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Image-Based Participatory Pedagogies: Reimagining Social Justice

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Abstract

As educators and scholars in social studies and art education respectively, we describe two visual methods from our own research and teaching in pre-K to university settings that are embedded in visual practices. We underscore their transformative potential by using Maxine Greene's (1995) ideas of the education of perception as a critical means for opening up a social imagination as well as contemporary theories of visual culture in order to underscore the ways in which encounters with the arts may provoke and transform our and others' understanding of the world. Specifically, we describe our research and teaching with Image Theatre (Boal, 1985) and photo elicitation techniques and discuss the ways in which each of these methods enacts different aspects of the image and offers insights into pedagogical considerations and implications for social justice. We frame these approaches as image-based participatory pedagogies in which images are primary to renewed visions of possibility and imaginative action.

Introduction

The arts have long been at the nexus of social action, with artists actively engaged in creating new visions of justice and democracy as they seek to challenge the given conventions, beliefs and values that govern societies (e.g., Smith, 1995; Thompson, 2008). Not limited to the artist's experience and vision, those who view and encounter the arts *also* potentially experience new visions of critical social issues through their engagement with the arts. Yet, while there is increasing attention to the promotion and dissemination of practices and policies related to social justice education (e.g., Adams, Bell & Giffin, 2007; American Educational Research Association, 2004), the arts are often overlooked as potential sources of transformative encounters with issues related to social justice. The work presented in this paper builds on traditional pedagogical frameworks for social justice (e.g., Adams, 2007; Banks, 2004), in which connections between personal and social dimensions of experience, attention to social relations in an educational setting, and a "conscious use of reflection and experience" (Adams, 2007, p. 15) are viewed as essential characteristics and practices. Although we do not review in this article the extensive literature on democracy in education, our work relates to definitions of democracy that recognize the concept as more than a formal political institution. We work with a concept of democracy that is seen as a continuous and lifelong process or mode of associated living of which its end is never realized (Dewey, 1916). Additionally, democracy can be rebellious, episodic, transgressionary and based in diversity (Benhabib, 1996; Parker, 2003) rather than based on cooperation and agreement. Our work contributes fluid and performative dimensions to these tenets of social justice and democracy through an integration of visual approaches.

As educators and scholars in social studies and art education respectively, we describe visual methods from our own research and teaching in pre-K to university settings that are embedded in visual and performance practices. Framed as pedagogies and methodologies, we underscore their transformative potential by using American educational philosopher Maxine Greene's (1995) ideas of "wide-awakeness" which is an experience that fosters imaginative capacity as well as the education of perception as a critical means for opening up social imagination, and frame the ways in which encounters with the arts may provoke our and others' understanding of the world and the ways in which we may transform it. We depict two projects and their contexts: 1). Performing Image Theatre (Boal, 1985) with university students as a means to engage performance of and discourse about democracy; and 2). Photo elicitation as an individual and group participatory pedagogy in a preschool to re-play social reality with children and imagine social justice from their perspectives. Each enacts different aspects of images, offering different insights into pedagogical considerations and implications for social practice and possibilities for social justice that can be initiated and practiced at any age and context.

We intentionally blur the lines between pedagogy and research, supporting the idea that “art and visual culture are able to produce both new knowledge and new modes of knowing” (Rogoff, quoted in Desai and Chalmers, 2007, p. 8) in both teaching and research. We view acts of teaching and research as encompassing similar actions in relation to social change. Taken together, we frame these as image-based participatory pedagogies, in which images are primary in a “wide-awakeness to imaginative action, and to renewed consciousness of possibility” (Greene, 1995, p. 43), underscoring teaching and research as open to action, ambiguity, and imagination, highlighting the *potentiality* of an experience and the ways in which the arts might frame experience for fuller possibilities of awakesness, participation, and agency.

The Arts as a Space to Re-imagine Social Reality

Both Maxine Greene (1995) and educational philosopher John Dewey (1934) have advocated the arts as central to democratic participation. For Greene, the arts must be central because, “encounters with the arts have a unique power to release the imagination” (1995, p. 27). They demand both cognitive and affective responses. Referencing Marcuse, Greene argued that the arts break open a dimension that is inaccessible to other experience, a dimension in which nothing functions within the given, established norms of reality. Since works of art are not necessarily centered on the representation of what is right, just, or good, encounters with works of art can lead to the imagination of a new social vision, a wide-awakeness to other possibilities. Greene described “informed engagements” (1995, p. 125) with the arts as the most likely way to release a person’s imaginative capacity, meaning that, pedagogically, teachers strike a balance between helping learners attend to qualities such as shape, pattern, tone, and other important contextual features while taking into account their own ways of achieving meaning and experience with a work. Drawing upon Brazilian educator and philosopher Paulo Freire (1970) as well as Dewey's notion of aesthetic experience (1934), Greene has noted that these visible experiences serve to empower individuals to interpret their own situations and move toward new social visions of ideals such as justice, freedom and equality: “When we see more and hear more, it is not only that we lurch, if only for a moment, out of the familiar and the taken-for-granted but that new avenues for choosing and for action may open in our experience...” (1995, p. 123).

When speaking about wide-awakeness, Greene (1977) has suggested that only the performing and, especially, the *working* self is fully interested in life and hence wide awake. It lives within its act and its attention is exclusively directed to carrying its project into effect, to executing its plan. Hence, wide-awakeness must not rest at mere consciousness or reflection. According to Greene, “It is, actually, in the process of effecting transformation that the human self is created and re-created.” (1988, p. 21). Dewey (1916) similarly stated that the self is not

fixed or ready-made, but “something in continuous formation through choice of action” (p. 408). Thus consciousness alone cannot affect social change; one must act to transform. In terms of social justice, wide-awakeness implies moving beyond mere knowing about an unjust scenario and toward acting in some way that may potentially incite change or attention.

These imperatives can also be found in the writings on visual culture, an interdisciplinary field of study that is concerned with images in society. Visual culture studies position the arts within a larger visual field that includes not only the fine arts but also advertising, folk art, television, building design, as well as home videos and family photographs, “the totality of humanly designed images and artifacts that shape our experience” (Freedman & Stuhr, 2004, p. 816). But, more than just enlarging the category of visual objects, visual culture studies seek to complicate taken-for-granted notions of visibility. Art theorist and curator Irit Rogoff (2002) has described visual culture as an “unframing” of conventional wisdom regarding vision, the visual, and historical practices of vision-related disciplinary fields such as art history, film studies, and media. Visual culture opens up a “world of intertextuality in which images, sounds, spatial delineations are read onto and through one another, accruing layers of meaning and subjective responses” that we might have when encountering film, art, buildings, media, and environment (Rogoff, 2002, p. 24). What is uncovered, or unframed, is a freedom to understand meaning in relation to images, sounds, or spaces that might not interact in any direct or causal way to context or to each other. As meaning-making shifts and is continually displaced, so too, according to Rogoff, are the specific histories and methods of analysis (as encountered in art criticism, for example) in which images and objects of study are embedded. As an example, she suggested that the boundary lines between art making, theorizing and historicizing have eroded, no longer existing as exclusive provinces.

Because images are so pervasive, embedded in ideology, and may represent hegemonic practices of communication, educators have argued for the necessity of educating students in the perceptual awareness of the messages that such images carry so that students become active agents in the confrontation and making of images rather than merely being passive consumers of images (Garoian & Gaudelius, 2008; Freedman, 2003; Freedman & Stuhr, 2004). Rogoff’s notion of the “curious eye” as a replacement for the “good eye” of connoisseurship applies to such pedagogical practices of visual production (2002). The curious eye implies an unsettling, an understanding of things not quite yet understood or known, and of finding out something that one had not known or thought of before. We extend this concept of visual culture as a way to unframe conventional wisdom surrounding pedagogical practices of the visual. Pedagogically, this might require educators first to acknowledge the ways in which our epistemology and discourse surrounding vision and visual images might be embedded in political and historical ideologies, social norms, and/or market dictates; it then requires an assemblage of pedagogical strategies that might unframe these

conventions by taking into account lived realities of students alongside these modes of seeing that might reformulate knowledge of the visual. Similarly, a research methodology with a “curious eye” may unframe traditional human relationships and modes of data collection and analysis by unsettling fixidity.

The ideas cited here—informed engagement, wide-awakeness, unframing conventional ways of seeing—help to situate our work across educational contexts, ages, and different visual and performance media, in which we sought to actively engage students in making sense of images and attend to alternate ways of seeing and their corresponding modes of knowledge production, and the intersubjective exchanges of person, image, and context. What follows are two examples from our research and teaching in which we first describe our efforts and then analyze them, identifying those moments in our pedagogical practices that we feel hold tremendous potential for transformative encounters.

Performing Democracy through Image Theatre

Powell has employed Brazilian director and activist Augusto Boal’s Image Theatre forum over the last five years in order to explore democracy as salient concept in American society and politics in her graduate and undergraduate courses. Image Theatre was first developed by Boal (1985) as part of Theatre of the Oppressed (hereafter referred to as TO), a range of theatrical forums and techniques developed in the 1960s and based on Paulo Freire’s Pedagogy of the Oppressed (1970).¹¹ TO generally involves participants in techniques that are intended to empower participants to recognize, analyze, and confront issues such as oppression and disempowerment through active involvement rather than passive reception (Boal, 1985). Boal wrote that TO helps overcome the “esthetic osmosis” of the spectator who “accepts as life and reality what is presented to him in the work of art as art” (Boal, 1985, p. 113, as cited in Lewis, 2011, p. 42). As such, TO is similar to fields such as ethnodrama, which engages actors and participants in the creative reproductions of natural social life (Butler-Kisber, 2009; Saldaña, 2005; 2011). Educators working with TO techniques in teacher education and in classroom practice have argued, for example, that TO is a powerful

¹ There are many forums that comprise TO; a sense of relationships and branches of the different forums are presented in this image found on the International Theatre of the Oppressed Website (2011): <http://www.theatreoftheoppressed.org/en/index.php?nodeID=3>. The two that are cited as the basis of most of these theatre expressions are Forum Theatre, used in many of the works cited above and involving dialogue and scenarios depicting a real-life situation, and Image Theatre. The website of the International Theatre of the Oppressed (2011) lists numerous projects, books, reports, and other resources pertaining to the use of TO in various settings.

professional development approach to the examination of power and ideology when underscored with critical pedagogy (Cahnmann-Taylor, Wooten, & Souto-Manning, 2010), or when it is performed as reflexive understandings about inequality, oppression, and racism for the purpose of preservice teachers' recognition of their roles in social justice and societal constructs (Rankie & McDermott 2010). Others have examined its effectiveness with students in terms of social justice, such as bullying (Hewitt, 2009) critical literacy (Rozansky & Aagesen, 2010) or participant-identified social issues (e.g., Shelton & McDermott, 2010; Snyder-Young, 2011).

Image Theatre is generally used to express oppressions and to encourage participants to actively change oppressive images. In a series of exercises that are generally wordless, participants "sculpt" an image of a selected theme with their own and others' bodies, expressing their feelings and/or experiences. Images, then, are given three-dimensional form, and the word "sculpture" is often used in discussion of images. The philosophy governing this form of theatre is that of the body as the primary method of expression, and that by using the body rather than speech, the normal 'blockades' and 'filters' of thought can be bypassed (Boal, 1985): "Image Theatre is a series of Techniques that allow people to communicate through Images and Spaces, and not through words alone" (Boal, 2004, cited in *International Theatre of the Oppressed*, 2011). The Boalian concept of the "spect-actor" is present in this context, as viewers become active participants as they realize an image. Image Theatre has been viewed as particularly powerful for providing non-verbal expression to ineffable feelings and experiences. In relation to educational settings, it has been found to be effective for engaging "low-achieving readers" in critical literacy (Rozansky & Aagesen, 2010) and for developing a critical stance toward multicultural literature (Singer and Shagoury, 2005).

The techniques of TO are often adapted and modified to specific contexts, largely to reflect the specificity of local contexts rather than impose a universalized ideal embedded in Boal's experience in Brazil (Blair & Fletcher, 2010), which has been the case with Powell's work with Image Theater. Working with Kristine Sunday, a graduate student in one of Powell's classes who had background experience with TO (and who is now a faculty member in Powell's department), they have moved Image Theater from a workshop context to a live public interactive performance. Image Theatre often takes place in a workshop setting-- a private, self-contained space intended only for workshop participants. But a chance encounter with a workshop held outside on a particularly warm spring day led Powell and Sunday to realize its immediate potential for a public, interactive performance. The graduate students had chosen the concept of democracy and had sculpted a powerful image of a border crossing at a time (2007) in which illegal immigration was gaining momentum and popularity as both a critical social issue and campaign topic. The image included students posed as if crossing a border (a landscaped wall), a rifleman taking aim at them, and a student who stood off to the

side yet between the rifleman and border-crossers, saluting to no one in particular. It was a spontaneous decision to then involve passers-by to comment on the image with questions such as, “What do you think of our image of democracy? Does it match your own conception of democracy? What would you change about the image?” It was one undergraduate’s comment --“I’m just a student. I don’t know anything about democracy” -- that prompted Powell and Sunday to think more critically of moving Image Theatre from a workshop context to a semi-staged, public performance whereby passersby might become spect-actors in shaping new images of democracy. Since that spring encounter of 2007, public, interactive performances of Image Theatre have been staged in a variety of settings across the university campus, each of which has yielded rich and powerful experiences with embodied understandings and representations of democracy. As such, these performances have taken on the qualities of interventionist² performance art: acts of intervention that explicitly disrupt normal associations and activities (Garoian, 1999) with and between objects, spaces/places, and people.

Powell has introduced Image Theatre in her graduate and undergraduate courses on curriculum theory, art education, and arts integration. As a pedagogical strategy, Powell views Image Theatre as an opportunity for spect-actors to challenge and blur the boundaries that exist between art and life in order to engage in and challenge historical ideologies of democracy, stereotypes, symbols, icons, norms and values embedded in such images. It is a chance for students to leap from a material, specific time and place to a more abstract, ideological space in which they might think about democracy in terms of questions such as: Why *this* image of democracy? What is *real* versus *ideal* democracy? What might *I* do to change this image of democracy? Powell and Sunday have adopted a framework for a pedagogical approach based on Boalian techniques, moving back and forth between different types of “imaging processes” (Linds & Vettriano, 2008): initiating a theme that is then created as an image; allowing students to first create an image that is then verbalized and interpreted as a class; allowing students to form images with their own bodies; and allowing students to sculpt the bodies of others. Whereas Boal discourages language use in Image Theatre, we have found it useful to brainstorm a list of concepts that might define democracy. Such a list has included positive conceptions like participation, consensus, equality, and representation,

²For examples of contemporary artists working with public interventions and North American democracy, see the work of The Critical Art Ensemble (<http://www.critical-art.net/home.html>); Alfredo Jaar (<http://www.alfredojaar.net/>), notably, *A Logo for America* ([http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u-
adpTvjNOK&feature=related](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u-
adpTvjNOK&feature=related)) the work of artist Mark Tribe (<http://www.marktribe.net>); Nato Thompson’s (2008) edited collection, *A Guide to Democracy in America*, which features several artists working with the theme of democracy (<http://www.artbook.com/9781928570080.html>)

but it nearly always moves toward more critical conceptions of democracy such as protest, Western dominance, capitalism, power, and compliance.

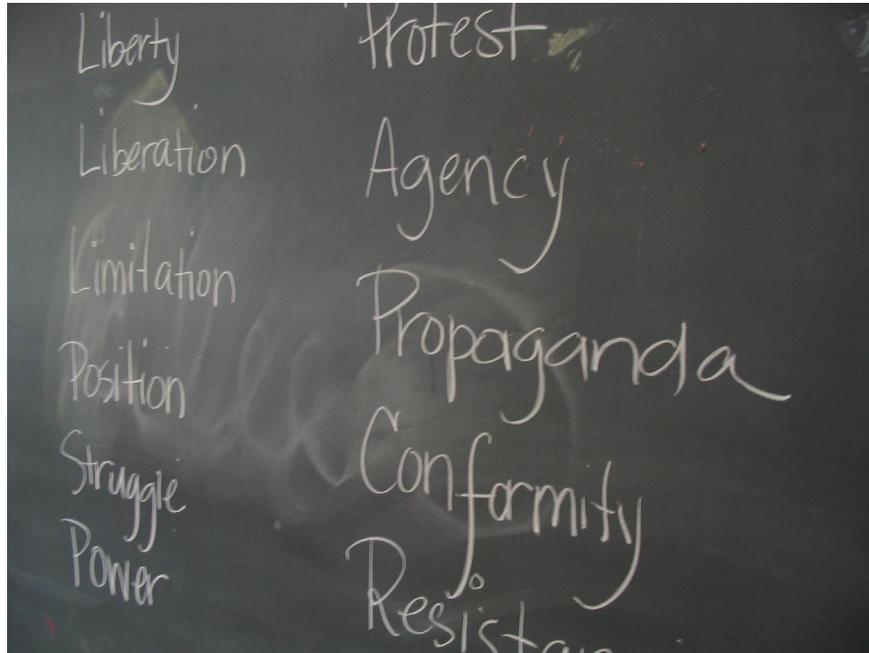


Figure 1. Brainstormed List of Concepts Defining Democracy
Photograph by Mary Elizabeth Meier

This word list is not critiqued; it remains on the board so that students can view it during any point of the workshop activities, serving also as a point of reflection after exercises. These words are ultimately used to shape images, pushing students to deepen their awareness of the multiple facets of democracy.

Warm-up exercises follow and have proved critical in terms of providing the student actors with ideological foundations for the work, in which language-induced thought yields to spontaneous bodily movements designed to engage the senses (e.g., Boal, 1995). Students are discouraged to explain their movements. Instead, the goal here, as explained by Boal (1995) is “not to create calm, equilibrium, but rather to create disequilibrium which prepares the way for action” (p. 72). These exercises scaffold the major activity of forming images in a series of student arrangements that respond to one of the brainstormed words pertaining to democracy, progressing from individual images to pairs, small groups and finally as a whole-class image.





Figure. 2, 3, 4 and 5. Student Images of Democracy
Photograph by Mary Elizabeth Meier

These exercises build toward group work in which members collectively construct an image. Reflective discussion, however, is minimal. The focus is on redirecting the thoughts and energy built by the previous poses into new images of democracy. In this manner, it is an attempt to develop Rogoff's notion of the curious eye. These exercises serve as scaffolding for perceptual awareness involved in theater work and image-crafting. They build towards Greene's notion of pedagogy as "informed engagements" (1995, p. 125) through an attention to perceptual qualities of an art form--theater, the body as artistic medium, and images--balanced with imaginative becomings.

All of this work leads to Powell's and Sunday's goal of Image Theatre as public art intervention. The prior experimentation and play prepares students to think about complex images of democracy that we then perform in a variety of public settings, engaging the larger student population in our work. Her classes have performed in the student union building, the courtyard of the university's library, the lobby of the library's circulation desk, and the front lawns of the colleges of education and business--all of which are highly-trafficked public spaces and designed to disrupt normal associations with and activities in public spaces and places. The following account draws from a performance that engaged six art education graduate students who were studying performance art and theory in relation to democracy and social action in the spring of 2007. After about an hour of Image Theatre exercises, we engaged in a one-hour image-based performance of democracy in the heart of our large university campus, the student union. The performance was videotaped and transcribed for the purposes of documentation and analysis of images, discourse, themes and issues that arose.

Performing Democracy in the Student Union

Powell and Sunday invited students who were passing by their public image—a total of 15 undergraduates in pairs or groups—to become actively engaged in discussing and reflecting on the displayed view of democracy and also in the “sculpting” of new images. In addition, students were asked about their year of study, major, and whether or not they had a chance to discuss democracy in any of their courses in order to get a sense of the possible contexts for discussion, conceptualization, and thinking about democracy on campus. While the details of those responses are not reported here, it is important to note that, with the exception of two students, 13 of the 15 students felt that there was no opportunity to discuss democracy on campus or in their academic courses, which included majors such as business, biology, journalism, and English. One student cynically discussed student government elections--which, ironically, were occurring the day of our performance--as a joke. While we recognize that students might not be remembering correctly, limiting their definitions of democracy, or otherwise not making connections that were actually occurring in their courses or on campus, we were nonetheless surprised by their perceived lack of opportunity for discussion. In fact, three students commented that the Image Theatre performance was one of the few, if not the only, opportunity they had for engaging in a discussion of democracy.

This public performance lasted 60 minutes, but it is the last 30 minutes that is described here in order to depict a prolonged and collaborative engagement of several undergraduates with the play of images and wide-awakeness to multiple meanings of democracy. The questions we posed to students about the images included the following: This is our latest sculpture/image of democracy, what do you think of it? What does this evoke for you? Does this match your

image of democracy? Do you think this is a *real* or *ideal* image of democracy? How might you change the image to reflect your concept of democracy?

During the last 30 minutes of the performance, and after a quick break from the first half, the graduate students sculpted an image of a straight line of people looking up at a TV monitor that was attached to the wall of the student union, each of them holding the same, passive expression while viewing. This image was the starting point for a group of five undergraduate students—Peter, Taylor, Sam, Perry, and Mary³—who happened upon our performance and collaborated with each other for roughly half an hour. The graduate students had wished to convey a cynical view of democracy and its relationship to the media. Commenting on this image, Sam (one of the undergraduates) felt that the image "sort of goes with democracy: everybody is facing the same direction, everybody is looking at the same thing. But at the same time, democracy isn't always necessarily everyone facing in the same direction." Taylor commented that it reminded her of when students gather in the student union to watch the TV monitors during election seasons, a literal reading of the image in contrast to Sam's. Peter offered a reading that was similar to Sam's in that the image was symbolic rather than literal, but remarked further on the ways in which it did and did not represent his own view of democracy:

[With democracy], we are dealing with a decision that affects, theoretically, many. What we've got here [in this image], is, at least to me, of a representative group, all watching one source. I'm sure you could get a lot of stuff out of that, but it seems kind of alien and not really what my concept of democracy is.

When asked if he might change the image, Peter agreed and rearranged people so that just three would stare at the monitor while two others stood beneath the monitor, whom he instructed to face and "stare" right at the other three viewers. He directed one of the TV watchers to be "slack-jawed" and in "rapt attention" watching the monitor, while directing the two people facing the slack-jawed individual to "watch and study him, almost maliciously, predatorily." Upon finishing, he explained his image:

... while in theory the idea of democracy represents the opinions of everybody matching to one thing that *also*, in theory, makes everybody happy, what often ends up happening is that small and more influential groups corrupt the idea of pure democracy and what we end up with is a lot of people who are in power watching one guy, or one

³All names have been changed to pseudonyms

small representation, or one person, who represents the larger masses, to see what [the masses] actually think. So that the larger more influential group can continue doing whatever they want in terms of power and society while appearing to appease the large mass[es].

Peter's image thus moved in the direction of a very cynical image of democracy as a representative body that watches and monitors public response to information.

Building off of Peter's image, Taylor changed it to reflect what happens "inside of people's minds when they're hearing the message, so [there are] different reactions to the message." After some discussion with Peter, who asked her what she was going to do, she turned people in different directions: one person faced away from the screen and the other people, to show that he heard the message but "maybe didn't believe it;" another person held a frozen clap while watching the screen, as if to "praise the message"; and another person froze into a strangle-hold on the slack-jawed screen watcher, "to object to the passive viewer's acceptance of the message," Taylor explained. Taylor thus reinterpreted the image by giving *agency* to the viewers of information. She also built upon the idea of multiple interpretations of media messages. Taylor's sculpted image was now layered with both literal meanings, embodied in recognizable bodily gestures, and metaphoric meaning, as revealed in her explanation.

Perry, a friend of this undergraduate cohort who was then just passing by, was invited into the performance by his friends. Perry was the first to add one of their own cohort, Mary, to the graduate student sculpture, positioning her to point at one of the sculpted students, mouth wide open as if speaking or yelling at the pair of students engaged in a strangle-hold. Initially expressing some trepidation when we asked him to comment--"I'm terrified," he confessed--he nonetheless proceeded to direct the group. He exclaimed, "This is what I honestly think of democracy," he stated, surveying the image that Taylor had made with his added change: Mary, yelling at a few of the posed individuals. Perry then proceeded to comment on some of the other posed individuals. Observing the student whom Taylor had (previously) posed to face outward and away from the screen, he said: "This other woman looks unhappy and she's facing away. I think that actually represents a larger percent of the population where they're not really happy with what's going on but on the other hand they're not contributing either." And, looking at the image of one student strangling another, an image that Taylor had created in response to media messages and in relation to the TV monitor, Perry did not implicate the media in his interpretation. Instead he commented, "This woman right here, it looks like she's holding this man who is sleeping. And it looks like she's taking advantage ... of someone who is unaware, actually."

Since Perry had just sculpted what he thought was “real” democracy, we asked him to sculpt an ideal image. Perry now involved *all* of his friends along with the graduate performers, for a total of nine performers. He then lined everyone in a straight row, including his friends engaged in different postures: one person in salute, two with their hands over their hearts. Perry explained: "I want them all looking in the same direction. ‘Cause in my mind, the way democracy should be is many varied people, all with one common purpose and goal, and faith in that goal, with a handful of people in there willing to serve a bit more than others." This time, the image of democracy was fairly positive, connoting service and unity-in-diversity. Two of his friends commented to him that they found his image “moving.”

After Peter and Perry left to go to classes, the image morphed one final time when Mary decided that she wanted a turn to sculpt something. She introduced newspapers and chairs to create an image of two people reading the newspaper upside down, each attended by a person standing over them and pretending to speak to them. The fifth graduate student was instructed to sit and sleep against one of the building’s pillar. Mary explained:

At least what I’ve noticed with the government, and at least some of the student government they have [at the university], is you either have people completely ignoring everything and sort of sleeping, and like, then you have people with the right information and people pointing out like, “Oh this is a good thing,” or whispering, telling them, “Oh, you should think this,” like with the media always going on. And then you have people who are given maybe perhaps wrong information ‘cause [the newspapers are] upside down.

Mary’s image was again one born of cynicism, but she added a new media component and grounded it in terms of local university campus government.

Unframing Democracy

These depicted images and beliefs about democracy relate to social justice because they bring to the surface what is not yet just or democratic, with contrasting images of what might be, or imagined. Notable in these reconfigurations were the ways in which students continually sculpted—either adding to or flatly disagreeing with the image in front of them as representative or ideal images of democracy, despite sharing similar ideas across sculptures.

As a result, while positions about democratic concepts may have been shared, the images representing these concepts were fluid, unpredictable and open to multiple interpretations. There was an endless deferral of meaning, unframing ways of imag(in)ing democracy while at the same time creating a self-reflexive discourse about personal beliefs and the possibilities of

changing those beliefs. The intertextuality of bodies, images, space, media, and discourse created opportunities for layered meaning. What is “unframed” through spect-actors’ discussion of these images is that there is no causal or fixed relationship between particular images and meanings of democracy.

Contemporary usage underscores the concept of *image* as one that bridges dichotomies between the real and not-real, subject to “reconstructions and reinterpretations” (Weber, 2008, p. 42; see also Berger, 1972; Garoian & Gaudleius, 2008; Sturken & Cartwright, 2001). Theorizing about the image in Image Theatre, Linds and Vettraino (2008) have described the connection between story-telling, image and embodiment, arguing that the image “is an embodied language that emerges through our interactions with/in the world” (p. 4). They have also described the connection between image and imagination as one that provides a “potential,” or “hypothetical,” of what might not exist (and perhaps never will), but what might have existed or come into being, a discussion point that is remarkably similar to Greene’s “as if” imaginings. Weber (2008) has similarly argued that images encourage embodied, visceral knowledge, are likely to be memorable, communicate holistically with embedded layers of meaning, enhance empathetic understanding, capture the ineffable, and provoke action for social justice. Indeed, while the props in these images—the TV screen, and later, newspapers—signified media, message, and monitoring, the images that were configured to represent these meanings were quite different from each other, reflecting subjective, nuanced responses toward democracy. In other words, there was always a “curious eye” involved in image production.

This vignette reveals how interrogating terms like democracy in an active and shared way may bring about specific and embodied notions of social (in)justice and how contemporary performance as a pedagogical site might produce new ways of understanding and approaching democracy. Specifically, it highlights a relational aesthetics (Bourriaud, 2002) with bodies, images and discourse co-mingling and co-constructing one another. The meaning of the image is in the subjective interchange, or what Rogoff (2000) similarly termed intertextuality, writing *with* an artist rather than about art (p. 36).

As a pedagogical act, this type of interactive performance concerning images—and the messages they carry—might encourage viewers to challenge and blur the boundaries that exist between art and life, thus permitting engagement with historical ideologies and breaking with fixed representations of democracy, and, as a result, confronting the complexities and contradictions of stereotypes, symbols, icons, and conventions that are embedded in images. University students, who share a campus in common, have the potential to question conceptions of democracy that are embedded in the university, town, and in their own specific experiences and how opportunities for democracy might alternatively come to be. Powell

hopes that through this project, university students might begin to ask questions in their coursework, in their majors, in their dorms, about what democracy entails and how, once “wide-awake” to cynical, real, ideal, and hopeful images--however defined or imagined--they might see opportunity for social change.

Photo-Talks and Carpettime Democracy in Preschool

The second project represents a photo-methodology developed by Stephanie Serriere (2010) during three years of research with preschool-age children. Like the first, this project was inspired by Boal's (1985) Image Theatre techniques because of the potential for participants to find, name and re-envision their own social issues through the close study of images. The preschool-age participants were invited to engage with photographs in a bodily and dialogic way. Specifically, Serriere invited children to alter photos by acting out the scene in a photo that occurred in the classroom and re-imagining it in new ways.

From self-portraits (e.g., Ewald, Hyde, & Lord, 2011) to sociodrama (Shaftel, 1967), photos have long been used in a variety of ways to explore children's experiences, thoughts and beliefs pertaining to social justice, and a way of eliciting a group's response (see Freeman & Mathison, 2008 for more examples). In fact, “young children generally find doing something with something and talking about that something to be easier, more comfortable and more interesting than only talking about something that isn't physically present” (Tammivaara & Enright, 1986, p. 232, cited in Freeman & Mathison, 2008 p. 96). Both with individual children and with groups, Serriere confirms that photos of children's lived reality seemed to be a comfortable mode of creating a platform for verbal and bodily responses.

In the first variation of her participatory pedagogy, Serriere invited *individual* children to explore digital photos with her, called "photo-talks." Then, building from this experience, she outlines a second project that elicited group photo explorations referred to as "carpettime democracy" as children are invited to use their bodies in the common area of the carpet to re-"write" a "script" that occurred in the photo. The digital photos are of the same child participants in play just hours previous, creating a platform to re-imagine and re-frame their own social reality, rather than extrapolating to their life from removed scenes in children's books. As a pedagogy and methodology, Serriere underscores how these experiences can unframe traditional relationships between children and adults by unsettling the idea of adult as “expert” or “knower” while placing children in the role of capable actors who know and can change their own social reality.

Photo-Talks

This three-year research study took place in a diverse preschool center affiliated with a large Midwestern University in which Serriere was both a researcher and a classroom volunteer. English was the common language of the classroom but over half of the children spoke a second language. Initially, Serriere wrote and documented her observations from the class rocking chair because it followed the center's belief that adults were not to intervene or spoil the purity of a "child's imaginative play world." Yet her data confirmed that ideas from the "adult world" were already inescapably and consistently present in the children's work and play, especially simplistic assumptions about gender, class, language and power. For example, most all of the students in this classroom seemed to be impacted by a popular group of boys who informally created and imposed the classroom "rules." Girls were often silenced in free choice play episodes (namely one girl, Nicole, highlighted below, who often sought to play with this group of boys); boys who did not speak English well were often labeled the "bad guy." Serriere decided to investigate children's view of these issues using a more interactive approach to her research: photographing actual classroom activities and then prompting children to respond (during the same day the photo was taken); and to see a photo as a script, one that they were then asked to "change" in order to re-imagine different possibilities that might result in a different outcome. Although using photos of children's reality may be viewed as a disadvantage, as children may choose to focus on the "real" solution that occurred, the benefits of immediate relevance to children here seemed to outweigh possible fixation on what actually happened. The reenactment of scenes allowed Serriere to access not only children's understandings of what actually happened but also various perspectives on the scene and, in particular, children's visions of a more ideal or just world.

Serriere, like Ewald (2005), chose to keep hold of the camera rather than letting children have the camera as in methods such as Wang's (1997) Photovoice, so that children could remain occupied in their "free choice" play. She sought to photograph not only the most visible and audible groups of children, but those that might have less voice in play episodes. Moments of social cohesion, deliberation, or tension were also of central importance to capture in deciding what to photograph, as her methods of looking and talking about photos were initially used to track social codes and norms (Corsaro, 1997) and how children subverted them in the classroom. Although these were social justice issues of which Serriere was sensitive, she did not make her issues theirs but rather asked them what they thought and sought to create a space for re-imagining and re-working.

As each morning's free choice playtime came to a close, so did Serriere's data collection (social mappings, field notes, audio recording and photography). Images from the day were uploaded onto a laptop and formatted in slideshow mode. During "clean-up time," she invited

one child at a time to view the slideshow from that particular day, leading one to three individual photo-talks per day. She first reminded the child that they could get up and leave at anytime (and that no one would be upset with them). She allowed children to control the forward button on the slideshow so they could determine the length of time we would focus on any one photo. Generally, they looked at and talked about five to seven photos in one sitting. Serriere referred to her field notes to remind children about words and actions surrounding the scene of a photograph. Some children spontaneously led her to the scene displayed in the digital photo to act out the scenario, as if they wanted her to better understand what actually "happened" but she usually led the conversation away from "what happened" towards what they would like it to be, or to other ways they may re-imagine the scene. She often asked, "Here you are doing _____. If you could change anything about this photo, what would you change?...What might happen then?"

The following is an example of a young girl re-imagining a common scene that occurred in her daily play: she wanted to play with a group of boys but they would either tell her she had to be silent or call her Stinkerbell (instead of Tinkerbell, as she wanted to be):

Serrire: Here you were playing as Tinkerbell and Ryan and Evan told you that "Tinkerbell does not talk" so you would have to be quiet. You chose to be quiet. What other choices did you have?

Nicole: I don't know...I want to be Tinkerbell... I want to play with them.

Serrire: You looked sad when they kept telling you to "be quiet!"

Nicole: I was (sad).

Serrire: So you want to talk and you want to play with them. What can you do?

Nicole: I can just talk anyway.

Serrire: Mmhmm (as if agreeing), you can walk away.

Nicole: No, I said I can just talk anyway.

Serrire: You sure can.



Figure 6. Nicole playing Tinkerbell but being pushed by the boys.
Photograph by Stephanie Serriere

In future play episodes, Nicole told the boys that she *could* talk. Initially, they responded by telling her that Tinkerbell doesn't talk "in the movie" so she shouldn't. Then a teacher mediated when Nicole protested, and Nicole was able to communicate that she wanted to be, "a special Tinkerbell who can talk." The teacher pointed out to the group that she had seen a version of Peter Pan in which Tinkerbell does talk. A clear change was not easy to determine here, and it often seemed that Nicole still made sacrifices to be included in the adventurous play of the three boys. Indeed, it is difficult to determine when transformation for an individual, in which a new social vision is brought to one's awareness, leads to actual change in one's life. Nonetheless, this example demonstrates how "...our transformative pedagogies must relate to both existing conditions and to something we are trying to bring into being, something that goes beyond the present situation" (Greene, 1995, p. 50) and while we engage in such processes, we can question how we might, "cherish the integrity of the meanings the children make" (p. 48). Appreciating the potentiality and uncertainty of social justice as Greene describes is illuminated here. Setting up experiences to 're-frame' scenarios may have the potential to build children's capacities to choose, disrupt the norm, and enact their own voice. Encouraging students' sense of agency relates to engaging their imagination. Such experiences of enacting one's own version of social justice should not be saved for the freedom of a university campus setting but rather can, as demonstrated here, begin in early schooling.

Carpettime Democracy

When doing the photo-talks with individuals, Serriere noticed that there was much collective interest amongst the students as she uploaded photographs on her laptop. Many children would gather around, awaiting the photos and when they appeared, they examined the photos and pointed at specific details on the screen. From this collective curiosity among the children, she developed a mode of group exploration with the photos as a platform of re-enacting social scenes together, a method and pedagogy she refers to as *carpettime democracy* (Serriere, 2010), inspired by Boal's Image Theatre techniques. Similar to Vivian Paley's (1992) ongoing conversations with her Kindergarten class about the proposed rule "You Can't Say You Can't Play," the emphasis was on the process rather than coming to some "right" answer or conclusion. Engaging in the process of democracy with young children involves, as Paley puts it, "talking about it, getting opinions, thinking about it, wondering how it will work" (p. 56). The following vignette is a compilation of various data collected at the preschool.

In lieu of the usual story-time, Mr. Baker (the pre-school teacher) projected a digital photograph on a white sheet hung from the wall. It is the scene of a boy, Miguel, crying because he is told that he "can't play." The children featured in the photo were given a chance to either act out or tell what actually happened in the photo's scene. Mr. Baker asked his students to use their imagination to "see" other ways this could have happened. One child volunteered by saying that Miguel could throw a building block at them; another said he should tell a teacher; another said he should just play somewhere else. After each iteration, the child who volunteered that idea acted out the new scene with a few other children. Mr. Baker asked the group, "So what changed when they did it that way?" As the scenario or dilemma was reenacted again and again, the students were reminded that they could "jump in" if they saw a new way of acting it out. Mr. Baker asked the students to think of it from multiple people's perspectives or "eyes": "If that happened, how might those two boys respond? How might Miguel feel?" To conclude the carpettime democracy session, Mr. Baker asked the students to think about all solutions presented and asked, "Is there one way that works best for all of us? Is there a way that works best for you?" Mr. Baker reminded the class that coming to "consensus" or agreement is not necessary unless a classroom contract or rule is proposed, and instead stressed exploration of dilemmas and understanding other viewpoints. "Yep, and here's another fine idea," he said to one of the student's proposals.

Although it may not be feasible to happen daily, carpettime democracy is something that requires regular practice, for honing the skills of the children and leader (researcher or teacher) alike. Implementing this idea with preschool children requires time, practice and attention to the images in photos and the corresponding scenes that children (and teachers)

might envision. Especially for younger children who may want to have the prized “right” answer (that they may believe the adult knows or has), it is important for the leader to not suggest her/his opinion of one correct solution (Nelson, 1998). As Greene describes, "We want classrooms to be just and caring, full of various conceptions of the good" (1993, p. 18), and these spaces may work to understand that "what is held in common becomes always more multifaceted-- open and inclusive, drawn to untapped possibility" (p. 18). Moreover, we see that starting at a young age as preschool may be just the time to re-frame traditional adult-child relationships, before school “obedience or correctness” is ingrained. Placing children in the position of knowing their social worlds while allowing them the space of having a “curious eye” toward their intersubjective social exchanges may frame schooling as personally relevant and meaningful. As photos served as a medium or springboard for the children to describe and reconsider their social life, dialogic encounters with photos can promote informed engagements and children’s imaginative capacity and hopefully lay a foundation for empowerment.

Discussion and Implications

In our paper, we depicted the ways in which image-based pedagogies might offer opportunities to open imaginations to envision or enact in ways that mere contemplation, discourse, or conceptual knowledge may not bring about. We used concepts such as wide-awakeness, unframing, dialogic encounters, and informed engagement to underscore the power of images to facilitate imaginative encounters. As we enter such spaces, we may find ourselves and our students in a sort of "psychic disequilibrium" as others unlike us present their interpretations of the world for which we have less frame of reference (Maher and Tetreault, 1994, p. 1). Yet the images gathered in places described here (a public building and a classroom) may remind us of our diversity and our unity, and how, despite of the dis-unity or disequilibrium, we may still be spurred to action. As shown, the arts may enhance our awareness of the disequilibrium by unframing our own perceptions of reality. This makes us as teachers or researchers, students once again while potentially allowing our students to become experts.

Like others who hope for social justice in education, we note that educators may feel a contradiction in the heart of their efforts (Ayers, Quinn, & Stovall, 2009). While the field of education continuously seeks to impart specific instructional outcomes, the projects described here purposefully stop short of explicating any specific instructional or "behavioral" outcome, what currently "counts" in educational research's era of accountability. This work promotes what Eisner (1969) coined *expressive objectives*, which position students as capable of elaborating and modifying existing knowledge. Like social justice pedagogy (Calderon, 2009), expressive objectives seek diversity rather than homogeneity of response, and ask that

the teacher-student relationship, as well as the relationship to the material, be an authentic one. This may involve letting go of some of our notions and practices we associate with learning. As in the traditions of social justice pedagogy, learners become the subject of the learning process and not the object (Friere, 1970). Learning reflects students' own questions, and answers may not be the next instructional goal but instead some sort of social justice.

One implication from these projects concerns the reconstitution of curriculum as embodied, experiential, and fluid, moving beyond a pre-planned syllabus or package of materials. In this way, it has led us to consider a reconstruction curriculum as lived (Aoki, 1993) and un/planned curriculum, emergent curriculum, purposefully fall short of outlining one way to lead students in such engagement. We see our students engaging with a curriculum not only as lived but an opportunity to perform, engage with images. As writing this article has allowed us to unframe our disciplines of art education and social studies education, we see how pursuing the ideals of democracy and social justice relate to an unframing of curriculum--for a diverse group of people to participate more fully, multimodal engagement should be considered in not only classrooms but all public spaces.

In such an unframing, "education" is never complete. There is always more to uncover, more to expand and embrace. The actions taken, or words spoken, from such an awareness represent what has been termed *beginnings* (Arendt, 1958). These represent the uncontrollable and even frustrating nature of our public offerings in a social world since even the offerer her/himself cannot determine the results, as others constantly add on interpretations in public spheres. Within our "wide-awake" community encounters, we highlight the unpredictable nature of engaging in the arts and educating for expression. We recognize the possibility that these pedagogies may not always be transformative but could give space to re-privilege those most comfortable or dominant ideas about social justice, leading us to conclude that careful facilitation of these practices is important in terms of confronting privileged ideals and images and encouraging students to think in divergent ways.

Notably, these moments are not meant to position researchers or educators as capable of ameliorating unjust social scenarios or making students their Helen Kellers to save (Boldt, 1996), nor do we seek to present any formula for teachers or researcher. Instead, we hope to illustrate the *possibilities* of offering a space to disturb the norms of the status quo or the unjust. The social change that occurs may be nonlinear and difficult to measure or capture precisely, instead perceivable as fragmented bits and pieces and for brief moments. This is why the process is emphasized in each of these examples; involving people in wondering about, re-envisioning, and altering public life. Still, the humility of our powers to create ideas should not keep us from acting on those ideas (Greene, 1995). Perhaps this work may spur others to reimagine how work that is situated in the visual might unframe the ways in which

social justice unfolds. These examples reveal how images teach, how pedagogy may be a process of re-imag(in)ing ideas about living, embracing ambiguity, noticing difference regularly, and looking “upon the ordinary with new eyes” (Goodman & Teel, 1998, p. 68), and with curious ones as well.

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