consensus about what is meant by words can be reached. The entire notion of dialogic assessment is predicated on the possibility of that consensus. Both Vygotsky and sociolinguistic theories of symbolic interactionism give credence to the assumption that social groups (in this case a teacher and his students) create order through the establishment of commonly held meanings, rules and perceptions (Hitchcock and Hughes 1989: 154). Ethically, there is, of course, an implicit understanding that the nature of the power relationship between student and teacher may color what a student says. The teacher must be sensitive enough to distinguish between honest, open student expressions of experience and more forced, calculated responses through which the student hopes to win approval (Bourdieu 1976: 114). While these are genuine concerns, the effects of

that power relationship in the drama class are muted by the ensemble-building that is at the heart of work in drama as well as adherence to Freire's (1998) dictum that there must be a dialectic between the experiences of the teacher and those of the learner. The goal, finally, is to establish what Jonothan Neelands calls "a partnership of voices in the classroom" (Neelands 2006: 19-20).

A. Subjects and Method

The subjects of the study were students taking classes in Introduction to Drama and Advanced Acting. These are students between the ages of 14 and 18 in a suburban comprehensive high school of approximately 1100 students. Enrolment in the course averages 18-24 per semester in Drama and 12-14 in Advanced Acting. While all students taking the courses became part of the study, the subjects could not be randomly chosen, since both courses are electives. The Drama course is open to all, but is self-selected by students, while admission to the Advanced Acting course is dependent on students successfully auditioning.

Before describing the process of collecting the data, several things need to be said in terms of theoretical justification for the selection of subjects. The theoretical foundation at work in this case is what is called "purposive sampling" (Wellington 2000: 61), or more specifically "typical case" sampling. Obviously, a random sample was inappropriate, since all subjects needed to have a common ("typical") characteristic – to be

participants in drama classes. This is also known as “criteria sampling” – all members of the sample must have this commonality (Ibid: 62). Some measure of randomness occurred in the Intro to Drama class due to the fact that there is a fairly large spectrum of interest in/commitment to work in drama among students at the introductory level. (See Chapter Six for some commentary on this variation.) Another sampling theory applied in the case of the Advanced Acting class is “critical case” sampling, in which the subjects are purposefully selected because of particular characteristics. Advanced Acting students bring with them not only experience as performers, but also at least somewhat developed aesthetic sensibilities that help to focus their self-assessments. Maykut and Morehouse (1994) provide clear justification for purposive sampling:

the selection and sampling strategy depends on the focus of inquiry and the researcher's judgment as to which approach will yield the clearest understanding of the phenomena under study (Maykut and Morehouse 1994: 56).

While it may be desirable for future research to explore self- and dialogic assessment techniques with a broader and more randomly chosen sample of high school students, because the goal of this research was to explore a method for increasing the validity and authenticity of assessment in drama, the purposive choice of criteria sampling was most appropriate.

Over the course of the semester, self-assessment and dialogic assessment data were collected from students' writing and from dialogues that occurred in the process of class work. In order to establish validity, four different means of collecting data were used (Hitchcock and Hughes

1989:104). Two different types of student writing were collected.

Informal writing – journal responses that students made following each class session – allowed students to engage in self-assessment of their growth both in the crafts of drama and in the affective and experiential arenas as well.

The instructions for the self-assessment journal asked students to reflect, following each class activity, on what they felt they had learned, not only about the skills of the theatre (for example: “I discovered that by using my knees as my leading center I could more convincingly move like an old woman”), but also about themselves (“after doing our simple objects performance my confidence has had a boost. When doing our warm-ups, I couldn’t think of anything else but the fact that I was going to be performing by myself for the first time. After working with my partner on creating imaginary objects, I felt more comfortable because I was becoming more familiar with it. I surprised myself by volunteering to go the first day, and even Brian said he was surprised I volunteered.”), and about interactions with others (“Kelley & I worked well together because there was a lot of communication. Also because we are roughly the same size. With Alan it was hard because his hands were so much bigger than mine. I didn’t really see how this activity could help with any theatre things besides trusting someone.”). While the instructions didn’t specifically use the terms *experiential* or *affective* in suggesting that there are several types of learning that take place in drama, the brief examples above suggest that students apprehend that learning beyond the

development of performance skills is taking place. Indeed, that last sentence of the reflection above (“I didn’t really see how this activity could help....”) shows that sometimes that affective learning takes students by surprise.

This sort of journal writing for reflective practice has always been required of Advanced Acting students, but the journal-keeping component was added to the Intro to Drama class when I began collecting data. (The examples above are all from Intro to Drama students). All students were required to do the journal writing, journals were collected every two to three weeks, and thorough and regular upkeep of the journal was part of the students’ grade. Some students’ journal writing was minimal and unsatisfactory, and there was a wide range in the depth of insight of their self-assessment. Nevertheless, the journals were the primary tool for gathering self-assessment data.

The journals also allowed me an opportunity to engage in dialogic assessment – responding to their journal writing with observations and questions intended to stimulate further thought and exploration of the issues they had discussed. Cortazzi (1993) advocates this teacher mediation of student journal writing as a step toward more valid understanding of student learning:

The benefits of writing a personal journal depend on the honesty and sincerity of the writer *and* of the sensitivity of the reader or supervisor. To some extent they depend on whether, and how, the writer re-reads what has been written and... responds to a supervisor's or peer's comments. This implies that both parties are working in the *interactive*

model of training... where learning takes place in interaction between participants (emphasis added)(Cortazzi 1993: 7-8).

This is a crucial juncture in the assessment process that the research aspired to develop. It is here that the gap between less productive, unguided student self-reflection and formative self-assessment guided by dialogue is spanned, where the dialectic of the teacher/learner relationship (Freire 1998) is embraced, and where students' participation in the creation of assessment is realized.

While journal writing and my dialogic responses to self-assessment journals were the dominant sources of data, three other methods of data collection were employed to increase the validity of the research. Students were required to do formal writing at the end of semester projects, responding to specific prompts designed to stimulate self-assessment (see Appendix) in a more reflective and summative way, evaluating the ways that learning that occurred during the process was employed in creating and executing the final product. There was also an effort to triangulate some dialogic assessment. In the Advanced Acting class, a third party was introduced into some dialogues through the use of videotape. First runs of student monologue work were recorded several weeks prior to final performances. Each student was then paired with a partner with whom she watched the tape. Following the viewing, dialogue took place between the students concerning the strengths and weaknesses of the performances as well as discussion of means for addressing the weaknesses. The students

were asked to summarize their dialogue in writing, which I then responded to based on my own viewing of the first run. (It should be pointed out that the great majority of the assessment that took place through this method was of learning the skills of the theatre or experiential learning. Other students were reticent to discuss their peers' affective learning.) I have also included in the data analysis the dialogue-aided self-assessment of one of the interns from the Advanced Acting class who assisted me in the Intro to Drama class. The value of this data is partially in the examination of dialogue with a highly experienced, highly talented student; but there is also equal (perhaps greater) value in triangulating her assessment of the beginning students in the Intro class with my own.

The fourth form of data came from transcription of dialogue that took place during class work. While a large percentage of this dialogue was aimed at solving problems of dramatic technique, much of it was intended to make students examine the affective or experiential learning inherent in the work at the moment. It is at these moments during what might be called formative or process dialogues that the need for a working vocabulary of assessment is most vital. In addition to these on-the-spot process dialogues, I also met individually with students at intervals during the semester to engage in a more private dialogue that explored that student's assessment of his or her affective and experiential learning in a more summative way. In Advanced Acting, these summative dialogues were required and occurred approximately bi-weekly. In Drama, because of a broader spectrum of commitment, they were at the discretion of the

student. Some students engaged in them on a weekly basis, while others had only one over the entire semester.

B. Ethical issues

The nature of action research in general and the goals of this project specifically required continual interaction between the researcher and his subjects. Reflective practice also calls for added ethical dimensions in that relationship. Habermas sees the inseparability of theory, research and practice as critical in the justification of action research (Carr and Kemmis 1986), and the researcher needs to be sensitive to what Freire (1998) called the “dialectic within teaching and learning processes and within/between the experiences of teachers and learners” (quoted in Neelands 2006: 19). Not only was it my intent as a researcher to learn as much as possible about the nuances of the students' learning, it was also my expectation that, as a teacher, I would also learn from them in ways that would improve both my pedagogical method and my assessment practices.

Since the purpose of the research was to study and develop self- and dialogic assessment methods in drama classes, all students who took my Introduction to Drama and Advanced Acting classes during the school years 2004-2005 and 2005-2006 participated in the research. At the beginning of the courses all students were given a Statement of Informed Consent (in accordance with Durham University Form EC2) to be signed by both the student and, since the majority of the participants were under

18, their parent or guardian. The Statement of Informed Consent explained the process by which data would be gathered from student writing and from dialogue with the students. Further, it assured that students' anonymity would be preserved if they did choose to allow my use of their work and that their willingness or unwillingness to participate would have no effect on the way they were graded in the class. It therefore should be noted that all the students whose writing or conversation appears in Chapter Six have been given pseudonyms.

C. Teaching Self-assessment

While most 14-to-18 year olds manifest a high level of self-involvement, none are born knowing techniques of perceptive self-evaluation when it comes to understanding what they have learned from a classroom experience. Although the use of self-assessment techniques has become more pervasive in recent years, there has been little written about methodologies and little research examining the results of using self-assessment at the high school level (McDonald and Boud 2003: 211). With the exception of Wiggins (1993) it is also the case that most of the literature on self-assessment is standards-oriented and does not explore the students' role in evaluating experiential or affective learning.

One of the primary jobs of the drama teacher interested in authentic assessment, therefore, is not only to train his students in the skills of self-assessment but also to develop a method for that training. On one level, self-assessment simply means involving students in identifying the criteria

to apply to their judging their work and then evaluating the extent to which they have met those criteria (Boud 1986: 5) rather than imposing a rubric on them and using a teacher-centered assessment method. Even this level of self-assessment seems progressive in most educational environments, where students have traditionally been the subjects of assessment rather than active participants in its creation (McGregor and Boud 2003: 211). This research aspires to a further step: teaching students a means first to articulate and then, with the aid of dialogue, to build on learning that is not rubric-centered but of an internal and affective nature. There is no easy and prescriptive method for doing this; it is a process of discovery for both student and teacher.

While this point may seem obvious, we must begin by pointing out that more dialogic direction is called for at the beginning of the task in order to focus the students' attention on the essential features of their learning and to break that task into manageable components (Diaz and Berk 1992: 28). One productive method begins from the work of Labov (1972) concerning the structures of narrative. Below is a progression of stages, linked to questions that can help the student understand and articulate a learning experience:

Abstract – What is this about?

Orientation – Who? When? What? Where?

Complication – Then what happened?

Evaluation – So what?

Result – What finally happened?

Coda – which returns the listener to the present moment

(quoted in Cortazzi 1993: 45)



The names of the stages are of little consequence for the student; but if the teacher offers the questions as guidelines for journal reflection following a drama lesson, students would begin to learn that 1) they are expected to try to make sense of their learning experiences and 2) there was a methodology for assessing those experiences. (Too often when we ask for 'self-assessment', we simply ask 'what did you learn?' The responses may be briefly insightful, but offer no way of tracking the progress of a student's learning.) Much more detail of Cortazzi's Evaluation Model (1993) will be discussed while examining the data in Chapter Six. In practice, the data show that by giving direction and structure to students' reflection on their work, their self-assessment showed a much more focused ability to address and explore specific questions and challenges they encountered during the learning experience. Their increased awareness allowed them to be more active participants in the formative assessment of the ways in which those questions might be answered and those challenges mastered.

Among the ideas that emerged from the data analysis, some dominant motifs in my students' self-assessments became evident. Throughout my analysis of the data that is reviewed in Chapter Six, I observed the strengths and weaknesses of my students' self-assessment. They may be summarized this way:

Strengths:

- Assessment of character development (*skills of the theatre, experiential learning*)

- Identification of commonalities between the work and themselves (*affective learning*)
- Identification of personal affective growth (*affective learning*)

Weaknesses:

- Assessment of their own growth as artist/practitioners – identification of where they *have* learned and where they still have difficulty (*this touches on all three types of learning: students need the vocabulary of skills of the theatre, but also the outside references of experiential learning and a sensitivity to their own development*)
- Assessment of the working process in developing a project (*all three types*)

The implications for dialogue that result from these observations will be detailed in Chapter Six, but I mention them here to demonstrate that even with minimal instruction in the techniques of self-assessment and minimal dialogue, students were able to articulate at least some elements of experiential and affective learning that would have otherwise been unobservable to me.

D. Reviewing the Data

As noted above (Chapter 5.I), I had created *a priori* a series of purposes for research exploring ways of increasing the validity and authenticity of assessment in my drama classes. These were based on fifteen years of experience as well as pre-research planning. They did not originally come from the literature so much as from my own reflective practice – a philosophical certainty that I was neither assessing nor fully facilitating some of the truly important learning that was taking place in my classes. Later reading from Heathcote (1967) to Taylor (2006a)

affirmed my view and gave theoretical support to the purposes of the research.

After four semesters of requiring my students to practice a regimen of self-assessment supplemented with student/teacher dialogue while collecting data from student journals, more formal student writing, and my own notes from both in-class dialogues and dialogic responses in student journals, I began a review process to see what the data would show about the effectiveness of self-assessment and dialogue in making assessment in my classes have greater validity and authenticity. The reading of the data began with “immersion” – essentially combing the data to see what they would say (Riley 1990; Rubin and Rubin 1995) From this emerged some distinctive patterns of student thought which meant the data could be organized loosely around a “Constant Comparative Method” (Wellington 2000; Lincoln and Guba 1985; Goertz and LeCompte 1981; Glaser and Strauss 1967) which attempts to organize the data into categories or “units of meaning” (Wellington 2000: 137). In a manner suggesting an affinity with grounded theory, patterns that emerged from the data seemed to confirm the legitimacy of the *a priori* purposes of the research. Admittedly, it is difficult to justify any significant generalizability from action research growing out of reflective practice done by a teacher with his own students as subjects. Nevertheless, there is an argument to be made that through systematic critical sampling, studying a number of cases will enable the researcher to make some valid generalizations (Wellington 2000:98). The data I collected come from 88 beginning drama students and

28 advanced drama students with at least one semester's prior experience (and in some cases up to four semesters, plus work on three or four extracurricular productions). It seems safe to suggest that repeated patterns in the self-assessment emerging from those students' individual learning experiences in drama – and I refer both to patterns of language and commonality of experience – would justify some measure of generalizability. The data reported in Chapter Six have been selected as *representative* of the several basic patterns (“units of meaning”) that emerged from the data. In qualitative terms, the representative samples are legitimate because, as Walker (1980) has said: “An instance is likely to be as typical and as atypical as any other” (Walker 1980: 34). The inclusion of Walker's statement should not be taken as a glib dismissal of reliability, but rather serve as a reminder that the research is examining individuals' attempts to articulate an affective learning experience, which of necessity yields highly subjective, qualitative data.

Chapter Six – Data Analysis

In this chapter, I will engage in an extensive examination and discussion of the data generated through student self-assessment and student-teacher dialogue. While this information does form the body of results of the research for this thesis, I wish to clarify the extremely qualitative nature of the data:

- the medium used for data collection – language – has a limited number of quantifiable characteristics. While one of the goals of the research is to examine language patterns in student self-assessment, the problems of assuring objectivity of meaning are complex and have already been detailed in Chapters 4 and 5
- the method of data collection required the subjects to evaluate their learning experiences in a manner that called for intensive self-reflection rather than meeting rubric-establish performance standards
- the purpose of the collection of student self-assessment and the documentation of dialogue was to serve an ongoing process of formative assessment *for* learning, not a final summative assessment *of* learning.

It is in that spirit – of using the data as a tool to improve assessment *for* learning – that the entire research project was undertaken. In the words of Dorothy Heathcote, the most important elements in creating authenticity in teaching (and by extension, in assessment) are “seeing the students as they

are really demonstrating themselves to be and being interested in students as they represent themselves to be” (quoted in Johnson and O’Neill 1984: 175). In other words, the true value of the data is what they reveal about what students learn in my classes that could only be revealed by the students themselves. This hypothesis is supported by the work of Ross, et al (1993), whose examination of student/teacher conversation concluded that dialogue gave teachers clear “qualitative evidence of... aesthetic achievement and expansion of understanding of the pupil’s aesthetic development” (Ross et al. 1993: 41).

For the students enrolled in my Introduction to Drama and Advanced Acting classes, formative assessment had occurred throughout both courses and the summative assessment that took place at the end of each quarter was largely based on how much each student had developed in response to the formative assessment over the progress of the class. In this way, at least one of my assessment goals was already being accomplished: in contrast to both state-mandated standardized tests and to objective summative assessments in their other classes, summative assessments in Drama classes were based on each student’s own learning progress in the class, not in competition with other students. It remained to be seen if a method focused on student self-assessment mediated by student-teacher dialogue could broaden and/or deepen understanding of what students learn in drama classes. Following four semesters of assembling student self-assessment and student-teacher dialogue from my classes, it was time to see what that data told me about the nature of the

assessment that had been taking place. The content of the student-generated data suggested it would be best to analyze it from four related but distinct perspectives that are detailed in the section below.

One further note about the organization of the data: where relevant (and not obvious) it will be noted whether the students who is speaking is a beginner from the Intro to Drama class or an Advanced Acting student with a strong foundation in the *skills of the theatre*.

I. Examining Student Self-assessment

If someone believes something, we needn't always be able to answer the question "why he believes it"; but if he knows something, then the question "how does he know?" must be capable of being answered.

– Wittgenstein *On Certainty* (1994: 72)

The necessity of distinguishing between an opinion based in emotional response without firm roots and an insight, no matter how personal, growing from or resulting in knowledge is one of the critical problems of this thesis (as it is one of the critical problems of the debate over assessment in drama). We need only remind ourselves of those critics on both sides of the controversy over the role of drama in the UK in the 1970s-80s: those such as Hornbrook who said drama wasn't fit for the curriculum unless it could be objectively assessed and those in the tradition of Slade who said that the kinds of learning experienced in a

drama class were so subjective that assessment would devalue the creativity of the student. This dichotomy is a reflection of a larger one in the entire field of educational research between quantitative and qualitative research, between positivist and constructivist views of human behavior. In his analysis of this conflict, Richard Pring (2000) mediates the misconceptions about “subjectivity” well. He is worth quoting at length in order help teacher/researchers navigate the world we enter in exploring students' perceptions and conceptions of their own experiential and affective learning. It should also be noted that while the distinction he makes about “meaning” and “interpretation” is striking, it does not preclude dialogue from mediating either kind of perception in a way that can legitimately be called formative assessment:

If by “subjective meanings” one means the feelings, personal connotations or associations that accompany a statement, gesture or action, then these are indeed subjective and private interpretations, and as such will no doubt limit the objectivity of what we do or say or believe. If, however, we mean by “subjective meanings” the way in which a particular “subject” or agent understands things, then the meanings are subjective only in a trivial sense. They are the understandings of this particular person or “subject”. But such understandings, reflected in the intentions that inform a particular action, gesture or word, presuppose a public and thereby objective world of social rules through which their behavior makes sense (Pring 2000: 102).

First, it should be noted that Pring is helping to separate affective (the purely personal) from experiential (prior knowledge/social context

applied to dramatic experience) learning. This statement also suggests, however, how the strategies implied by the theories of Wittgenstein, Polanyi and Cortazzi (see Chapter Four, Part II) can be practically applied to self- and dialogic assessment. The distinction that Pring makes helps the teacher who is trying to help a student articulate her inchoate understanding of an abstract concept or a step in personal growth construct that knowledge. In this respect, we can begin to achieve the goal of assessment *for* learning.

The central hypotheses of the thesis are that students in drama construct new knowledge and build on prior knowledge in at least three ways, that their participation is required to assess that learning, and that dialogue is essential to shaping understanding of that learning in a way that provides meaningful formative assessment. To best illustrate the full range of constructions of knowledge and meaning that students engage with in drama, the data will be presented in four discreet categories dealing with:

- evidence of experiential and affective learning
- analysis of self-assessment vocabulary
- development of self-assessment skills
- the cycle of self-assessment → dialogue as formative assessment
→ reflective practice

The choice of this approach is grounded in my belief that the first step in justifying the importance of self- and dialogic assessment is to demonstrate that learning that may be called experiential or affective and *which can't be assessed through observing student performance* is actually taking place through students' experiences in drama. Much of the data generated in student self-assessment and developed through dialogue made this

evident and will be examined in Section II. Once it is established that this learning is taking place and that students are capable of articulating it, the remaining sections of the data analysis will examine the various ways in which assessment helps the student and the teacher to make meaning of the learning.

II. Evidence of Experiential and Affective Learning

One of the major units of the Advanced Acting class deals with period comedy. The emphasis of the unit is on two types of physical acting required by the genre. The first is physical comedy – the drawing of characters with vocal and physical mannerisms that are sometimes very close to being cartoons for the purpose of humor. Most of the learning required for mastering this element involves vocal and movement techniques included in the *skills of the theatre*. The second element, however, concerns the social and cultural context of the scene the student is working on. These pieces range from Elizabethan to late Edwardian time periods and understanding the effect on character of the social and cultural conventions of those periods is critical to the student's learning and subsequent success in creating the character. Experiential learning is vital here: some students may bring prior knowledge of the period, but research is also a key component of the project. In a self-assessment of her initial approach to the role of Cecily in *The Importance of Being Earnest*, Tara made the following observations:

Tara: Cecily has all the mannerisms of a well-brought up Victorian lady, yet she shows her youth through her enthusiasm about superficial ideas such as being admired for her good looks. She moves gracefully and with a maturity almost beyond her years but she shows that she isn't entirely proper because she always gets up close and personal with Gwendolen, though she has just met her... she gets terribly defensive of her man, as any jealous girl would do, but she has more wit than Gwendolen does and Cecily knows how and when to use it without losing her gentle, sweet tone of voice.... In present times, being sarcastic, rude, or just plain mean would have been [sic] typical responses to the same situation. But due to the time period's standards, the scene became funnier because both characters were a step out of reality for modern viewers because they were being polite, yet insulting at the same time

After reading Tara's self-assessment, a short dialogue ensued:

Teacher: You show a keen awareness of the social satire that Wilde intended in the play as well as awareness of the difference in social "proprieties" between Victorian England and modern America. Now – as modern American actors, how do you physicalize the manners you've discussed?

Tara: We added the physical comedy by emphasizing the mirror images of the characters' movements, such as sitting at the same time, standing alike, or moving similarly, so that when we broke the rhythm of

this it was obvious, important and exactly timed to either emphasize a point or create physical comedy without the characters realizing it.

This is experiential learning – Tara has taken learning/research/prior knowledge about Victorian social conventions and stirred it back into her knowledge of stagecraft the skills of the theatre to both understand and play the comedy the scene requires.

The next self-assessment/dialogue shows how experiential and affective learning can both occur in the same learning experience. Anna is talking here about playing Kate in Shakespeare's *The Taming of the Shrew*:

Anna: I believe she is a shrew because she is tied down by her social standing and the time period. Her anger and bitchiness is a result of knowing she eventually has to give in to a husband. There really is no avoiding it for her '...for it is no boot, place your hand beneath your husband's foot.' She is saying that she is giving in but has not changed; she will not like this.

Anna has done thoughtful script analysis and character development based on her experiential learning. In dialogue, I hoped to help her find a way to personalize Kate's predicament.

Teacher: You make a couple of very good points: 1) that she loathes the idea of being a wife and 2) that she realizes that she has no

other options. No wonder she's so angry in the scene. Now how do you physicalize this notion of sexual politics?

Anna: Symbolically (and literally) it seems to be a struggle for who's on top (in control). The blocking begins with Kate standing triumphantly on Petruchio as a hunter stands on his kill. I am serious, but Petruchio is taking me lightly, as he does in the whole scene. He twists me down and eventually covers over me. This puts Kate in a submissive position, which she hates and Petruchio loves. This struggle can be taken as Kate's struggle to be a strong, independent woman and Petruchio's response of 'You will eventually give in; I'll just tease you for now.'

The positions are also somewhat sexual (**Teacher:** No Anna, they're *entirely* sexual...) and our characters react accordingly. I don't want it; Petruchio is intent on holding Kate down.

Teacher: Good – I like the way you understand that the movement is both amusingly sexual and more seriously about submission.

Anna shows both experiential learning here – in the way she uses the lens of 20th century sexual politics to understand *Shrew* – and affective learning to find a way to place herself in a position to make Kate real. If we accept that it's a play that simply can't be done straight up in this time and zeitgeist, then any actress playing Kate must develop an understanding of how to make the irony clear to the modern audience without ever forgetting she's playing a comedy. Anna shows a good comprehension of all of that in this exchange.

In both Tara's and Anna's responses, we can see that experiential and affective learning can exist simultaneously, deepening understanding of the historical and cultural context of the play and exploring the modern context of attitudes toward those historical and cultural contexts. The learning that takes place has led the student to a deeper comprehension of the play and to a greater understanding of and confidence in how to play the scene. As Lyn McGregor (1983) noted, "in the sense that drama has to do with emotional and intellectual involvement in exploring people's attitudes, behaviour and feelings, the political/moral undercurrent of what is being explored cannot be ignored" (McGregor 1983: 125).

In the next excerpt, Karla is doing a self-assessment in her journal as she rehearses a monologue that requires her to come off stage and address the audience directly.

Karla: I've always had issues with speaking in front of people in the school environment. If I'm on a stage singing or acting, I can do it, but when I'm just standing there in front of my peers, I freak out. I get really nervous and my voice starts shaking. This monologue is a really good opportunity for me to get over that. Whether I have to do it by being in character enough to not be myself or simply suck it up and do it, it'll be good for me.

Karla begins with an affective insight about her difficulty with speaking in front of others, realizes that the project she is working on is a

good vehicle for addressing those difficulties, and then has an epiphany about her character (who is an actress having a self-described “crisis of confidence”) and herself:

Karla: I think today is the first day I have really been able to understand my character. I was sitting at the back of the auditorium thinking about things when I started watching the other students on stage run their pieces. I started thinking about our behavior onstage vs. offstage when I really started to comprehend acting from my character’s point of view. She talks about herself being an entertainment and how she never saw herself like that. I really connected with her because I started thinking about myself, about why I act... I like to perform. But we never think about the other end really. We think about what we’re doing onstage when we’re doing it, but in that moment, we don’t think about what the audience is thinking. I am somehow influencing every single person in the audience when I’m onstage. That is so amazing.

What is most interesting about the evidence here is the way in which Karla is able to connect all three types of learning in one insight. She begins with the affective insight about her reticence to speak in front of others and then uses that to make an *experiential* connection between being an audience member and being a performer. These realizations bring her back to greater insight about character development – a *skills of the theatre* issue. Finally, there are two further *affective* realizations, one intrapersonal (“I started thinking about why I act...”) and one

interpersonal (“I am somehow influencing every single person in the audience...”). It goes without saying that without reading Karla’s self-assessment, I could have never “observed” these levels of learning and neither she nor I would have had a valid assessment of all that she’d learned in the process of that particular project.

I have not included any of my dialogue with Karla because the self-assessment cited above produced interesting results. Usually I find that when students work on this particular monologue (“Fifteen Minutes” from Jane Martin’s *Talking With*), they need the most guidance in discovering an honest and reasonably emotionally comfortable way to do the part of the monologue when the character comes offstage and interacts with the audience. However, when Karla and I engaged in a formative dialogue during her rehearsal process, she felt entirely confident about the offstage moment, while the issues she asked for help resolving were all *skills of the theatre* related questions of physicalizing character.

The two previous examples were from Advanced Acting students. This observation concerning experiential and affective learning comes from an Intro to Drama student, but one who brought with her enormous natural ability and has since successfully auditioned for the Advanced Acting class. In the following self-assessment journal entry, she reflects on her learning from a class exercise. As students begin a project to create a character from scratch (a character for whom they will eventually write, rehearse and perform a monologue), they are subject to character

interviews (an exercise similar to the drama-in-education practice of “hot seating” in which the student must answer – in role – questions about their character’s background, values, and relationships [Neelands 1998: 95]). Despite the obvious difference of being in role, this exercise nevertheless engages the student in dialogue about their work. The questioners include both the teacher and other students in the class. In teaching character interview skills, I always emphasize that the most important questions are those that force the interviewees to follow up on revelations that have emerged through their answers, so the exercise becomes another kind of formative dialogue.

Caroline had come into the class as a freshman with a lot of natural talent and a good deal of experience at a middle school in another state. She thought that acting was about unleashing that talent on stage and some of her early work had seemed overwrought. Her self-assessment here shows that she had begun to learn about how much is needed to underpin a believable performance.

Caroline: This class I did my character interview. I learned how important it is to keep a consistent accent and how important it is to really think about not only what is in your character’s past, but how they feel about things and how that affects the character’s views and relationships. This exercise really helped me understand the importance of knowing your character’s past, relationships, views and feelings.

Unfortunately, Caroline doesn't make specific references to the questions that she answered in role during the interview. While on the surface her self-assessment seems to be mostly about the *skills of the theatre*, specifically character development, there's also a lot that she has made, through dialogue, of the connection of past experience to present and future choices. It's certainly affective, but there was an experiential element that had been realized through the in role dialogue that would continue to be developed. When I engaged Caroline in summative dialogue about her rehearsal process just before her performance, she had spent a great deal more time and effort both in developing dimensions of character and in writing those realized dimensions into her monologue:

Teacher: Your initial draft did a lot of "telling", as opposed to revelation of character. The revised monologue contains many more facets of the character. What can you tell me about how those came into being?

Caroline: In the interview I learned how the way my character feels about her family and past will affect her ability to befriend others as well as the type of people she will befriend. Once I knew those things, I could write situations where (the character) had lived through them.

Teacher: Don't answer this if you'd prefer not to, but do those situations come from experience or imagination?

Caroline: There's a little bit of experience, but I'm more adaptable than she (the character) is, so most of what she says is imagined.

The development of Caroline's monologue project from start to finish makes a strong case for formative assessment through dialogue, not just with her teacher but with her classmates as well. Her final comment reminds us of Neelands' observation that the best drama is made where public and the private worlds intersect (Neelands 1998: 38). Caroline has managed to use that intersection in her own experience to explore it in her character's life. Again, it is evident that a summative observation of her performance would have told me only a small portion of what she had learned by doing the project.

Before the reader begins to think that awareness of experiential and affective learning are gender-specific, I will next examine Rick's observations about his work as Angelo in a scene from Shakespeare's *Measure for Measure*. This was Rick's first project as an Advanced Acting student. The following exchange began from Rick's summative self-assessment at the end of the project and continued into dialogue. The writing prompt he's responding to asks students to choose a line of dialogue from their scenes and explain how the language gave them insight into their characters and the interactions in the scene.

Rick: The language allows me to understand that Angelo is creating a hypothetical situation, yet Shakespeare prevents the actor from performing it in any way other than some kind of sly cross-examination (of Isabella). This gives insight into Angelo's character: not only is he cunning and two-faced, he's willing to kill someone to blackmail Isabella for sex.

Teacher: And what feeling does that awareness fill you with as you play the scene? Does it help you define the relationship between Angelo and Isabella? And how do you and Alice play that relationship in the rest of the scene?

Rick: The feeling is of power. At first Angelo is facing Isabel and talking to her, but as he paces around behind her so that she cannot see him, he looks her body over in an aroused fashion. However, he delivers the remainder of the question in the same tone as the beginning, allowing the audience to see his two faces. The dramatic irony later feeds in when Angelo is asking Isabel for her chastity in return for her brother's life, yet Isabel does not understand because Angelo seems too honest and principled for that.

There's a substantial amount of learning revealed for assessment in this single paragraph. Here is experiential learning (defined as the interaction of non-drama related knowledge or experience with the student's work in drama) feeding back to aid Rick in making effective choices in his use of several skills of the theatre – including movement, vocal quality, and making meaning of language. I could easily have observed the blocking that Rick describes and commented positively on its effectiveness in communicating the dynamics of the characters' relationship. I could not, however, have known that Rick's experiential understanding of dramatic irony was informing his vocal choices in contrast to the movement without

the dialogic question about how he would use his understanding of the character to bring the scene to life.

Finally, on the level of affective learning, Rick's thinking shows a lot of understanding of power relations – between authority figures and those who plead their cases before them and between men and women (or predatory men and naïve women...). He demonstrates, in a very summative manner I would argue, how process has led to product. He accomplishes this through exploring the boundary between public and private, between the experiential and affective and then showing his ability to apply that learning to his work on stage:

Rick: As Isabella is finally standing up for herself and threatening Angelo, Alice shot me a look with those big eyes of hers that said “I’ve got you now, and I’ll make you miserable for it.” The look always prompted a feeling of shock and disbelief, followed closely by anger that I was duped by her.

Because this beat is at the end of our scene, the tempers of both characters have built; and while I, the actor, am putting on a persona, a little bit of Angelo's smug authority has rubbed off on me. When Alice gives me that look, it shoots through the character on the surface and hits me, the actor, as a shock, and I lose my bearing a little because it doesn't seem as though Alice is putting on the face, but that she has something against me. When I jump back into character, I can turn on that all-knowing scowl to show her I am still superior. I don't believe my final

monologue could be as sinister or as powerful without that look from Alice.

Everything Rick says seems like a great meta-analysis of all the power dynamics – linguistic, verbal, and physical – in the scene, especially concerning the ways that people display power relations through physical interaction. There are also keen observations here about emotional memory, since he describes both himself and his partner as working from honestly felt emotions instead of trying to “act” them.

The last thing worth comment in Rick’s self-assessment is the way these last two paragraphs jump from third person (“Isabella stands up to Angelo”) to first person (“Alice shot me a look”) and then merge until character and student become somewhat interchangeable. This was perhaps the single most common of the linguistic patterns that appeared in students’ self-assessments (Section III of this chapter focuses on analysis of the vocabulary of self-assessment that emerged from the data).

In the following (and final) piece of student writing concerning the nature of experiential and affective learning, Andrew’s reflections are pure self-assessment presented with no dialogue attending. Nevertheless, they are vivid examples of a student’s capacity for articulating his learning in drama and then generalizing it and personalizing it into explicit understanding of affective and experiential learning. (Andrew was in the process of rehearsing a scene from Ibsen’s *Hedda Gabler*, working with two other Advanced Acting students):

Andrew: Character exploration is a fascinating thing. In the inanimate object part (*Andrew is referring to an improvisation exercise we did in class*), I became a mirror. My character seems to reflect what he sees around him or becomes that which people feed to him. He reflected first Hedda's self-destructiveness and then Thea's demonstration of a 'good' life. A mirror is thin. It has no depth. It is what it sees from one side; the other is bare and lonely. And when a mirror falls it smashes and is destroyed.

Without transition, Andrew switches from third to first person in his discussion of Eilert:

Andrew: I'm too encourageable [sic]. I have almost no self-will. My personality becomes what I think someone important would like best. I'm not what I want to be. I'm not sure what that is. I do what I like doing, this being writing.

In his next journal entry, his reflections turn from Eilert to Andrew:

Andrew: No new developments in the scene, so I'm going to think somewhat about why I suck at talking at times – for that is something I'd really like to solve. One instance where I've noticed I'm timid about speaking is when I'm afraid I'll say something stupid or will get cut off or no one will care what I'm saying. If something really is worth saying, I'll say it, but if I'm not sure, I'll just think about it until it doesn't relate anymore. The other case of bad speaking occurs when I'm thinking while

I'm speaking. In a mock trial today I was trying to compile all the data into questions whose answers would be in my client's favor. I had a terrible time getting any kind of question to come out. Muddles of jumbly words spewed out and I got nowhere. I only sort of saved my butt because I got the witness so confused that she began to contradict herself. Explaining things also gets muddled.

Yet when I write, everything seems to be all right. Perhaps this slows everything down to a sufficient level where I can organize my thoughts and turn them into words. So perhaps I need to slow my speaking down; this may give me time to better organize my brain. I probably just need more practice in thinking while I'm talking – or at least talking in situations where I'm not comfortable.

Had there been dialogue during Andrew's reflections, I would have pointed out that his experiences on stage were all designed to address some of the problems he articulates: I'm always goading students about slowing down, about how to make effective use of silence as a tool of dramatic communication. Also, managing the words and ideas of skilled playwrights is a means of training one's own skills in discourse. And finally, performing must eventually increase the student's confidence and comfort level in speaking before others. (I would also have pointed out the interesting empathy between Andrew and Eilert as somewhat passive men who prefer writing to 'live' conversation.) In reading Andrew's final self-assessment, it almost seems as if that dialogue had taken place:

Andrew: This class has helped me out a lot. I just love that I feel leagues more comfortable on stage now. The monologue really helped me out. Getting on stage alone with people watching was a real challenge. Having to carry a scene and keep it interesting alone is something I certainly have never done before. I feel after that, I can do anything in front of people and do it fairly calmly. It's strange that we benefit most, it seems, from the things we least want to do. Perhaps I should search myself for similar things that I do not want to do and then do them anyway for my own growth and benefit. Hmm. Interesting.

Here again the instantaneous transportation between skills of the theatre, experiential and affective learning merits notice. This may be an emerging language pattern: that students make little distinction as they move from self-assessment of learning skills to reflection of affective growth. Brian Edmiston has said that you have to know what learning is before you can look for it. Looking at Andrew's final reflection, we not only see transparent articulation of affective and experiential learning, we can perhaps begin to define affective and experiential learning objectives – for example, the deliberate inclusion in a more individualized curriculum of student-identified challenges, such as Andrew's desire to feel more comfortable as a public performer.

III. The vocabulary of self-assessment

“The arts, if anything, are non-conventional language systems that require their own unique modes of comprehension” – Philip Taylor (2000: 82).

It was one of my hypotheses at the beginning of this research that data from student self-assessment and student/teacher dialogue might well yield a common vocabulary that would be useful not only in practicing assessment in my own classes, but which might also lend a modicum of reliability to the dialogic assessment method. In practice, no clear-cut system of language use that might help systematize this type of assessment emerged from student writing or dialogue. Although it was the intention that this work should focus on a qualitative examination of students’ understanding of their learning and of student-teacher interaction, it should be acknowledged that a more quantitative approach to language analysis might well be a useful area of future research. While the data stop short of clearly establishing a lexicon for self-assessment, some interesting and useful patterns emerge in the way that students use language to explore psychologically and emotionally complex challenges in their learning, not only about the characters and the scenes they are creating, but about themselves as well.

As was noted in Chapter Four, it is striking how often in reading Wittgenstein’s discussions of language games one is reminded of

techniques used by actors and in actor training. For example, Wittgenstein says:

I want to keep a diary about the recurrence of a certain sensation. To this end I associate it with the sign "S" and write this sign in a calendar for every day on which I have the sensation. –I will remark first of all that my definition of the sign cannot be formulated. –But still I can give myself a kind of ostensive definition. –How? Can I point to the sensation? Not in the ordinary sense. But I speak, or write the sign down, and at the same time I concentrate my attention on the sensation –and so, as it were, point to it inwardly (PI 258).

This sounds suspiciously like *emotional recall* and/or *physical recall* – techniques that every acting student learns early on as means of honestly conveying experience without having actually had the experience (Hagen 1973: 46-7). Ironically, this is also a valuable technique of self-assessment in which the student is asked to publicly articulate private experience. How can this be accomplished? Perhaps through association, through a sort of *family resemblance* in which the student works toward articulation of the affective learning that has taken place. Here dialogue becomes essential in shaping and guiding the student's self-assessment towards clarity and accuracy, which in turn leads to an explicit understanding of the learning among all interested parties.

Before examining the patterns that emerged from the data, it will be useful to have a model from which to begin that analysis. For this, I turn to Martin Cortazzi's Narrative Analysis and his Evaluation Model

(1993). Cortazzi's theory is that we can assess the meaning of what he refers to as "narrative" in two ways. The first is *external evaluation*, by which the speaker comments on his own narrative: "as principal protagonist, the teller takes listeners back to the state of knowledge he had at the time of the episode" (Cortazzi 1993: 40). To put this in the terms of student self-assessment, external evaluation would occur when a student remarked on his discovery of affective learning in the middle of discussing the development of a theatrical skill. Here is an example from an Intro to Drama student's self-assessment journal:

Lynne: I also really liked the homework assignments, especially subtext. It helped me to understand the Countess and her relationship with the other women a lot more, which I think can be seen in our scene now. The activity really made the scene easier. Also, the emotional interviews helped me to get what makes Countess tick, and I actually learned that she has a case of narcissism and her lines make more sense. Overall, this scene work has been really helpful. It's improved my ability to look at others and tell what they're doing well and what needs improvement. It's also really helped me to work on relying on myself to interpret the script instead of the director.

Lynne is reflecting at length on how various in-class and homework exercises have helped her with a *skills of the theatre* issue – character development. Then, without transition, she steps out of that discussion and the language shifts perspective from the character to Lynne herself,

commenting on more experiential critical skills which have enabled her to assess her own character development.

When he turns to *internal evaluation*, Cortazzi's model becomes much more detailed. Internal evaluation is manifested in a number of linguistic patterns: *intensifiers* (and these may be gestures in dialogue as well as language choices in writing or speaking), *comparators* (embedded questions, "might haves"), *extension* (connecting events), and *explications* (examining causal relationships, qualifying subordinate clauses embedded in independent clauses) (Cortazzi 1993: 48). Throughout the data analysis, we will see how these patterns manifest themselves in student self-assessment.

In her next self-assessment, for example, Lynne examines the connection of cause and effect:

Lynne: One thing improv helped me with was my fear of forgetting lines. The improv made me realize that if I forget my lines or skip something, I can just go along with it and cover. Improv raised my confidence in my scene work a lot. It also helped me to know what to do with myself when someone else was talking. During improv, I was trying to get lines in. Now, in a scene where I'm trying to interrupt, I have a better idea of what it's like.

In addition to the understanding of causal relationships (if I follow the flow of the conversation, I'm less anxious about forgetting lines), there are two other observations to make about Lynne's self-assessment. Note the direct transition from *skills* to *affective learning* ("improv raised my

confidence...”) as well as the *extension* in the overlapping of various skills (improv→scene work). And while not as germane to her self-assessment, I am also struck by the observations about the dynamics of dialogue itself (in the performing sense).

Among the language patterns of greatest interest in students’ self-assessments are the points where a shift occurs from analysis of *skills of the theatre* to reflection on *affective learning*. In three consecutive journal responses, Ketia uses her reactions to Intro to Drama ensemble-building exercises for self-examination:

Ketia: I would like to think of myself as someone who works well with others, and in reality I think that I do. But as we are doing these exercises I am noticing that I’d much rather work alone. For example, in the trust exercises, I tried to let myself go completely but I found it hard to do. I regret to admit that I really didn’t trust the people in my group at all. Partly because I don’t know them, but then again it might be because they dropped a few people before they got to me. I suppose that I could try to be more open, but I think I’ll wait till we’re doing something a little safer, like reading lines or something.

In this response, Ketia engages in both external and internal evaluation. She quickly steps outside the exercises themselves to assess the reasons she has difficulty feeling comfortable in the ensemble. There are also several examples of what Cortazzi calls *comparators* – the “might haves” of reflecting on an experience (“I suppose I could try to be more open”).

As we will see again in later examples (Charlotte and Jean in 6.V), this “might have” stance was one of the common patterns that emerged in student self-assessment.

A key phrase in Ketia’s next journal entry is “you have to adopt their mannerisms and try to conceal your own.” It indicates where extension – the connecting of experiences – occurs.

Ketia: When you are performing, you have to think about a million different things that you would normally pay no mind to. You have to adjust to your character’s age and personality. You have to adopt their mannerisms and try to conceal your own. The exercise that we did with leading centers really helped me to be more aware of how I use my body. Your body is a huge part of your character. And if you’re not using it to sell yourself, then you’re probably not a very convincing actor.

This is the language of *experiential learning* in two senses. The first involves a critical stance (“If you’re not using your body...”) drawn from experience in responding to drama. More important to assessment of Ketia’s learning from this exercise, however, is the observation that “you have to adopt their (*the character’s*) mannerisms and try to conceal your own.” This is obviously *skills of the theatre* learning, but it is also *experiential* – while she does not go on to explore the challenge in this entry, the next question that must be addressed is “How does one do that?” Ketia’s self-assessment suggests that she understands that the *skills of the theatre* technique to be employed in answering that question requires

connecting knowledge of one's own physical tendencies with and experiential approach to creating the character physically.

Ketia's first entry explored *intrapersonal* affective learning and the second examined the connection between the skills of the theatre and experience. The third typical language pattern that is evident in the next entry is employed in self-assessing *interpersonal affective learning*.

Ketia: Working with partners has been very educational for me. Not only do you have to watch your actions and focus on what you're doing, but you also have to look out for what your partner(s) might be doing. Then you've got to feed off of that. With something like the mirroring exercise, and pretty much everything else, I think that it's easier to work with someone you know them [sic]. That way you kind of have an idea of what they're going to do. If you were working with a stranger, they could come with something completely off the wall. But it is good to be ready for anything. These exercises make me realize that when you are doing a play or anything else that requires more than one person, that it doesn't matter if you know all of your lines and can present them well if you're not working with the people around you. Even a great actor could ruin a play by thinking that it's all about them or by doing just their part.

The self-assessment above shows how Ketia is able to easily move among the three types of learning in drama, implicitly distinguishing them from one another while also connecting them in the construction of knowledge.

In presenting qualitative data, there is always the problem of choosing between breadth and depth and the question may arise as to why I have chosen only one student's (Ketia's) self-assessment for an illustration of these language patterns. It would be prudent, therefore, to reiterate at this point that all language is subject to the conditions suggested by Wittgenstein and Polanyi (see Chapter 4.II.A), and that any language analysis done by a researcher is mediated by the contexts of both subject and researcher (Wellington 2000: 117), *and* that the goal of the data analysis was to look for representative language patterns (see Chapter 5.III.D) rather than a systematic vocabulary. It is my intention to use one student from the Intro to Drama class (in other words, a student who does not bring to the self-assessment exercise either substantial knowledge of *skills of the theatre*, nor a substantial theatrical vocabulary) to establish as baseline for those representative ways of articulating self-assessment of learning in drama. The choice of Ketia is not based solely on Walker's assumption that "an instance is likely to be as typical and as atypical as another". There is a practical basis for the choice – the fact that among the Intro to Drama students, Ketia's self-assessments moved most fluidly among the three types of learning – and a theoretical one: according to Kemmis (1993), the main criterion for validity of this type of action research is "authentic insights, grounded in the participants' own circumstances and experience" (Kemmis 1993: 185). By that criterion, any of my students' observations about the purposes, practices, or results of

their activities in drama might have provided a valid baseline from which to examine the self-assessment and dialogue in the sections that follow.

This baseline is useful because the language used for the self-assessment of affective learning takes a variety of forms. It may be measured self-awareness, as in Lynne's passage above where she reflects on her critical skills; it may be Ketia's more assertive application of self-knowledge ranging across a variety of learning experiences; or it might display the gradual evolving of awareness through language in Andrew's self-reflection. Rarely is it solely emotional, but I include the following example as illustrative of an exception. Despite – or perhaps because of – its entirely emotional language, it is arguably a *pure* self-assessment of affective learning:

Mary Ann: Today when we did improv I was very angry at the end. I did my improv with Judith and during the entire scene Amanda (*this is the name of the character Mary Ann was working on developing*) was screaming in my ear saying “NOOO! Don't be rude. Rudeness is bad” – but during the scene Judith took control and made it about her and I knew it's because she is great and better than me but I couldn't be Amanda because I felt threatened as Mary Ann and I hate myself right now because I couldn't do it.

This ought to be looked at as more than an emotionally fraught reaction to a teenager's “bad day”. It is actually a useful piece of self-assessment in

that it manages to address both *skills of the theatre* and *affective* learning. Even at a high emotional pitch, Mary Ann is still engaging in character analysis and development – “Amanda was screaming in my ear...” – and what “Amanda” is screaming is in fact evidence of Mary Ann’s understanding and interpretation of the character. But there is also the larger issue of the affective response – Mary Ann’s anger at Judith, which seems to result from her sense of being in an unevenly matched competition with Judith; and her anger at herself for letting her emotional response detract from her work. The question then arises: what learning am I assessing here by being privy to Mary Ann’s self-assessment? On one hand, I probably could have “observed” her anger and frustration, but knowing the cause opens up the opportunity for dialogue. The learning to be “formatively assessed” here addresses what Taylor calls the “social contract” of the drama classroom (Taylor 2006a: 112). Outside the classroom, it is a truth that drama is competitive: students compete several times a year for roles in extracurricular productions and for places in the Advanced Acting class. But inside the drama classroom, there are two mutually supportive assumptions: 1) that all members of the class are equal partners in the ensemble and 2) that all assessment is geared around evaluating individual effort and development. In the Advanced Acting class there is the additional operative assumption that admission to the class implies a high level of ability and working in the class means that the student wishes to have that talent stretched. Ross speculates that there may be two kinds of dialogue: one in which the teacher *guides* to build that

student's learning and another in which he "suspends criticism and judgment..." (Ross et al. 1993: 38). In my dialogue with Mary Ann (responding to her journal about that class), I found it necessary to balance both kinds:

Mary Ann: I wasn't prepared for the way she (Judith) started off the scene. I didn't know what to do.

Teacher: Remember – part of the "learning" that goes on in Advanced Acting is being *challenged* by other advanced actors. Use the challenge to grow: and I mean both the character and you as an actor.

Mary Ann: Here's what I should of [sic] done. I should of waited till she was done, then started off slow asking about her and who she is. I guess what I'm saying is that I approached her wrong by being angry. I should of charmed my way through the scene.

There are two remarkable things in Mary Ann's response. The first is that I feel *fairly* certain that all the pronouns in Mary Ann's proposed solution refer to the characters, but I can't be sure. The line between skills of the theatre/characters and affect/Mary Ann/Judith has gotten quite blurry. Second is the fact that she hardly acknowledges the guidance I offer and plunges right back into a discussion of her work. I find this a sign of professionalism actually; she chooses not to continue to indulge in her anger but to seek a solution to the scene and, by extension, to her dissatisfaction with herself.

It is also interesting that we can still easily recognize elements of Cortazzi's evaluation model even in Mary Ann's emotionally inflected language. Clearly, she has stepped outside the narrative of her improv experience to comment on her affective response to it, while *internally*, the language is filled with examination of causal relationships, "might haves", and conditional tenses.

Also, with the aid of dialogue, she has constructed a problem → solution approach to her work. That structure may be a good place to start to build a characteristic vocabulary for self-assessment. Cortazzi provides a list of what he calls *lexical signals* – useful words that tend to occur in assessment. He assigns them thusly:

Lexical signals of "problem" – *problem, drawback, need, requirement, concern, bad, awkward, risk, hard, difficulty, crisis, change, accident*

Lexical signals of "solution" – *solution, answer, remedy, cope, suggestion, overcome, improvement, iron out, prevent, develop, tackle, treat, help, implement*

Lexical signals of "evaluation" – *success, failure, better, worse, reduce, control, benefit, enable, delighted, excellent, pleased, disappointed, thorough, great, enjoyment, understand, welcome, neat, nice, okay, happy, develop* (Cortazzi 1993: 54)

I would suggest that using these lexical signals as a base might be a valuable first step in teaching the skills of self-assessment. In the section that concludes this chapter, (6.V) "Learning to engage in reflective practice", I will examine the ways in which students have used self-

assessment and dialogue (with other students as well as with the teacher) both to analyze and improve their work and to reflect on experiential and affective learning experiences. If students learned to organize those analyses and reflections according to the problem → solution → evaluation continuum, it might then be possible to establish a language of self-assessment and dialogue that had some claim to reliability.

IV. Development of self-assessment skills

One of the most emphatic results of the data revealed the ways in which students learned to build upon their self-assessment skills in order to give evidence of experiential and affective learning not only about creating, performing and responding to drama, but also about their own artistic natures as well as about their development of what Gardner calls *intrapersonal* and *interpersonal* intelligences.

In this first piece of self-assessment, Gabrielle discusses what she learned from doing the traditional “mirror” exercise, which is used in the Intro to Drama class as a first step in ensemble building.

Gabrielle: Mike and I were, I guess, the best in the class. I really felt like I had a connection w/him. I think knowing someone somewhat makes things easier. Being a total stranger is awkward [sic] because you don't know anything about their natural movements & if you know someone too well you loose [sic] concentration because you think you

know what they will do next which causes you not to be in sync with your partner.

While Gabrielle's self-assessment uses fairly general terms, it also shows evidence of internal evaluation in the way she examines causal relationships. Following the next ensemble-building exercise – called “blind trust”, in which a blindfolded partner must develop trust with a sighted partner as they move about the theatre connected only by fingertip contact – Gabrielle offers more precise commentary about her learning in the interpersonal domain.

Gabrielle: Kelley & I worked well together because there was a lot of communication. Also because we are roughly the same size. I felt I could trust her to let (?) me down the stairs. Mike, on the other hand, NOT ONE BIT! Since I fell down the stairs because he forgot to mention we were going down steps. With Alex it was hard because his hands were so much bigger than mine. I didn't really see how this activity could help with any theatre things besides trusting someone.

In this commentary, Gabrielle offers specific insights about interpersonal cooperation and trust based on a *physical* exercise – but the learning objective of the exercise is not a physical performance skill; its precise learning objective is to have students develop trust and to develop sensitivities to each other's working methods. There are two ironies in

Gabrielle's comments : 1) she is talking about the same Mike with whom she felt a strong rapport and cooperation during the mirror exercise, so there is an interesting extension between the two experiences (though unfortunately Gabrielle doesn't make that observation) and 2) she says she doesn't see how "this exercise could help with theatre things." She is correct that the physical skills involved in the exercise are not really relevant to performance. Nevertheless, there is an external evaluation of the exercise in her self-assessment. Stepping outside the description of *what* she did, her affective learning about the comparative interactive styles of her classmates seems to take her by surprise. Yet the reflection on the experience makes that learning "observable" to me for assessment.

In the next journal excerpt, another Intro to Drama student discusses her first impressions of a character she is going to play in an assigned scene. (*Note: It may be worth pointing out that when I assign students scene work, I strive to match the student performers with roles that they can succeed at. In the Intro class, I cast them in roles that will challenge them without placing excessive technical or emotional hurdles in their way. In Advanced Acting, I begin the year by asking students to discuss their strengths and weaknesses as well as areas in which they'd like to improve. Casting decisions are then made to address those areas where the student's ability can be "stretched" by a challenge.*)

Tina: I was assigned to the scene "Final Placement" as Luellen. Luellen is a troubled women [sic] who wants her child back after he was

taken away by children's services. I think that she's a good character for me to play because I can switch my moods easily and smoothly and that is kinda [sic] how Luellen is. She goes from eager/excited to angry and violent, and then to quiet. I think it will also be a challenge because Luellen is not very intelligent and her language is very different from how I talk.

There is a good deal of *intrapersonal* awareness evident in Tina's beginning character analysis. There is also evidence that she is thinking right along the border between Bolton's two objectives for learning in drama – "learning about form" and "change in understanding" (Bolton 1979: 114). She is certainly discussing *skills of the theatre* – script analysis, making meaning of language, and character development – but there is also the *affective* awareness of a connection with the character ("I can switch moods easily and smoothly...") as well as the *experiential* dimension of the way the linguistic differences she observes between the character and herself reflect a difference in intellect that will affect her understanding and creation of the character.

The following self-assessment is the penultimate journal entry of the semester for an Intro to Drama student. He reflects on the creation and rehearsal process of his group's final exam project – a one-act play conceived, written, rehearsed and performed by the group. (Interestingly, this is a formative assessment about a summative assessment.).

Nick: Learning about the characters and their personalities was really cool too. I got a lot more insight into how a regular teen faced with a heavy decision feels, and it made me think about big decisions I've had to make.

Actually, acting in our final is one of the harder pieces I've had to do, because there's zero stage directions. Trying to have 4 people with different visions come to a consensus about how to do certain beats can be kind of a struggle, but it's a good thing too. Since we are 4 separate people, we bring 4 different flavors to the piece so it keeps it interesting. Working on this has helped me to loosen up and let other people take charge.

What is most worthy of commentary in Nick's self-assessment is the seamlessness with which it blends discussion of *skills of the theatre* – character development, ensemble acting, and directing are all addressed in the two paragraphs – with affective learning. O'Neill observed this same sort of dual awareness between actor and character in her work in process drama: "actors undertaking a role become transparent, inviting the spectators to look through them at the character or, as in a mirror, at themselves" (O'Neill 1995: 69). What is different is that Nick's "transparency" occurs *before* the performance is viewed by an audience. His self-assessment opens the awareness of the duality to the creator of the role himself and, almost as importantly in the setting of the drama classroom, makes it observable by the teacher.

Quoting O'Toole and Dunn, Taylor (2006) reminds us that “self-assessment, in the form of journal or diary, can be a very effective means of gaining the reflective qualities we seek in our students...” (quoted in Taylor 2006a: 114). The next example of a student's journal-writing reflecting on the development of her skills is reproduced here at length because it demonstrates the way drama students (in this case a student in her second semester of Advanced Acting) are capable of bringing both breadth and depth to their self-assessment.

The project alluded to in the initial entry is an improvisation where I ask students to create physical metaphors for their characters – first in the forms of animals, then (more of a creative challenge) in the forms of non-living things. Jennifer is developing the character of Thea Elvsted in Ibsen's *Hedda Gabler*. She has chosen as her inanimate metaphor a bottle cap under pressure. These entries and the dialogic responses to them record how Jennifer moves from considering a physical challenge in the improvisation exercise to thinking through the power relations in her scene to a reflection on her own responsibilities as an actor working in partnership to a resolution about personal growth:

Jennifer: The inanimate object was a bit more difficult to portray than the animal. How does a bottle cap move? Mr. Zotos gave me a suggestion that helped me understand Thea further.

There are different emotions that Thea experiences. When she is around Hedda, the pressure seems to be constantly building. When Eilert is refraining from drinking, Thea seems to be much more comfortable, and

therefore pressure is released. Whenever she feels that Hedda is gaining power over Eilert, the pressure built again. The inanimate object turned into more of a walk. Faster, tenser movement signified a build-up of pressure, a slower walk and a more relaxed posture signified a more comfortable Thea (a release of pressure).

Teacher: So, are you suggesting that there are ‘different’ Theas depending on the situation she is in and the individuals she is with? Let’s try improv-ing scenes with just Thea and Hedda, and just Thea and Eilert.

We then created an improvisation in which the students had to create scenes that put their characters in situations outside the play text.

Jennifer: Today’s improv was very helpful. Judith and I had to act as Hedda and Thea would have back in high school. I learned a lot about both of them.

I began talking about chemistry with her and she began her usual Hedda questioning, eventually circling closer and closed around Thea (this is a blocking motif in the scene.) About halfway through the scene, I realized we could incorporate the part where Hedda threatened to burn Thea’s hair off. I wasn’t sure how to communicate this to Judith, but thankfully, she was already a step ahead of me. Judith started to question me about different chemicals. Then I saw Hedda Gabler when she mentioned that certain chemicals could be flammable. She then connected this to threatening to burn my hair off (there is a reference to this schoolgirl incident in the scene) It really helped me make a bit more sense

of Thea's past. She was much more timid in high school, especially around Hedda.

In this entry, Jennifer is examining experiential learning: she is using her first-hand knowledge of the power dynamics of high school girls to internalize the nature of Thea's relationship with Hedda. Later in the same class, Jennifer then did an improvisation of an earlier incident in Thea's relationship with Eilert.

Jennifer: It was really difficult for me to be Thea without Hedda. So much of what Thea does in the scene involves reacting to Hedda with suspicion or apprehension. Perhaps, however, Thea is stronger as an adult than she was as a teenager. This would provide more of a contrast between the first and last beats in our scene.

Teacher: This is exactly the purpose of improv. You can know all about how Thea acts around Hedda, but what you really want to know is what she's like when she's not in the particular scene.

Jennifer: I found myself being more of 'Jenn' than mousy Thea. I had to carry the scene because Eilert was drunk and couldn't carry on a logical conversation. And I realized that I depend too much on Judith and other people to carry the scenes I'm in. Perhaps by taking a bit more responsibility and charge of my own character carrying the scene, I will gain more self-confidence. Once someone starts losing confidence in their abilities, instead of giving up, they should put in more effort than before.

The remarkable thing about this dialogue/self-assessment is the quantum leaps in the last three sentences – Jennifer has a realization about her working method and has learned something about addressing it, but then immediately generalizes that realization to a method for building her own self-confidence. This is also an interesting contrast to Kate’s realizations about her creation of Laura in *The Glass Menagerie* (see 6.V below), in that Kate’s learning is expressed much more implicitly, while Jennifer is able to articulate all the steps of her learning.

V. Learning to be engage in reflective practice

The final step in the process of using self-assessment and dialogue in partnership with the teacher for formative growth is to encourage students to become reflective practitioners. It should be noted that when Schon (1983) or Taylor (2000) use this term, they are primarily referring to the teacher/researcher. However, it is not a huge step to apply many of Taylor’s criteria (see Taylor 2000: 84-5) to drama students as they develop their work. This is especially true of the last three criteria. Reflective practitioners, says Taylor, work collaboratively, revise learning procedures, and are “story-makers and story-listeners” (85). Developing reflective practice is the step that neither standardized assessment nor unguided self-evaluation can help students to make. Taylor has pointed out

that partnerships have the capacity to change people, to help them not only to grow in the skills of the drama classroom, but also to change their perceptions of themselves and of others (Taylor 2000: 127). Taylor (and others) calls this *praxis* – the cycle of philosophical reflection, construction of knowledge, and practice.

In the self-assessment below, even without much in the way of dialogue to guide her reflection, Kate is able to build a character through a change in her own perception. Kate had done a great deal of fretting at the beginning of her scene project as Laura in Williams' *The Glass Menagerie*, saying she found the character dull and herself without much insight how to make Laura interesting.

Kate: I think that Laura acts so helpless because psychologically she believes that she is because of her handicap. She thinks she can't do anything. She blames all of her problems on her handicap, acts like a recluse and withdraws herself from everything. I guess I don't understand her because I have never met anyone like her. It is going to be hard to substitute events from my own life.

Sometimes it does not require an entire dialogue to help refocus a student's self-assessment towards further learning; sometimes a single suggestion may show results.

Teacher: Perhaps you have no similar experience, but how about empathy? What can you do to put yourself in Laura's shoes?

In Kate's self-assessment following her next rehearsal session, she had this reflection on Laura and herself:

Kate: Today during rehearsal I realized something very important: all of the attention is on me. Everyone will be watching Laura the entire scene because they are intrigued by her and by her 'defect'. This is a little weird. Up to this point, I thought that Amanda (*Laura's mother, the other character in the scene, was played by Mary Ann – see Chapter 6.III*) had all of the attention. She is so dramatic, but I guess it's only because she is jealous of me because I get all the attention. Laura really doesn't want any attention, so that probably makes her life even more unpleasant. She probably doesn't even realize how much everyone cares about her. It stills annoys me how oblivious she can be. She is too caught up in the past. She lives with many burdens and can't forgive herself for them. It kinda [sic] scares me a little that all of the attention is on me.

Two things are immediately apparent in the above reflection: as was noted above (6.I.B), Kate uses 'Laura' and 'I' interchangeably, and the empathy I had asked her to reflect on has found a mooring in Kate's self-consciousness. This is the kind of experiential learning that that mirrors the notion of "decentering" in intercultural studies (see 3.II.B). Having achieved a new perspective, Kate is adjusting her preconceived notions (Fleming 2006: 58). In addition to the reflective practice that allowed her to make this connection, there is also affective learning taking place here as Kate broadens her understanding of diverse experience as

well as learning in drama about finding a substitution to mirror Laura's self-consciousness. So, as a sort of "summative assessment", we may observe that Kate has grown in several ways. She has expanded *intrapersonal* knowledge as she discovered, almost by chance, the magnitude of her own self-consciousness; she has decentered and broadened her perceptions and, arguably, her compassion; and finally, she has acquired and employed an important skill of the theatre – the ability to substitute her own emotional experience for the character's. A well-trained and experienced drama specialist observing Kate's performance might have concluded she had employed substitution to achieve an honest, believable characterization, but without the reflective practice that is evidenced in Kate's self-assessment, there is no possibility of assessing the learning that has taken place leading to that performance.

Kate was a first semester Advanced Acting student. The next series of self-assessments – reflections on both artistic and personal growth – come from a 10th grader in Intro to Drama. I have excerpted five of nine journal entries in which Shelly at first wrestles with and then grows into a sense of self-confidence.

Shelly: (1st entry) – My confidence isn't the greatest because I have never done this before. As soon as Brian and I hit the stage, a different person emerged out of me. My nervousness turned to excitement and all of my doubts disappeared.... I didn't know I would be excited

because when Mr. Zotos assigned us the assignment, I was nervous and not looking forward to it.

(3rd entry) – After doing our simple objects performance my confidence has had a boost. When doing our warm-ups, I couldn't think of anything else but the fact that I was going to be performing by myself for the first time. After working with my partner on creating imaginary objects, I felt more comfortable because I was becoming more familiar with it. I surprised myself by volunteering to go the first day, and even Brian said he was surprised I volunteered.

There are two things worth observing in Shelly's third journal entry: the first is the obvious (and, to her, surprising) growth in confidence in the course of one exercise; the second is the evidence of how ensemble building both aids student learning and is in fact an affective *part* of that learning. Working with Brian (who has substantial talent and self-confidence) has evidently affected Shelly, both in the growth of her skills and in the growth of her self-confidence. The support of the ensemble (*interpersonal affective learning*) and the way it fuels Shelly's learning – of both *skills of the theatre* and the *intrapersonal affective* element of self-confidence – are also evident in an entry from the following week:

Shelly: (7th entry) – As the class went on I was surprised by the reactions I was getting from people as I began practicing the emotions. Laura even wanted some pointers from me. It made me feel really good.

She asked me if I could help her with the emotion “hope”. After I showed it to her, she found it to be exactly what she needed and she wanted me to show Chelsea and Brad. It felt really good being recognized for something in drama by a person with such experience because I have never done theatrical performance before.

Shelly’s reaction to Laura’s praise and request for assistance shows that she still considers her abilities to be somewhat inferior to the more experienced students in the class. Nevertheless, being consulted by someone she considers more talented affirms her sense of self as a performer. While she does not comment on this explicitly, I would argue, along with Ross, that “knowing, which comes perhaps as a flash of inspiration,... is verified in the process of publication” (Ross, et al, 1993: 53). In other words, the recognition of ensemble members whose abilities she considers superior to her own builds her confidence in those abilities. I offer as evidence Shelly’s very next journal entry in which she analyzes the work of the ensemble in a voice that suggests confidence in her own judgments and not uncertainty or deference to others.

Shelly: (8th entry) – Today we did the “human machine” and I thought it was so much fun. I think this activity helped me with how to apply myself in a larger performance. I’ve never really had the chance to work in a bigger group. Each person in the group had strengths where others had weaknesses. For example, Megan had awesome rhythm while

Brian had very precise body movements. I think by having the group work together on this, it made each person become a lot more familiar with the people who are willing to take charge. I noticed Laura wasn't afraid to take charge and it made me want to step up and get in there.

At this point, the students had submitted their journals and after reading Shelly's, I challenged her to address this dialogic response:

Teacher: You've been talking a lot about others' in the ensemble, but you started by saying that you learned something about how to work in a larger performance. What was that, do you think?

Shelly: (9th entry) This activity also helped me because I was able to take what I know of my own body movements and learn off of others' movements so I could alter mine to make the "machine" appear cooler and create spots for other people to come in and work off of me.

In the section above (6.III) called "The vocabulary of self-assessment", I addressed recurring themes and language patterns in students' self-assessment. Perhaps there is also something to be said about *tone* as well as word choice. When Cortazzi speaks of *intensifiers* as a device of internal evaluation, he includes not only the modifiers and quantifiers of the vocabulary, but also alludes to intonation (Cortazzi 1993:48). It is a simple matter to examine the anxiety and lack of certainty evident in the language of Shelly's first journal entry side by side with the precise, almost professional observations of the ninth to see the cycle of

practice and reflection, reinforced by her interpersonal experiences with the ensemble, provide a detailed assessment of Shelly's learning in the first quarter of Intro to Drama.

Diaz and Berk suggest that what Vygotsky hypothesized in young children about the transportation between dialogue and private speech (see Ch 4:II.A) is extendable to older students as dialogue stimulating critical thinking (Diaz and Berk 1992: 212). In the following self-assessment/dialogue, Elizabeth talks about overcoming what she has perceived as a flaw in her approach to acting.

Elizabeth: (after viewing videotape of a first run) – I'd like to be able to concentrate more on becoming the character. I find myself being consumed with thoughts like, "how am I doing?" or, "does the audience like it?"

Teacher: Can't do that!

Elizabeth: I'm sure this is not uncommon, but it would help me as an actress if I could be "less Liz" onstage. I remember something that Alice (a more experienced advanced acting student) said to me the other day: "Liz, you have a very natural acting style. Oftentimes highschoolers get onstage as if to say 'OK, I'm acting now' and it doesn't come out as well." I don't want to lose the "natural style", but when I see myself onstage, I see more "Liz" than "the character". I suppose I'm looking for that same technique I had when I did Seada. (Elizabeth had electrified us all the previous fall playing Seada in a staged reading of Eve Ensler's *Necessary Targets*, especially in a monologue where Seada, a Bosnian

refugee, becomes totally unhinged while describing a gang rape and the loss of her baby.)

Teacher: You've identified an important issue concerning your development. You are a natural, as opposed to a technical, actor (I offer her two examples of student actors who have graduated the previous year for comparison). Not that one is inherently better, but that you start your work from a different base. Alice is also a natural, and it took a long time for her to develop enough self-control and discipline to sustain her genius so it didn't just show up in blips. What I think you've identified is the opposite restraint – you are a bit too self-conscious, so your creative impulses get held in check when they should be allowed to run (the Seada monologue being a complete and beautiful exception). We'll talk about this more as you develop your monologue character.

What occurs in this exchange is learning not about the art or craft of drama, but about one's self as a performer. This is certainly affective learning, but it's also one of the most fundamental pieces of learning a drama student needs to come to terms with – what is my nature as a creative human being? Do I feel more at ease using techniques to build on the creative challenges of performing that a playwright or director demands of me, or do those creative demands inspire intuitive understandings that I somehow tap and need to learn how to discipline so that they may be communicated to others? This is self-assessment of the most fundamental kind and, as a result of this project, Elizabeth (who is

also a dancer) has learned something that will be valuable to her in the remainder of her creative work. This fundamental self-knowledge is also perhaps the first stone that should be laid in formative assessment, since without creating understanding of an approach to learning that will allow each student to maximize his or her potential for growth in the subject, there is little point in proceeding down the wrong path.

Of further interest here is the way that Elizabeth sought and heeded the advice of a more experienced classmate. Learning took place through the exercise of *interpersonal* intelligence, as well as of the *intrapersonal* intelligence Elizabeth explored in understanding herself as an actor. Finally, because of the solidarity of the ensemble and because she had respect for Alice's work, I felt comfortable alluding to Alice's own developmental experience to give Elizabeth a reference point for her own.

When it came time for Elizabeth to write her end-of-semester assessment (see Appendix), she went beyond commenting on how she had used the feedback from her classmates and teacher and continued the meditation on her identity as a performer that had started in the earlier dialogue with Alice and then with me about her "natural" approach to acting. I quote it here at length as a remarkable example of articulating *intrapersonal affective learning*, "unobservable" in performance:

Elizabeth: I believe that the intensity of my imagination as a child has shaped a part of who I am today. I was always very fond of the stage, theatre, and the spotlight. In my mind I use it as a release, a form of entertainment, and a thrill... similar to riding a roller coaster, only the

“rush” lasts for years to come. I suspect, however, that there is an ulterior motive that creates my passion for the stage.

I believe it’s simply pretense [sic], and the honest desire to imagine, pretend, and play like a child. It seems unsophisticated, perhaps silly.

I suppose if I were to name an incident that has shaped the artist I’ve become (or aspire to be) I would recall last October (*Note: Elizabeth is referring to the performance of *Necessary Targets**). I was indeed tested by a very challenging monologue. I had hardly ten minutes to prepare my mind for the intensity of the words, but it didn’t seem to matter.

Everything just fell together like the pieces of a jigsaw puzzle. The picture that the puzzle created was very moving for me, and for weeks following that evening, I searched for what I did that night to make it work so well.

While I did not realize it until now, that four-minute event was no doubt an assessment of my perception as an actress, but perhaps also a release of creative energy I had kept alive since I was five.

All in all, my discovery comes down to this: as a child alone in my room, I was secluded and uninterrupted. With the help of my stuffed animals, I was able to turn my pink and white walls into anything I wanted: a boat, a jungle, a beautiful castle. There was no audience, no smiling parents, no critical commentary. And yet, without these exciting additions, I was utterly satisfied in my own world. Today, if at all possible, the stage is my room. For four minutes that October night, I was alone once again in my room, with my stuffed animals, totally satisfied.

Elizabeth has certainly chosen an odd, “warm and fuzzy” image of the child with her stuffed animals to compare her satisfaction in portraying the kind of brutality and emotional damage Seada incurs in the monologue that she refers to. But what is really important here is that Elizabeth has finally identified the wellspring of her creative power. I would argue that she has *learned* how to return to the place where those self-conscious checks that she and I had discussed are removed and she can create what she calls a “pretense” – whether playful or terrifying – and be “less Liz... consumed with thoughts like ‘how am I doing?’”. I would also argue, along with Dorothy Heathcote, that drama is a process for change and “a new awareness... something I hadn’t conceded before” (quoted in Johnson and O’Neill 1984: 116) and that Elizabeth’s realizations are evidence of the kind of “changed student” who was the objective of Heathcote’s teaching method. And in this case, although my work is totally theatre-directed, Elizabeth has used the experience of drama to learn something about Elizabeth. The use of self-assessment and dialogue helps to make the drama classroom what it should strive to be: a place where students are constantly reflecting and transforming (Taylor 2006a: 128).

In this next section, I contrast the working methods of two Advanced Acting students. My purpose in doing this is not really comparative assessment, though we will see that one student is more meticulous and solution-directed in her work. More to the point, by using

self-assessment to make me aware of the student's reflective practice, I am better able to facilitate and optimize each individual's learning.

Charlotte is one of the most purely instinctive actors I've ever taught. She consistently performed brilliantly on stage while possessing a somewhat lackadaisical approach to her work in rehearsal. Her natural gifts are superlative, but I frequently urged to think more about her working method. In this passage, she struggles to discuss her performance in technical terms. (Contrast this with Elizabeth's observation about her working method).

Charlotte: When I finished performing my monologue, I have to say that I felt like I did really well, but watching it back, I think I did really not good [sic]. I rushed the lines during the beginning of the phone call. I think the things I say trying to make him remember me should be more spaced apart and awkward, so that wasn't good. Also, a small thing is that I want to show more thought before "my friend Rita has!" because it's supposed to be a thought that jumps into my mind.

My movement, blocking-wise was ok. But I'm very tall and strange looking, so I shouldn't stand up very much. To improve, I think I will just try to like [sic] make it more awkward. Thus far, I think my character development is pretty good though.

Teacher: All these observations are pretty *external*. What I'd really like is for you to think/talk more about how you go about making the character *real*, so that things like her awkwardness and her train-of-thought work naturally because they're part of you.

I know your work is largely intuitive and I don't want to mess with that, but once you've intuitively established a character, it would be useful to know *how* you do it so you can repeat the performance.

There was no further commentary in her rehearsal journal, but the final version of the performance showed substantial reflective practice had occurred as Charlotte continued to develop the monologue. Working from the conceptualization of "awkwardness" she had mentioned in her self-assessment, she reblocked her movement to assume almost every sitting, slouching, lying down – even upside down, back on floor, legs and feet on bed – position imaginable; all of which were characteristic of an anxious, insecure teenage girl.

Charlotte didn't really touch on her experiential learning in analyzing the final performance – how did she come to choose the movements she chose? what/who did she model them on? – but the two-way interplay between skills of the theatre and affect is evident. Viewing the performance told her that what she was doing did not create the accurate emotional pitch in the character, so she had to find a new affective reality for the character (her reflection suggests she knew roughly where to look), align it with her own understanding of awkwardness and anxiety, and then find the physical and vocal skills to give form to the affective reality. This sort of reshaping of one's work based on formative self- and dialogic assessment is precisely what I refer to when I suggest that drama students work toward becoming reflective practitioners. In the

end, the fact that Charlotte's working method is intuitive rather than technical does not matter. I know through our dialogue that she has identified the problem and I know her working method well enough to know that just a slight nudge in the direction of technique will lead her to a solution.

In contrast to Charlotte, Johanna has some of the most meticulous and methodical working habits I have ever seen in a high school student. She explores her characters and reflects on her work – at length, in writing – after every working session. Here is Johanna's reflection, with some dialogic prompts, on watching the first run of her monologue:

Johanna: Over all I was greatly dissatisfied with my performance. Sheila (her character, from Peter Nichols' *Joe Egg*) came across as a pathetic individual who spent her time dealing with the trials of life in a whiney "Why me?" kind of attitude. It was painful to watch so pathetic a character on stage. Of course, the biggest factor causing that was my personal lack of energy the day of the performance. I had been dreading the performance day because Sheila wasn't real to me yet; she was just a two-dimensional character who was more of a shadow puppet than a person.

Teacher: I tend to agree with your perceptions, but what did you *do* about them?

Johanna: Immediately after my performance, I spent far more time working on filling out Sheila as a person so that I could believe she was real. If I didn't believe she was real then there was no way anyone else

would. Sheila should have been portrayed as a strong woman who has survived her many hardships because of her strength in hope. The costume remains a problem. From the beginning of this project, I have thought Sheila to be a suit-wearing individual = blouse, suit-jacket, skirt, and heels. Now that I have continued work on it, I no longer believe that to be true. Sheila may have everything pulled together, but she is not one of those people who go about their days in a suit.

Teacher: Is she pulled together or is that a façade? Does she dress up to appear more pulled together than she is?

Johanna: She's a sensible woman who realizes that there are more important things in life than fashion. She's still after that 1950s "perfect life" image, but she's still one to live more for comfort than for fashion. I now believe that she would probably wear a T-length skirt, comfortable sweater and comfortable shoes.

What we see here is constant interaction between technique and creativity, between *skills of the theatre, experiential* and *affective* learning. Johanna has realized that the character she saw in the video is not the one that she wants to create. This is awareness of *skills*: both performing and critical response. She knows that part of her perceived failure has to do with her own lack of energy, but she is also aware that Sheila needs to be different from her original conceptualization. This is an *affective* response, showing both intrapersonal awareness (her energy level) and empathy with the character (she has "survived many hardships because of her strength in

hope”). Having identified the problem, Johanna immediately turns to technique (*skills*), in this case costume choices, to begin to solve the problem. Here again she sees her original conceptualization to be wrong for the character. When I ask Johanna the simple question of *why* Sheila presents herself to the world as she does – in other words, when I guide her away from pure technique and back towards the affective truth of the character – she is able to reconceptualize through bringing several conflicting ideas together: the 1950s ideal vs. Sheila’s reality, comfort vs. fashion, and common sense vs. the façade of strength. And these choices reflect *experiential* learning – Johanna’s knowledge of the cultural context relative to gender roles and especially motherhood meet with her interpretation of the text and her empathy with the character she desires to create.

In the end, Charlotte and Johanna both gave excellent performances, creating characters that were believable and multifaceted. Had I assessed solely through observation, both would have achieved highly but nothing would be known about how those performances were achieved. In other words, an enormous percentage of both women’s *learning* over the course of the project would have remained unknown to me and subconscious to them. Nor is it my intention to suggest that one student’s working method is superior to the other’s. Because their self-assessments allowed me access to understanding their working methods, I was better able to know how to provide the kind of formative assessment that each needed to optimize her learning.

Before concluding the data analysis, I would like to examine two more kinds of dialogic assessment introduced in Chapter Five – student/student dialogic assessment, and formative assessment developed in dialogue with a student intern in the Intro to Drama class. Both will provide vehicles for increasing the validity of the perceptions of learning.

I paired the Advanced Acting students with partners and, following the first runs of their monologues, the pairs were asked to view the video of the monologue and then engage in a *dialogue* about what they saw and what ought to happen in the next phase of rehearsal. (see Appendix for more detailed description of the expectations). Finally, each partner was expected to write a reflection on the viewing and ensuing dialogue.

Barbara: Will was confused as to what my setting was. We discussed maybe changing it to me being the bartender rather than a customer talking to a neighbor. We believed this would open me up to more movement opportunities such as getting more drinks or cleaning the bar.

In the end, we both noticed that it became a little “commercially”. It looked like I had forced sincerity. Maybe it would look better if I didn’t make so much eye contact then, because he asked me the question “Do you care what your listener thinks about you?” Then I realized I don’t. I’m just trying to prove a point and I’m trying to make them think in a certain way, not looking for an opinion; so in turn I don’t need to act like I’m waiting for any answers.

Lastly, we discussed my tattoos, [sic] I said that I felt I needed to know my people that the tattoos represented better, but Will suggested I learn the actual tattoos better. I discussed my fear about the more grim tattoos such as my mother as the bird in flight, Brother Shelton, and Marian's because they all either died or had a depressing impact on my life. Like I feel my mother probably depresses me to think about [sic] because I see her as a woman in a bad marriage who was never able to make good decisions or stand up for herself. So I picture myself getting lost in thought when I try to picture what life was like with her. I was initially afraid that the audience would think I was forgetting my lines, but Will said it would be okay if the audience couldn't tell if I was acting or not.

Will: One thing that she mentioned being concerned about was the fact that her performance didn't feel natural or, "organic" enough. She said that one way she had tried to work on this problem was by imagining that she was speaking directly to someone at the bar. She mentioned that when she had performed the piece in front of Chelsea, and imagined that Chelsea was the person at the bar, her delivery felt much more directed and fluid. Barbara talked about the way the bar was limiting her movements, so we talked about several solutions, like playing from behind the bar, or feeling free to get up and walk around, even though the monologue is still directed to someone sitting at the bar.

Familiarity was a big part of the discussion as well. We talked about the scene when she presents her tattoos to the audience, which in my

opinion was one of the weakest moments in the monologue. She had mentioned that many people had told her she needed to be able to picture the person that each tattoo represents. I mentioned she might benefit from having a strong picture in her head of what the tattoos look like on her body. If she is unsure of where the tattoo flows over her features or how the design is oriented, she'll just look awkward as she points them out to the audience. I think her character is very aware of her body and she would know exactly what it looks like.

Note how easily Barbara slips into the characteristic "I" in talking about her playing of the character as if she were the character. Also, Cortazzi's problem → solution → evaluation pattern is evident in the way Barbara and Will assess her first run. What's most interesting here, however, is the way Barbara talks about movement strictly from a practical, *skills of the theatre* approach, whereas Will integrates *experiential* learning: she should move thus and such a way because of the level of intimacy and sincerity required by the monologue.

Student/student dialogue was only a partial success as an additional tool of formative assessment. It certainly helped students identify areas of their performance that needed to be reworked or rethought and there was substantial evidence in final performances and self-assessments that the student/student dialogue had resulted in learning that led to both cognitive and artistic growth. The disappointment, however, was that the student/student dialogues focused almost exclusively on *skills of the*

theatre, with an occasional practical application of *experiential learning* as noted in Will's writing above. I have included only one student/student dialogue because it is typical. In none of the 28 Advanced Acting student/student dialogues that were collected did an assessor venture to discuss the assessee's *affective learning*. There are, I believe, two obvious reasons for this. First, despite both the tendency of adolescents to operate emotionally more than intellectually and Neelands aspiration to a "partnership of voices in the classroom", students were reticent to make observations about learning experiences that they perceived to be "personal" or "private". Second, there is a strong lesson for me as teacher that there needs to be more thorough and specific training of students in the skills of dialogue as well as the skills of self-assessment (further discussion of the need to train students in these skills follows in Chapter 7).

The final series of data to be presented in this chapter is the result of a desire for some triangulation of assessment in the Intro to Drama classes. In most sections of that class, I have an intern from the Advanced Acting class who assists me. Because so much of the work of a drama class (of 20-24 students) involves students working individually, with scene partners, or in small groups, it is very helpful to have an experienced drama student on hand to help the beginning students develop and evaluate their work.

My intention in presenting Rose's internship journal with the rest of the data is two-fold: to examine the self-assessment of an extremely

experienced, highly motivated, and gifted drama student (Rose has graduated and is currently studying at one of the most prestigious conservatories in the US), and to triangulate her impressions and assessments of the beginning students' learning with my own.

Rose: (intern journal observations) – I've been developing this nasty habit of acting too close to myself. I think that this is my way of trying to bring more real emotions into my character but then end up just sort of being messed up versions of me. For example, this character was basically a version of what I could imagine my life like if certain things happened (*Rose and I had done a rehearsal of the monologue she was developing in Advanced Acting for the Intro to Drama students*).

Teacher: Well, that's why the creative imagination is a "safe" place to explore possibility and perhaps learn something about yourself.

Rose: But I don't think I'm the only one doing that. Lisa seemed to act in a way that her life might have been like if other things had happened. I can see a lot of Lisa's characteristics or values or ways of looking at the world through the character she has made. Maybe creating a character is just a really good psychology test. The characters that we create are just sort of different parts of us that we bury. We only feel comfortable bringing them to life when we act because we're "acting" aren't we? And these people not real people, so it's safe for them to exist here.

Teacher: Another way to think about it is that people—especially teenagers who are trying to figure out who they are – *prefer* their made-up lives to their real ones...

Rose: Maybe I can do something with this for an intern project. Actually, that's probably not a good idea because I will end up messing everyone up. Acting is dangerously close to insanity.

Rose's observations above, especially the remark that "maybe creating a character is a good psychology test", go to what I believe to be one of the core truths of learning in drama – that when students are allowed to create, they create some amalgam of themselves and an imagined reality. In this creation the theatrical and the affective operate simultaneously. This is what Slade, Way, Heathcote and Bolton all understood and practiced and what critics of the drama-in-education movement (Hornbrook in particular) disparage in favor of theatrical content. This is also why drama is seen as transformative in education and therapeutic in the mental health field (Landy 2006: 92). Most of all, this is why the need for drama teachers to assess affective learning is essential to understanding the complete learning experience of the student in drama.

The following observations seem to be riffs on a possible disconnect between the skills of the theatre and affective growth. Rose is observing the beginning class.

Rose: Whenever people make up characters, they always want to make up these really fantastic, eccentric people. I think that there is something to be said for eccentrics, but it makes it too easy to slip into a cartoon character. I guess that this is drama class; we're not quite too worried about trying to make fully developed 3-D people. On the other hand, we don't want people to think that acting is all about making people very eccentric on the outside and not having to deal with the nitty-gritty on the inside. It makes me nervous to see that some of the students obviously went home and write out this character's entire life story so that when people ask them questions, they would know the answers. I spoke to one student who said that she wished she could have brought her paper up with her. Apparently she had written down all this life history and then forgot it once she got up for the interview. Instead of creating a new person, she had created a robot, and if you lose a robot's programming, it doesn't work.

(later) The big difference that I noticed between what I had seen in rehearsal and what I saw on stage is that technique is just getting in everyone's way. One of my favorite quotes goes something like "the mastery of technique is important only because it allows us to say exactly what we want without confusion." I think that all of these actors really have an idea of what they are trying to say, but their inexperience makes it difficult for them to know how they want to articulate it.

Teacher: Do you mean in the writing or in the actual performing of their scripts?

Rose: I noticed this most in Tina's performance. Technique got in her way.

Teacher: Do you mean that, or *lack* of technique...?

Rose: She had one of the most developed characters when I was working with her during class, but then on stage it was like she was trying so hard to think about blocking and diction and not forgetting her lines that she had bad blocking and diction and forgot all of her lines. I think it had a lot to do with her trying to act too much and not thinking about the character she had created.

Teacher: Are we making a mistake to think "technique" means a specific way of approaching performing? Do you see different techniques in different students? Different levels of success mastering technique while keeping the performance honest?

Rose: The left-brained actors (Caroline, Kelley, Mike) had everything planned out to the tiniest detail and that made them comfortable. The right-brained actors (Mark, Ketia, Julia) all understood enough about their character's emotions to just let the movement flow and that made them comfortable. The people who tended not to do well were the ones that just hadn't figured out how they work yet. In particular Chris seemed to be trying really hard to be a left-brained person and think about how her character would react in the situation and all of the little details. I think she would have done much better if she had approached it from a more emotional level. She seemed to get stuck in the details.

The observation above takes us back to Elizabeth's dialogue about discovering what kind of performer one is, what one's working method is. There is also an interesting contrast to note between Rose's perception and my own. She refers to Ketia as a "right-brained" actor, by which I take her to mean intuitive and inspired rather than intellectual or methodical. Yet if we look at Ketia's self-assessment (see 6.III), there is a great deal of intellectual reflection even on her work in ensemble-building exercises prior to anything as sophisticated as creating a character.

Rose's last observations concern what makes the good beginners good:

Rose: What I really noticed about Kelley and Gabrielle in their work is that they pay close attention to the words. I think that that is really what separates some of the better people in this class from some of the less experienced ones. The students who tend to rush through the words and have the emotion as an entirely separate thing aren't making as cohesive of a character. The people who really listen to what they are saying are the ones that understand the character better and are able to make a better performance.

While most of the assessment in this last observation is of *skills of the theatre*, it is extremely useful for several reasons. It is positive formative assessment for Kelley and Gabrielle. It creates a learning objective for the students who haven't yet mastered what Rose has

observed in Kelley and Gabrielle. Most importantly, it demonstrates to me the sophistication with which students can understand and apply assessment criteria.

Rose's journals certainly allow me to thoroughly assess *her* learning during her experience interning in the Intro class. There is evidence of growth in her perceptions of technique, her perceptions of how other students learn in drama, and in her understanding of the relationships among *skills of the theatre, experiential, and affective* learning. Her assessment of the other students and her exploration of their work has also been an invaluable tool for making transparent the interactions among the three types of learning.

VI. Summary of the Data Analysis

The research question calls for examining a process that starts from the hypothesis that much of what students learn through the experience of drama often escapes assessment because it is not observable by the teacher. The data have served as evidence supporting the research objectives identified in Chapter 5.I. It is my hope that the data presented from student self-assessment and student/teacher and student/student dialogue:

- illustrate the working method of self- and dialogic assessment
- demonstrate the fact of experiential and affective learning in drama

and that the analysis and explication of the data:

- examine the development of students' self-assessment skills

- demonstrate how student self-assessment makes experiential and effective learning transparent and therefore assessable
- show that student-teacher dialogue can give shape to students' self-assessment in ways that broaden and deepen student learning

and that the application of Cortazzi's evaluation model coupled with recommendations for more extensive teaching of self-assessment skills will be an impetus for further research to:

- examine language patterns in self- and dialogic assessment that may lead to a vocabulary for assessing all types of learning in drama.

The research is also predicated on the principle articulated by Brown (1990) that no standardized or objective test is capable of assessing critical thinking, self-knowledge, or invention (cited in Ross et al. 1993: 14) and that these skills are an essential part of learning in drama. In the presentation of the data I have also sought to demonstrate that secondary school students are capable of becoming "reflective practitioners", as defined by established criteria (see Taylor 2000: 84-85) and manifested in learning through a cycle of reflection, construction of knowledge, and practice. The implications for creating more meaningful, authentic and valid assessment through reflective practice resulting from self- and dialogic assessment will be examined in the concluding chapter of this thesis.

Chapter Seven – The Implications of Self-assessment, Dialogue, and Reflective Practice

It is hard to say whether it is good news or not that fewer than 25% of the fifty states have developed an art component as part of their standardized testing (Dorn, Madeja and Sabol 2004: 44). On one hand, similar to inclusion in the National Curriculum in the UK, inclusion in nationwide high-stakes testing would lend the arts in US schools greater prestige of place in the curriculum. On the other hand, of course, the results of the research undertaken for this thesis reinforce already existing evidence (Taylor 2006, Dorn, et al. 2004, Ross, et al. 1993, Hope 1991) that valid, authentic assessment of a great deal of learning that occurs when students engage in artistic practice – whether it is drama, music, dance, or the visual arts – lies beyond the reach of standardized, quantitative assessment. Regardless of what may best serve students and teachers of the arts, what is beyond question is that mandated standardized tests have altered the curriculums, assessment methods and pedagogical strategies of both American and British schools and not in a way that promotes teacher decision-making nor optimizes student learning. It has been a neglected need for some time now to consider alternatives to standardized assessment, not only in the form of state-mandated high-stakes tests, but also across the curriculum in individual schools. Especially in the current educational climate in which politicians, educational policy-makers and school administrators share, in the words of

Joe Kincheloe, “an innate refusal to acknowledge that any learning can take place without strict measurement” (quoted in Taylor 2006a: vii), it is necessary to reestablish a clear understanding of both the nature and the purpose of valid assessment. School administrators who live in fear that the results of this year’s standardized tests will show a drop from last year’s (the quality of the testing cohorts notwithstanding) often move to deprofessionalize teaching by prescribing curriculum and instruction based on “what’s on the test.” Philip Taylor has pointed out the irony that, in the market-model educational climate that values skills over critical thinking, teachers are being deskilled by the standardization imperative (Taylor 2006a: 128). The antidote to this must come from the classroom itself, with teachers showing that the creation of “contextual assessment” will tell far more about student learning than standardized, quantitative testing does.

While drama has been an ideal area of the curriculum to examine and advocate the value of student self-assessment and reflective practice guided by student-teacher dialogue in increasing validity of assessment, it is the contention of this thesis that certain generalizations may be made about the potential of these assessment methods to improve assessment not only in other arts disciplines, where they are already frequently practiced, but across the curriculum, where the need to improve assessment is more pressing. It should be reiterated here that in the context of this thesis, “improving assessment” means making it a more useful tool. *Useful* in this case is intended to mean the degree to which the assessment helps the

interested parties, particularly student and teacher, not only “measure” the result of a learning experience but track the process of that learning experience, so that teaching is monitored and adjusted in order to nurture learning towards its full potential. Additionally, the student becomes an active participant in the creation and application of the assessment and thus more fully understands its value (and while the concept of *validity* may not be a concern of the student, he or she will also realize that participation in the assessment has in fact created a stronger cohesion between the learning experience and the assessment).

Finally, it will be useful to reiterate the views of Barron, Eisner, and Maxine Greene (see Chapter 2: V): that learning in the arts “liberates us from the literal” and forces students to look at themselves and the world in fresh ways. Therefore authentic assessment of that learning needs to bring us closer to the individual learner rather than seeking the mass mean score that results from quantitative assessment. And if that is true of the arts, might it not also be applicable to other areas of the curriculum that require students to construct meaning rather than master facts and formulae? If that is the case, there is an argument to be made not only for self-assessment guided by dialogue across the curriculum, but also for an approach to assessment that has more in common with the aesthetic perspective than with empirical measurement.

I. Assessment and Aesthetic Growth

Artists, so Barron (1969) suggests, have “a high tolerance for ambiguity, disorganization, and asymmetry” (quoted in Dorn, Madeja, and Sabol 2004:77). Think for a moment what that tells us about certain kinds of students – those who don't easily adapt to the regulated and systematic nature of academic discipline. They struggle in the linguistic and logico-mathematical realms where Gardner and others have shown that most traditional assessment takes place, but thrive – and more importantly *produce* at a high level – in a less strictly structured environment that challenges them to construct and synthesize meaning rather than memorize and report it. The arts have always been the somewhat subversive stepsiblings of the general curriculum precisely because they insist on student autonomy, student/teacher interaction and independence from rigid, standardized curriculum and assessment practices. All of these valuable autonomies are endangered by the homogenization of student learning demanded by the imperatives of standardization and quantification (Boughton 2004: 585).

If we mean to create assessment out of the contexts of learning that are most useful to students and teachers alike, how might we do it? Gardner and Grunbaum (1986) proposed a workshop-based approach to learning and assessment in the arts. This alternative approach would operate on an apprentice/master relationship with students guided by

teachers and collaboration among students and teachers in the development and creation of artistic projects (Puurula and Karppinen 2000:6). Complete adoption of the workshop model would be a radical alternative, but the interaction of master and apprentice has been common to the arts throughout history. It is one of the contentions of this thesis that this interaction may offer a valuable lesson for creating more valid alternatives in assessment. Many progressive educators are already engaging in that sort of collaboration, using techniques of dialogue, self-assessment, and reflective practice in their work with their students. Likewise, whereas formative assessment has only recently begun to be embedded in pedagogy across the curriculum in many schools, teachers of drama, music, dance and the visual arts consider formative assessment a matter of course if not a necessity and practice it continually in helping their students improve their work. Because of their foundation in creativity and its nurturing, the arts perhaps have a more fundamental understanding of the purpose and value of assessment. It may not be unreasonable even to suggest that the aesthetic view of assessment is that it is in itself *dialogic* – a tool for learning, both by the teacher and the student, about what is being taught and what is being learned (Eisner 2002: 238). The path to valid, authentic assessment requires further steps in that direction. For example, Ross et al. (1993) used dialogue in which the teacher was dominant, supplying the students with cues for developing their work (in music). This is certainly *formative assessment* through dialogue because the students are using feedback to build on their learning, but there was no

self-assessment component that would then allow the teacher access to the ways the students' transformed that formative assessment into further aesthetic growth. However, because the arts are largely about making symbolic meaning, they also offer a definitive model of the inability of quantitative assessment to reveal anything about "issues of complexity" (Taylor 2006a: 117) that any learning that goes beyond rote memorization aspires to. Kincheloe reminds us that assessing learning about the making of meaning must take into account:

- The ambiguity of language and its less-than-transparent meanings
- The ways that individual minds rarely perceive phenomena and their meanings in the same way
- Meaning-making is not simply a rational process (Kincheloe 2005: 109)

If the data analyzed in Chapter Six show anything, it is that the only way to begin to counter these obstacles to valid assessment is to include the learner as an active reflective practitioner. That, however, is only a first step. Although I have suggested using components of Cortazzi's Narrative Analysis, especially the lexical signals of his evaluation model (see Chapter 6.III) as one means of teaching students a vocabulary of self-assessment, this is certainly an area suggesting a need for further research. It is evident in the literature concerning both self-assessment and dialogue that vocabulary itself remains largely unexplored. It is also evident in the data that, even when the learner has achieved a

significant level of comfort both with her working method and with the teacher through working in ensemble, negotiating meaning through dialogue still presents difficulties. While certainly giving the teacher significant clues to the student's construction of knowledge that would be unavailable without self-assessment, the problems that Kincheloe identifies must still be addressed. Mediating the self-assessment through dialogue can address the issue of validity to a satisfactory degree, but while vocabulary remains fluid, reliability remains elusive. And that brings us back to the characteristic that language shares with the aesthetic perspective – ambiguity – and a larger question that perhaps also calls for further inquiry: how much ambiguity can we tolerate in assessment?

Addressing Kincheloe's hypotheses on the one hand and the hypotheses of the data presented in Chapter Six on the other, a paradox emerges. Two contradictory truths confront the seeker of valid assessment: 1) any method involving dialogue (which relies on the constructed meaning of language) cannot help but be ambiguous, and 2) any method of assessment that hopes to understand affective learning must engage in dialogue. One summary conclusion of this research is that it is better to accept and address that ambiguity than to either assume that language is sufficiently transparent to reveal a student's learning through an isolated written assessment or to assume that that learning is simply not assessable. Wittgenstein, Polanyi and Cortazzi provide us with a rationale for addressing the problems of language, while the aesthetic perspective helps us dismiss the "refusal to acknowledge that any learning can take place without strict measurement".

However, while it is well advised to develop a practical methodology for coping with ambiguity, there is also a theoretical argument to be made which harkens back to Wittgenstein's "family resemblances" and supports the idea that we will not be overwhelmed by ambiguity. Despite the best efforts of postmodern theory to separate language from authorial intention, even an anti-intentionalist like Beardsley (1970), after asserting that "an ambiguous text does not become less ambiguous because the author wills one of its possible meanings," also argues that if one utters (or writes) an ambiguous phrase, the *intended* meaning must have presented itself in the speaker's mind in some other form than the ambiguous one (cited in Lyas 1997: 162-3). It is the vocabulary or structure of the language that remains ambiguous. If that is true, there are two potential avenues by which we may be able to access the speaker's intention: *dialogue*, through which we may help the speaker either reformulate and clarify his expression or establish greater context for the listener's understanding; or (and this is especially apt in that it grows out of drama) *performance* – despite the ambiguity of the dialogue, is the speaker's intention born out by what she has *done*?

Having accepted ambiguity, before arguing for the value of self- and dialogic assessment in the broader curriculum, it may be well to reiterate some of the significant points discussed in Chapter 2 concerning the way an aesthetic approach to education has benefits outside the arts themselves. As Eisner (1992) has also observed:

Education is about learning to deal with uncertainty and ambiguity. It is about learning to savor the quality of the journey. It is about becoming critically minded, intellectually curious, and learning how to frame and pursue your own education aims. It is not about regaining our competitive edge (quoted in Dorn, Madeja and Sabol 2004: 76).

Going beyond critical thinking to construct knowledge concerning specific issues, Hope (1991) argued that the aesthetic perspective also offered adolescents an introduction to the life of the mind. The arts are the correct vehicle for this because 1) art familiarizes students with some of humanity's best achievements and 2) art provides students with a creative way to know and understand the world (Hope 1991: 78).

Finally, beyond the specific goal of creating better understanding of learning processes, aesthetic understanding is a vital means for students to enter into and participate in culture (Ross et al. 1993: 53).

II. Reflective practice across the curriculum

Intuition can involve creative leaps and be the source of necessary flexibility, the necessary ability to make connections, the ability to feel the "rightness" or "wrongness" of potential courses of action, but only... in teachers of wide and quality experience" – Michael Vernon (1983: 140)

Even outside the special interaction of the theatrical ensemble or the master/apprentice relationship of the art studio, the transactions between students and teachers are enormously complex and, contrary to the claims of the accountability movement, it is hard to establish causal relationships between teaching and learning. Those transactions hinge on such independent variables as the values and aims of the teacher in attempting to strike a balance with the beliefs and interpretations of the learners and the controlling cultural realities of the particular school (Pring 2000: 121). Further complicating these internal factors are the outside-mandated expectations of the imperatives for standardization and quantification. When Pring points out these discrepancies between the perceived purposes of education and the practical realities of the classroom, he is arguing for greater use of action research to promote progressive change. I would argue that the same factors drive the need to rethink assessment, to challenge the culture of standardization in order to better understand the student-teacher transaction and, by extension, better understand (and understand with greater validity) student learning. If reflective practice encouraged through dialogic assessment became more common, one of the great frustrations of classroom teachers might be alleviated with the collateral benefit that assessment would become more useful in improving pedagogical practice. It is a regrettable fact of educational practice that teachers often have pedagogical *method* imposed upon them by trend-following administrators. Neelands argues that reflective practice combats this intrusion by self-orienting teachers towards

“understanding and improving one’s own practice rather than towards the research of practice by external researchers” (Neelands 2006: 16). It is through this sort of reflective practice that the “teachers of wide and quality experience” that Vernon says are required to make the most of non-quantitative assessment can interrogate the validity and authenticity of their own standard practices. Therefore, one of the inescapable conclusions of this research is that educators need to become more adept reflective practitioners *and* train their students in reflective practice as well. We can deduce from that data that the sharing of knowledge between student and teacher in a two-way transaction is an effective means for understanding those components of learning that are not objectively “observable” (what I have called *experiential* and *affective* learning). We can further deduce that dialogue between the student and a more skilled, more experienced practitioner (the “master” of the master/apprentice model) can help the student make meaning of those learning experiences in ways that allow him to develop the learning further. What remains, then, is for further action research that will explore ways to teach students as well as teachers to be reflective practitioners, using assessment as a continuous process of optimizing learning. This research needs to occur not only in drama classrooms but also in any subject where the exploration of meaning – whether aesthetic, scientific, cultural or historical – is valued.

To offer merely one example: in the teaching of composition skills, teachers have gone beyond simply summatively marking students’ writing for errors and do offer feedback. In creating, say, a critical essay in

response to literature, a student must master content, synthesize it with his own thinking, organize that synthesis into a cogent presentation, and then construct clear and correct prose in which to make that presentation. The student turns in a draft and at this point the teacher will offer feedback. However, what will happen most frequently is that the teacher's feedback will be largely *corrective*: "Awkward sentence" or "You should mention Whitman's similarities with Transcendentalism here". These are not responses that will allow the student to engage in reflective practice. They are not questions that will lead the student to enhance and extend his learning. Dialogue, on the other hand, would not only draw the student's focus to the areas of his work that needed further development, it would also engage student and teacher in a discussion of the student's *intention* in the work. As the student articulates his intention, the teacher is now able to assess not only the student's knowledge of content but also the process of synthesis, connection and organization by which he showed his critical mastery; for mastery, Wiggins reminds us, "is not answering inert questions correctly, but *solving a complex problem by responding to the feedback provided within the problem and situation itself*" [Wiggins' emphasis](Wiggins 1993: 190).

There are myriad other examples that could be offered in the study of history, or the social sciences; even the scientific method itself when applied to studies in biology or physics, though less tolerant of ambiguity, requires students to engage in a process of discovery. In short – any learning activity that requires students to construct knowledge, especially

if they must then express their understanding of that knowledge through language, might be assessed with greater validity through engaging self-assessment with dialogue.

III. Conclusions

Martin Buber believed that educators produced their best pedagogy when they were not consciously trying to teach but when they acted spontaneously and in the context of their own life experiences (Smith 2001: 4). There is certainly enormous latitude for debate about that proposition, but at the end of this research (both the examination of the literature and the interaction with the students who were the subjects of the study), I am more convinced than ever that what is true of learning in drama – that the learning experience is multi-faceted and, as a result, attempts to quantify it are of little value – also gives teachers good advice about assessment across the curriculum. That advice may be summed up by saying that, just as the teacher acts most effectively from reflection on his own experience, it is the learner's spontaneous reflection that begins the process of formative assessment. The results of the research suggest that guiding that reflection through dialogue can help student and teacher, in partnership, not only use the formative assessment to build on learning, but also lead to summative assessment of creative or critical work that is of

far greater validity and authenticity than any that aspires to be “objective” or quantifiable.

Beyond that general assertion and the possibilities suggested for further research into the implementation of dialogically mediated reflective practice, however, it is worth examining the ways in which this research contributes to the creation of knowledge. First, I can speak only as a drama teacher who has sought to know more about what students are learning in my classes for the purpose of assessing that learning more authentically and, more importantly, helping each student maximize each learning experience in his or her work in drama. Upon completing the research, however, I believe there are also some more theoretical conclusions to be drawn. To return to the essential research question asked at the beginning of Chapter Five: *How do self-assessment and dialogue increase the ability of both student and teacher to understand, articulate, and assess the learning that occurs in drama classes?* The experience of the research itself and the analysis of the data suggest several answers. The first three pertain directly to student-teacher interaction:

1. *The practice of dialogue mediated self-assessment allows us to dispel the assumption that there are certain kinds of learning that occur in drama that are beyond the reach of assessment.* The data presented in Chapter 6. II serve to show that students are able to articulate a great deal of their experience of experiential and affective learning in reflecting on their experiences in drama. Many – and not only the Advanced students – proved to be fairly adept at grasping the interrelatedness of the three types

of learning (see Chapter 3), moving fluidly and productively among them, using experiential knowledge to choose from among theatrical techniques that would help their work communicate more clearly or self-assessing the way a skills exercise had brought them insights about interpersonal or intrapersonal knowledge. Looking at self-assessments, whether they are thoroughly reasoned like Andrew's (pages 126-8) or emotionally charged like Mary Ann's (pages 137-139), shows the teacher deep and multi-faceted learning on the students' parts that was previously inaccessible if the teacher relied solely on his own perception.

2. Engaging in these assessment methods allows teachers and students to establish starting points from which students may develop the breadth, depth, and clarity of their self-assessment skills. In Chapter 5, I discussed the desirability of attempting to construct a basic vocabulary of self-assessment prior to beginning the research, and said that this idea was dismissed because it seemed contrary to the spirit of both action research and student-centered assessment. Even without any sort of vocabulary, students showed they were capable of using the same critical skills they demonstrate in "responding to drama" to a) critique their own work and b) analyze their affective learning experiences. Should others also find that the dialogic method has proved itself viable and valuable, the next step in its development through research might be to engage in a somewhat more empirical language analysis of student self-assessment and student-teacher dialogue.

3. *Engaging student self-assessment and developing it through dialogue greatly enhances the teacher's access to the full range of student learning.* One of the primary assumptions of the thesis was that unguided self-assessment may have as little validity as standardized, quantitative testing in revealing the variety and complexity of learning in drama. My first instinct is to say that that assumption is, if not incorrect, at least exaggerated. Even without the mediation of dialogue, the student self-assessments presented in the data show an impressive ability on the part of many adolescents to make meaning of affective learning experiences. This bodes well for the argument that inclusion of the learner in both the construction as well as the practice of assessment produces greater validity in the assessment. That said, the data also reveal that in many cases even a minor suggestion made as a part of dialogic response (see Kate, page 150-1) can steer a student toward subsequent significant insight. There is also evidence (see Elizabeth, page 156-7) to suggest that more in depth dialogic response to a student's self-reflection can help the student identify and solve major problems, not through corrective feedback but through helping the student give shape and clarity to an inchoate understanding revealed in her self-assessment.

The second set of answers to the research question suggest broader philosophical implications for improving assessment:

4. *The results of the research suggest some means of negotiating the ambiguity of language as a tool for assessment.* The difficulties, both practical and philosophical, of relying on language to achieve and

understanding of learning presented (and continue to present) some of the greatest challenges to this thesis. The theoretical framework based in the writing of Wittgenstein, Polanyi, Vygotsky, and Cortazzi, which is articulated in Chapters 4 and 6, is my attempt to build a foundation that justifies some faith that language can successfully mediate a learner's understanding of his learning experience and his teacher's understanding of how much the student has learned and how best to build further learning from that knowledge.

5. Contemplating the data validates the point of view that a certain amount of ambiguity is acceptable in assessment; indeed is unavoidable if we wish that assessment to include the student's participation in understanding the process of learning through which the construction of knowledge has occurred. It has been one of the assumptions of this thesis that defending the research will be complicated, even relying on grounded theory emerging from the data rather than on presuppositions (and here I use the term *grounded theory* advisedly and in the specific sense of "trying to make sense of one's own experience... constantly tested against further experience, data and questionings" [Pring 2000: 41]). The dominant medium of the research – the observations of adolescents concerning affective learning experiences, further complicated by the subjectivity of language discussed in Chapter 4 and the issue of ambiguity discussed in the previous section – makes it difficult to call the data generalizable in any simple sense. Nevertheless, it is also an assumption, perhaps the overarching one, that the information derived from examining student self-

assessment and student-teacher dialogue is of enormous importance to developing an assessment method that brings students, teachers, parents, educational researchers and other interested parties closer to a valid understanding of what it means for adolescents, who are searching for and developing a sense of identity and (it is hoped) an aesthetic perception of the world, *to learn in drama class*. As an experienced teacher, I am capable of creating sophisticated rubrics describing progressive levels of achievement of skills. As a trained drama specialist, I am able to assess students' attainment of those skills through observing their performance against the descriptors in the rubric. The evidence in the self-assessments, however, clearly demonstrates that there is much more learning going on and without *talking* about that learning *with* the learner, the rest, to end with a dramatic flourish, is silence.

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Appendix:

Guidelines for Student Self-assessment

1. **Advanced Acting Rehearsal Journal**
2. **Intro to Drama Self-assessment Journal**
3. **Advanced Acting Video/Partnered Dialogue**
4. **Advanced Acting Semester Self-assessment Project**
5. **Advanced Acting Semester Self-assessment Project II**

Rehearsal Journal

Starting with the monologues, you are going to keep a written journal of your work on developing characters and scenes. The purpose of the journal is to expand and deepen your thinking about your character, the scene in which he or she lives, and his or her world beyond the scene. This is not school-type busy work; professional actors do this. While I will not be grading the journal itself, your faithful and thorough upkeep of it will be part of your grade for the course. You should try to do an entry for every rehearsal period *or* reflection outside of class. I will want to see it every couple of weeks, not to check up so much as to respond to your reflections.

The following elements ought to be included in your journal:

I – Notes on Character Development

- Understanding what the playwright tells you
- Your invention of the rest of the character's background
- Commonalities and differences with the character (what parts of you can you use?) → Comments on substitution, sense memory and emotional memory

II – Textual Analysis

- Making maximum meaning of the script (including research if necessary)
- Definition of objectives (What do I want?)

III – Blocking and Physicalization

- Justified by understanding of the character
- Supporting meaning/tone of scene

IV – “Visual Stimuli”

- Photos of “your character” or places, objects or other people relevant to character development

V – Interaction with Partner (obviously this does not apply to monologues)

- Here we'd like discussion of both the characters' interactions and how you as actors worked out those interactions

VI – Reflection on Feedback

- From partner
- From classmates
- From teacher
- Self-reflection (!!!)

Self-assessment Journal

Grading student performance in Drama is very difficult because, beyond the *skills* of the theatre, much of what you learn in the course occurs on a personal and experiential level. In other words, it's not stuff for which I can give you a *test* that accurately tells me how much you've learned. Therefore, to fairly assess what you learn in the class, **I need your help**. That's where the *Self-assessment Journal* comes in and why it's a very important part of the class.

After each class session, I will expect you to do some reflecting on your experience in that class. Anything is fair game for your writing, though occasionally I will give you specific prompts I'd like you to think about. But what's really vital is that you do some self-reflection: don't just say what you "learned in class", *think about what you think*. For example, we'll be doing an exercise called "Leading Centers" – the objective of the exercise is to become aware of how you can create characters by altering the way you move. You may find, however, that the exercise also gives you some insight about elderly people or children or pregnant women. I'd be really interested in what you "learned" beyond the movement skill.

I will collect journals on a regular basis, calling in a few at a time, so everyone should be up to date at any given time. I will not be grading the journal itself, but:

- your faithful upkeep of the journal is a part of your grade
- what you say in the journal will help me know just how much you're really learning from your experience in Drama.

I will also be responding to the things you say in your journals – engaging in an ongoing dialogue designed to further your learning.

Also -- just so there's no "Hidden Agenda" -- the self-assessment and the dialogue that results from it are part of the research I'm doing for my doctorate. You're also helping me make assessment in arts courses better!

Here's just a few suggestions as to what you might explore in your self-assessment:

- increased self-awareness or perceptions – physical, intellectual, emotional
- confidence
- interaction with others
- understanding of the creative process
- meaning of language (when we work with texts)
- response to feedback – from classmates, from teacher, from partners

Monologues – Partners for Video Assessment

<u>Performer</u>	<u>Assessor</u>
Jennifer	Andrew
Andrew	Judith
Mary Ann	Kate
Kate	Mary Ann
Charlotte	Eli
Judith	Jennifer
Karla	Johanna
Eli	Charlotte
Johanna	Karla
Matt	John
John	Matt

What you want to do is watch the monologue performance together. The assessor should give some feedback, but mostly it should be a dialogue, not a one-way critique. Pay special attention to differences in perception of what took place in the performances (as opposed to interpretive disagreements). Then, both partners need to write a summary of their perceptions (performer's should be in your journal; assessor's may be separate) of both the performance itself and of the dialogue. Then, I'll want to see those.

Semester Assessment

The main purpose of this “midyear exam” is for you to assess your own performance and development. If you’re willing to do some serious thinking about your work, you’ll “do fine” on the exam.

You may refer to either your Shakespeare or your Period Comedy scenes in answering the questions, though Question 2 is geared to examining a final product in addition to the process and Question 3 refers to first runs, which we skipped over for Period Comedy.

1. Discuss something you did to physicalize your character that was either drawn directly or inferred from the text. In other words, make a connection between what the playwright gave you (please be specific about the language) and your creation of character.
2. Pick an element from one of your scenes and discuss its development from rehearsal to performance. What was the point you wanted the beat or “bit” to make and how did you and your partner work toward communicating that point? (For example, the actor playing Angelo in *Measure for Measure* may decide that Angelo is either repelled or excited by his own evil thoughts. How could you go about making that point clear? Ditto Lady Anne’s falling under Richard’s spell. How did you help the audience understand *why* she does?)
3. Comment on what seeing the videotape of first runs of your scenes “taught” you. There are two things I’d like you to discuss in as much detail as you can: your analysis of what you saw and the strategy you (either alone or with your partner) developed for addressing the problems discovered in the first run.
4. In a similar vein, reflect on the way you’ve used the feedback you’ve gotten from your classmates and instructor – either following first runs or during the rehearsal process – to further develop your work (you may discuss either individual character issues or the scene as a whole).

Semester Assessment

The first two questions pertain to your Shakespeare scene, the third to your Period Comedy scene, and the fourth to either one you choose.

1. Select one line or speech from your scene that gave you the greatest insight into your character. Discuss as specifically as you can how Shakespeare's language led you to understand your character.
2. Discuss something your partner did (a line reading, a gesture, a look, etc.) in the scene that motivated a specific response from you. (You need to answer as an actor, not as the character; we're now talking about technique, not language.)
3. In as much detail as you possibly can, discuss the choices you made – individually and with your partner – in *physicalizing* the scene. Discuss your “building” of your character's physical traits as well as the movement/blocking patterns you created for the scene. How did those movement patterns reveal both character and the comic style of the scene?
4. Reflect on the way you've used the feedback you've gotten from your classmates and instructor – either following first runs or during the rehearsal process – to further develop your work. You may discuss either individual character issues or the scene as a whole, but *be specific* about the problem, the feedback you received, and the process of assessing the feedback and solving the problem.

