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**An Experiment in Integration:
Working with "Youth At-Risk"
in Performative Style Drama Therapy
at The Centre for the Arts in Human Development (Concordia University)**

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A Research Paper

in

The Department

of

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Abstract

An Experiment in Integration:
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Nicola Bangham

This paper presents the experience of two adolescents, traditionally labeled as “youth at-risk”, involved in the collaboration of a public performance rising out of Performative Style Drama Therapy Process. This unique project combines the creativity and dedication of several groups of people including adults living with mental handicaps (the primary participants), University students, Creative Arts Therapists and the two so-called youth at-risk or whom we call “Creative Arts Apprentices”. The focus is on the journey of the apprentices. The process is explored at several levels. The paper begins with a brief historical and factual overview of the phenomenon of Performative Style Drama Therapy and how it is approached at The Centre for the Arts in Human Development. In the second part of the study I have attempted to bring the phenomenon of “youth at-risk” to task by presenting the apprentices only through the descriptions of themselves. The project itself is presented in detail with transcripts of interviews and journal excerpts offered by the apprentices and other participants in the process. Themes and meanings that emerged through out the creation period and production are presented and considered in greater detail. The purpose of this research, for the most part, is to present a “successful” portrayal of integration through the Performative Style Drama Therapy process.

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Introduction:

The aim of this paper is to explore the effects of the Apprenticeship Project on its participants. This program was introduced as a pilot project at the Centre for the Arts in Human Development. The "apprentices", to whom I refer, are two so-called "Youth at-Risk" recruited to participate in and assist with a formal theatre production, developed out of a special drama therapy process. In January of 2000, the participants of the Apprenticeship Project were integrated into this unique creative process under the auspices of the Centre for the Arts in Human Development. The mandate of the Centre is to offer therapeutic intervention in the Creative Arts Therapies to adults with intellectual disabilities and, often, dual diagnoses. One of the missions of the Centre is to provide the opportunity for participants, of the Centre, to participate in the creation and public performance of a production rising out of the Performative Style Drama therapy process (D'Amico, 1998). This year's production was called "And Alice Dreams", an original adaptation of Alice in Wonderland. As a result of their participation and assistance with this special project we hoped that the apprentices would gain interpersonal and hard skills (i.e. "theatre skills" such as stage management and set building). My goals for the apprentices, included increased self-esteem, relationship skills, hard skills acquired under the umbrella of the creative arts, communication skills and a sensitivity to people living with disabilities. A lot of these outcomes are apt to arise naturally out of the process of creating a theatre production with a group of diverse people. However, in this project these goals were intentional. The apprentices themselves did not have specific "therapeutic goals" that they were working towards through the drama therapy process.

However, they did have goals that they were specifically working towards through the creation of the performance.

I participated as the Youth Co-ordinator. I have one year of clinical work, in group and individual drama therapy, with several of the "actors" or "clients" at the Centre. As a result, I had a solid relationship foundation on which to introduce and to facilitate integration of the apprentices into the "Centre culture". Biases related to the clients at the Centre may have had an impact on my relationship with the Apprentices as a result of my previous history together with the clients. My biases related to the actual research project are most clearly illustrated in the paragraph below describing ecological ethics.

Regardless of our individual actions or intentions, (however), the researcher-participant relationship is largely defined (long before we begin the study) by our respective roles, status differences, cultural norms, and the very language that makes communication possible in the first place. At least some of these factors will militate against genuinely collaborative relations. To put this another way, we can hardly approach our own work as if it was a blank canvas. (Flinders, 1992, pp. 110)

I accept my bias and previous lived experience as having an impact on what has been explored. It is my belief that some of my past lived experience with the Centre clients enriched the process. I also acknowledge that some information has been sacrificed at the hands of my biased perspective.

Considering the presence of several different groups of people involved in this process I have 'labelled' each group for the purpose of clarity in my presentation of the process. For this study, adolescent participants in this pilot project are called "apprentices". The persons at the Centre, with developmental disabilities, are called

"actors". The students in the University's Theatre Program are called "students". The individuals that assist with lunch time and logistical concerns are called "volunteers". The people who are involved in the technical design including sets, lighting and sound are called "production staff". There are assistant directors, choreographers, music directors, a clinical co-ordinator, a director and producers, all of whom will be identified as such.

The Apprenticeship Program, itself, was not a drama therapy group. It is a group that assisted, participated in and witnessed the drama therapy process and performance. I did not work formally as a drama therapist, rather my role was as Youth Co-ordinator and Assistant Director, during the preparation for the performance. However, I came at the role(s) and research from the perspective of a drama therapist. My responsibility to the apprentices was to keep them informed, work with them in the rehearsals, 'debrief' with them at the end of each day, give them general support and to be their advocate.

Paper structure:

Chapter 1 meticulously explores the structures that frame the project. These two main structures include Performative Style Drama therapy and the Centre for the Arts in Human Development. I have discussed the implications that both of these frames have on the apprentices, including the obligations that they were expected to fulfil for the six months of collaboration. In chapter two, I describe my phenomenological method of inquiry. The participants and the implications of the "Youth at-risk" label are discussed as well. The case material includes interview and journal excerpts that I categorized into the four different stages of the creation process. The elements that influence the experience for each stage are identified and the themes that arose within these elements are listed. In chapter three, I integrate the case material with theory. Themes and elements of each

stage are discussed further as they relate to the boys experience. The original aims of the project are discussed relative to the outcomes.

Chapter 1:

No matter how we crave clear demarcation lines between the infirm and the healthy, the incarcerated and the free, the rich and the poor, the young and the aged, we are all part of one continuum. Fear motivates us to maintain distance. Our comfort comes in separation from the reminders of that which we know is possible, if not inevitable, in our own lives. (Gordon, 1998, pp. 10)

There are two main structures that contain the Apprenticeship Program. The primary one is The Centre for the Arts in Human Development. Within this is the Performative Style Drama therapy Process. The Apprenticeship Project exists within both of these frames. In this chapter, I have described each framework in detail and their potential effect on the apprentice's experience.

Primary Frame: The Centre for the Arts in Human Development:

The Centre is located on the Loyola Campus of Concordia University in Montreal, Quebec. The Centre began in October of 1996, accepting 21 participants for two days a week of sessions in four Creative Arts Therapies modalities. The Centre is staffed by a Clinical Co-ordinator, Art Therapist, Drama Therapist, Dance and Movement Therapist, Music Therapist and a Logistics Co-ordinator. The participants work with Drama and Art Therapy masters students at Concordia University. In addition, the Centre is supported by volunteers and research staff. The Centre is financially supported by Concordia University, various associations including the Taylor Birks association and the Seagram Fund for Academic Innovations, and private sponsorship. Fund-raising continues to be necessary and ongoing in the continuation of the Centre.

The Participants:

The clientele at the Centre are adults living with developmental disabilities. This population of people come under many labels: mentally challenged, developmentally challenged, mentally retarded and most recently referred to as 'people living with intellectual handicaps'. The diagnoses include Organic Brain Disorder, Williams Syndrome, Downs Syndrome, Autism and psychiatric backgrounds. One main theme or similar life experience that many of the clients share is brutal stigmatization. Often this seems to be due to the above mentioned labelling with negative vernacular emerging out of these labels. The individuals at the Centre, in particular, are creative and sensitive individuals who are willing and interested in the expression of themselves through the arts.

Referral Method:

Applications come to the Centre via the Clinical Co-ordinator. Applications originally came from the four agencies under the Co-ordinator's jurisdiction: West Island Readaptation Centre, Miriam Home, Le Cap and La Spirale. Since the media coverage of the formal production of The Winds of Oz and a general interest in the Centre, more applications and referrals are being made by social workers, caregivers and family members. At the end of each academic year, the Centre sends out clinical summaries and progress reports to the referring agent.

The Centre's Mission:

The participants come to the Centre with varying abilities and expectations. They all share the common goals of improving self confidence, socialization and self worth attainment. The Centre's objective is to assist the clients attain these goals through the exploration in the creative arts therapies. In addition the group work encourages friendships and support. The Centre also directly and indirectly educates the surrounding

community. Indirectly, education occurs through the public performance produced through the performative style drama therapy process (as explored in this paper) at the end of each two year session. Directly the 'Public Outreach' initiative and media coverage of the Centre brings attention to the abilities and potential of the participants.

Research:

The Research executed at the Centre, in addition to the research presented in this paper, is an ongoing observation process. The purpose of the Centre research is to gather data on the development and growth of the participants. The behavioural observation team work under the supervision of the Research Co-ordinator. The research aim at the Centre is to validate the effectiveness and document the impact of the creative arts therapies on this special population. In addition the development of effective evaluation tools is ongoing. Information is gathered through video and written observations in the different modalities. A research assistant observes the clients in all four of the creative processes, weekly. This research is on going throughout the clinical year and during the formal performance creation (D'Amico, 1998). Whilst the participants are encouraged to maintain a distanced relationship with the research staff during session and rehearsals, the clients do interact with them at recreation periods and meals. This fine balance manages to be maintained and the research process seems uncontaminated, if not enhanced by this human connection.

Secondary Frame: Performative Style Drama therapy:

The intention of this section of the paper is to bring clarity to the second framework in which the Apprenticeship Pilot Project exists. 'Performative Style Drama Therapy' a term coined by Susanna Pendzik is "an approach that involves the therapeutic development of a play and its presentation in front of an audience" (Pendzik, 1988, pp.

88). In the first year's course work of my Masters, I wrote a paper investigating the therapeutic value of "Performative Style" drama therapy process. It was my work, as a drama therapy intern, with the participants in the third year cycle at the Centre for the Arts in Human Development, that inspired this initial inquiry. The "graduates" had been involved in a very similar process that I have followed with the present participants. They participated in an intense four months of preparation for the formal presentation of their "Winds of Oz" (an adaptation of the Wizard of Oz). In this case, the play had already been produced the year before with different actors. I wished to investigate how this model of therapy could be designated as therapeutic from a theoretical and psychological perspective. My initial feeling was that the addition of aesthetics as a goal, had the potential of becoming priority at the price of the therapeutic goals of drama therapy. In my investigation and now in my experience with "And Alice Dreams", I have determined that this is exactly what differentiates 'regular' theatre from performance style drama therapy. The creation of the aesthetic theatre piece is only the means to the therapeutic outcome. Aesthetics enters into the equation in the advanced stages of creation of a production produced out of the drama therapy process.

To understand the basic theory behind performative style drama therapy, one need only deliberate on the intrinsic therapeutic value of mainstream theatre. There is, I believe, a simple explanation for why public performance, itself, has therapeutic affect. I identify this as the experience of being 'accepted'. Improved self-esteem and confidence often comes simply through the experience of feeling accepted and included.

How do we move from exclusion to inclusion? When I talk about inclusion of people, whether they are those with disabilities, beggars like Lazarus, or people

suffering from AIDS, I am not talking only about starting up special schools or residences or creating good soup kitchens or new hospitals. These are, of course, necessary. I am not just saying that we should be kind to such people because they are human beings. Nor is it a question of "normalizing" them in order that they can be "like us", participate in church services, and go to the movies and the local swimming pool. When I speak of the inclusion of those who are marginalized I am affirming that they have a gift to give all, to each of us as individuals, to the larger forms of human organization, and to society, in general.

(Vanier, 1998, pp. 85)

Gestures of "Vanier's inclusion" are manifested in applause, laughter and simply through witnessing. It is my belief that the applause that people offered to the actors were authentic expressions affirming that what the actors had to say was meaningful. Increase in self-esteem and confidence are often therapeutic goals of the Creative Arts Therapies. Thus, formal performance is a natural extension of the drama therapy process. Specifically with persons who have previously been the victims of stigma and public dismissal, this inclusion, by way of the safe frame of theatre can be therapeutic.

Process vs. product:

There are two main therapeutic effects within the performance structure. On the one hand, the process allows the client to find expression for the material to be worked on and the means for working with this material (Jones, 1996, p.102). Secondly, as proposed by the American drama therapist Renee Emunah, a public performance suggests that the story is worth hearing (Emunah, 1994). Thus simply through a public showing an individual may feel validated. "The therapeutic impact of the performance is different from, and often greater than, process oriented therapy." (Emunah, 1996, p. 251) I believe

that pivotal to the formal production is the preparation and creative collaboration, or the 'process'. Drama therapist, Phil Jones, identifies the therapeutic value as existing mostly within the process of working with others in the 'creation of dramatic expression' (Jones, 1996, p.102). The process and the product of performative style drama therapy are a part of each other whilst consisting of differing elements. The process is a period of creation of community, acceptance and safety. The formal performance or product can be seen as the great risk where we take it and put in front of a panel of judges. When the acceptance of this product is given the result can be astounding.

The Audience:

The audience defines the 'performative style' process of drama therapy. There are both dangers and great potential in public presentation of process resulting from therapy. The presence of a public audience introduces different hurdles for the individuals involved. These new issues include the fears and anxieties associated simply with performing in front of others. Not to mention performing personal experience to others. The audience will judge the performance, even if they don't mean to or intend to. These issues raise the question of the role of the audience. Since drama therapy is client-centred, the addition of the audience complicates things. It adds new possibilities that could potentially contaminate the work done in the therapy sessions.

Schechner, in his book Between Theatre & Anthropology suggests that one of the roles of the audience is to induce and create the energy. "...even when apparently passive, as at a concert of classical music or a performance of Racine, a full house eager to see this performance, to attend the work of this particular artist, literally lifts a cast of players, propels, and sustains them" (Schechner, 1985, p.10). Assuming that the audience responds with positive support and pleasure, the experience of the performance can be

'awesome'. "As the actors walk off stage, with the applause of the audience still flooding their ears, they experience a rare and sacred sensation: glory" (Emunah, 1994, p.294).

Brooks (in his essays: 'The World as a Can Opener' and 'Entering Another World') sees the audience as giving theatre its fundamental meaning. In the 'heat' of the encounter between an audience and performer the 'peak' experience is achieved. He describes the encounter as a 'meeting', a 'dynamic relationship' between the prepared (performers) and the not prepared (audience). (Jones, 1996, p.109)

This interaction between witness and witnessed is the significant experience of the whole performative style process. Jenkyns suggests that "the witness provides the containment necessary for the self to act, that is to take action in role, wearing, as it were, another self; living out Landy's paradox in the presence of another. As such the audience acts as witness to the actor" (Jenkyns, 1996, p.20).

Closure:

Schechner is a performance theorist who has "been dedicated to organizing and understanding performances" (Schechner, 1985, p.1). Schechner's seven phases of performance, within the whole performance sequence, are very closely related to the performative style drama therapy process. These phases include training, workshop, rehearsal, warm-ups, the performance itself, cool down and the aftermath (Schechner, 1985, p.18). The cool down includes the spectators and audience. In the drama therapy process we call this the closure stage. "The spectators, having experienced the performance, have been affected by it." (Schechner, 1985, p.18) The cool down are the rituals that many audience members and actors will go through upon the completion of a performance, including eating or prayer. "It appears that a wholehearted performance literally "empties" the performers, and one way they restore themselves (or are restored)

to ordinary life is by being refilled with food and drink, sacred or profane" (Schechner, 1985, p 19). He discusses his experiments with "cool-down exercises - group breathing, the passing of water, some quiet talking about the performance (nothing critical, more in the way of individuals sharing experiences)" (ibid.). Westernized rituals in theatre in the cool down period include the cast party eating a meal or simply having a discussion at the end of it. This 'sharing' that Schechner refers to is similar to what Emunah's closure phase includes. "The process the group has undergone is reviewed and encapsulated in it's entirety. The recognition by the drama therapist of the challenges and growth the whole experience has entailed for the client/actor, along with her recognition of both new and old self-images, help foster the integrative process" (Emunah, 1994, p. 297).

What Schechner refers to as the 'aftermath' is a paramount consideration in performative style drama therapy. The 'aftermath' is "the long-term consequences or follow-through of a performance" (Schechner, 1985, p.19). Emunah recommends an 'intensive schedule' of post-production sessions to mirror the intensive rehearsal period, celebrations involving special outings and rewards, dramatic rituals, and tangible reminders of the performance including photographs, videotapes and any articles and reviews (Emunah, 1994, p. 297).

Education as an Ulterior Outcome of the Performative Style Drama Therapy

Production:

The educational impact as a result of this witnessing can be global or individualized. Creators of "Narration's of Self", a puppet based performative style drama therapy project recognizes the educational value: "... We shall consider how stories of self, their metaphorical implications and alternatives, can lead us toward an educational device which has applications in both the mental health and the rehabilitation fields"

(Coelho de Amorim & Calvalcante, 1992, p.149). The lines can easily get blurred between education and therapy in this context. We may, inadvertently, educate and destroy the stigmas associated with populations like that at the Centre. Educating the audience or witnesses has benefits for the individual. With the project, this could be happening at a more rapid rate. The apprentices as representatives of 'normalcy' participate with our folks, and indirectly just by their presence might dissolve some of the barriers.

Emunah, discussing her experience with her theatre company "Beyond Analysis", makes an excellent case for the use of performative style drama therapy:

I had witnessed innumerable powerful dramas, dramas enacted by non-actors about core themes in their lives. I knew that with some direction these scenes could be transformed into aesthetic creations worthy of stage performance. I also felt that these dramas had to be seen on the outside, as a healing force for the larger community. Barriers between those who have been institutionalized and the community need to be broken. Taboo subjects needed to be publicly addressed, stigmas and projections needed to be shattered. People who have lost their voice needed to find that they had something to say and a way to say it, and the rest of us needed to listen. In listening, we would find our compassion about our common humanity. (Emunah, 1994, p. 253)

Risks of Performative Style Drama Therapy:

"Applause aimed at the people only (and excluding the product they have created) risks being condescending, if not infantilizing. Moreover, the limited expectations that the audience had (of the special population on stage) are reinforced; the audience's preconceptions are unchanged by such a production" (Emunah, 1994, p.290). "There are

dangers inherent in the transformation of improvisational based theatre, created in a drama therapy session, into more conventional performance for general audiences. For one, the actor/client is often too exposed, too unmasked. While this reality can be appropriate for a "safe" audience, it can become problematic when the group modifies its work to please a general audience" (Landy, 1986, pp. 151). The 'safe audience' refers to the group, the therapist and members of the stigmatized population. This risk may be considered worthy in exchange for the potential good. Robert Landy, in his discussion of theatre as a projective technique, warns the therapist of this potential shift. "...in order to facilitate the development of positive self-concept and social interaction through the theatre experience, the drama therapist must develop support groups both during and following the performance experience and must not lose sight of the therapeutic needs of the performers through focusing on the entertainment needs of the audience" (Landy, 1986, p.153)

Theatre Unlimited is a company that works with developmentally challenged adults as well. Lovis, the director, raises a question that I constantly asked myself throughout the experience: "Are we exploiting our actors to reach a desired dramatic affect?" (Lovis, 1997, p. 1). "One of the most exciting creative challenges our company has faced in working with its developmentally disabled actors has been to monitor emotionally intense material in an ethical and artistically responsible manner" (ibid.). He calls theatre the container into which extreme emotional material is introduced; this container should never break. It is a very thin line that separates the aesthetic from the therapeutic. Once you step into the aesthetics you risk sacrificing the therapeutic value. If an actor is crying on stage it does not "look good" for a stage hand to go on and comfort. As well, stories and scripts have to make sense and reach the audience on some level.

Hood, from her article reviewing theatre companies that include people living with disabilities, raises the serious question that we are all afraid to truly examine: "Does most theatre for disabled people represent *real* liberation, or a kind of entrapment or exploitation for the performer?" (Hood, 1992, pp. 16). The most important lesson I learned in this experience, is to constantly question and check in with the actors and with myself, that the aesthetics or exposure never outweighs the emotional well-being of the actors.

The Centre's Approach to Performative Style Drama Therapy:

The lights come up on our Mock Turtle sitting on a rock, crying. He is sad because he is not real. And so begins our production of "And Alice Dreams", hatched out of the imagination of our director in conjunction with the cast, adapted from Lewis Carroll's Alice in Wonderland, and inspired by the true life stories of 21 developmentally disabled adults (or perhaps more appropriately: creatively abled adults) two adolescent boys, a handful of theatre students and production staff. This production has its share of magic, poignant messages and unpolished rawness that seems to come with living with a disability.

In my investigation, I discovered that in North America alone, there is an exciting trend of theatre companies whose mandate it is to bring the stories of people living with disabilities to life and to the public; and to give the opportunity to people to express their full creative potential. In particular these companies use the voices of the persons to show and share their experience (Lovis, 1999; Cossa, 1992; Rosten, 1995; Hood, 1992; Emunah, 1994; Jones, 1996). The Centre for the Arts in Human Development is unique from these theatre companies in that it is foremost a centre for the Creative Arts Therapies

and, secondarily to that it functions, every two years, as a community-based theatre company. Now, with the addition of the two adolescent boys, and possibly as a continuing integrative project, the Centre emerges as even more unique.

The director's approach to performative style drama therapy was less focused on bringing autobiographical work to the public. Instead, the stories presented were metaphorical. The therapeutic value transpired mostly through the creative expressive model which values the process over the actual formal performance product. I did not feel that I was ever witnessing catharsis through telling personal stories. I did witness, however, an increase in engagement between the actors and others, and genuine happiness in the rehearsal process and performances.

The Apprenticeship Project:

History of the Apprenticeship Project:

The apprenticeship pilot project was another dream of the Clinical Co-ordinator of the Centre. It was her feeling that with all of the investment of time and effort that the Centre was giving on it's fifth show, that the Centre should spread the benefits to other marginalized populations. Her thought was that adolescents could really profit from drama therapy and here was an opportune time to offer this. This was her fantasy:

That we would find some kids who their teachers said "if only this kid could be given a chance to express him/herself in a creative way, that this kid has artistic talent or talent for drama and doesn't have a chance to express it"... and that could effect self-esteem. I was fantasizing that these would be kids from alternative schools who have difficulties in their academic histories and this would be a chance for them to help people with disabilities, learn about helping, be in a responsible role, have a creative outlet, help out with the show's development, and

have a chance to express themselves in the show as chorus members. The idea was that we would make it clear to them that they were helpers, and then thinking through this, I thought that they could be considered apprentices... it would be an integration process really. Here were regular kids, who wanted to help out from the high school. It is a dynamic process. I felt that that dynamic of them helping people with disabilities and feeling part of a group, with them, at the same time could be very powerful in helping them gain self-esteem, feel important, come to the University, and as well having outlets for their creativity (Clinical Co-ordinator, interview, June 2, 2000)

The initial aims of the project were clear. The primary projected benefits for the apprentices was improvement of self-esteem through all of the elements of creation. “The mandate of helping these kids was a secondary mandate, in a sense. The first mandate was for them to be helping our guys and the benefit would be a secondary benefit for them” (Interview with the Clinical Co-ordinator, June 2, 2000). These benefits would almost be serendipitous in nature. It was also suggested that we would eventually pair up the apprentices with participants as mentors or helpers, to increase relationship skills. This never occurred, though natural human connections did bring people together.

Creating and Implementing the Apprenticeship Project:

The process was very deliberate. Upon raising the idea to the Centre’s Executive Committee, the Clinical Co-ordinator received a somewhat conservative response. Like any situation where you create a heterogeneous group one needs to be incredibly sensitive to the ramifications. We had to work towards the best interest of the Centre participants.

The idea would be that they would be in from the beginning in January when we started to develop the show and that they would be right there two days a week at

lunch hours when the whole concept was being developed, so they would become part of the group. They would feel important to the group. The committee asked: “Why take a risk by introducing people that may have had difficult backgrounds if we are talking about kids from alternative schools, that there could be issues of drugs and violence and family histories and they could be a negative influence on our guys and why do that? And if we did it, why not start with one kid?” And I was looking at 4 or 5. At which point I negotiated and said “look, lets see what happens and see how many could come”. I approached at least 6 schools and was told that it sounds very nice, but they (the kids) have their academic requirements and there is no way that they could leave two afternoons a week, from January to April and it’s not realistic to expect them to be out of school all of that time. So, that was the resistance I got all the way through. The head of the last school that I approached responded differently. I spoke with him, and he was luckily, very open to the idea and feeling that part of his mandate for educating these kids who have had lots of problems academically, family wise, emotional, whatever... that this process of building self-esteem and allowing them to express talents that they may not have had a chance to do in such a public way could really help them with their self-esteem and go a lot farther than the academics in which they have had a lot of failure, a lot of them. So, he really saw the point. (Clinical Co-ordinator, interview, June 2, 2000)

The students from two schools were invited to meet the participants at lunch time, in the University cafeteria, to get a feel for what it might be like. Eight students attended. They were not exposed to the creative process as this was considered secondary at the time. The creative arts was the medium and the human connection was the purpose. The meeting was, essentially, an opportunity for the high school students to evaluate for

themselves if they felt that they wanted to commit to this. Four of the students expressed interest, all of whom came from the aforementioned “last” school. The other school withdrew after they became concerned about time commitment. At which point, I was introduced to the project. We conducted interviews after receiving their applications. A special application was designed that focused mostly on working with people with special needs and motivation to do so, rather than on the creative arts and the play itself .

Selection Criteria for the Apprentices:

The basic criteria was that they were committed and that they were motivated. In addition, as staff working with the apprentices, it was understood that we would not focus on their ‘pathology’. An implicit part of the mandate of this project was to ‘normalize’. “One thing that was really important was that I didn’t want to label them” (Clinical Co-ordinator, interview, June 2, 2000). They were to be treated as regular youth. The mandate of the Centre itself is to focus not on the disabilities of the participants, but rather on the abilities. Why should this be any different with the apprentices?

Goals of the Project:

From the interviews and my own reflections I extrapolated and identified the main goals of this project:

- 1) To develop an empowering environment for both special populations.
- 2) To improve communication skills.
- 3) To increase self-esteem.
- 4) To dissipate stereotypes about Developmentally Challenged Persons, held by the apprentices.
- 5) To expose the apprentices to new skills.

6) To demythologize the concept of "at-riskness" for the public.

Similar Integration Projects:

I came across a few projects where the integration of more than one special population was the focus. This included a theatre project called "Inside Out". The aim of this project was to provide an integrated theatre experience for people normally excluded from acting in mainstream theatrical presentations. This project used drama process and culminated annually in a public performance (Bieber-Schut & Mathieson, 1997/98, p. 6). A phenomenological research was conducted to investigate the experience. The results showed that "the participants highly valued their experience in "Inside Out", placing particular emphasis on creative expression, social support and the final performance. Findings also indicated that attending "Inside Out" enhanced participants' lives outside of the project" (ibid., p. 6). The study hypothesizes that exclusion from participation in society is a familiar experience for people with disabilities. However, there has recently been an increased recognition of the arts as therapeutic modalities for excluded groups including people with disabilities, people with mental health concerns and other minority groups. One direction this recognition has taken is the development of drama therapy and theatre projects for such groups (ibid. p. 6).

Another popular framework for integration of special populations is in adventure based programs where the focus is to bring people together in the wilderness (Lais & Smith, 1988). Specifically the project that I looked at is a community-based adventure program that integrates "disabled peoples" (cognitively disabled and physically) with "problemated teenagers" (youth who have been sexually abused) (ibid., p.1). The goals of this program include: socialization and communication skills, enhancing self-esteem,

developing independent living skills among the disabled participants and reducing negative stereotypes (or a reduction of negative and/or condescending stereotypes) among the able bodied (ibid.).

Some of the most beneficial interactions that we've seen are between people with physical disabilities and troubled youth. Although their circumstances may be quite different, both groups are usually looking for the same thing - acceptance.

An emotionally problemed youth often seems to find a special sensitivity to other specials (ibid., p. 5).

Potential Difficulties of Integrative Projects:

How much do we disclose about other participants or other groups to the others? (Lais & Smith, 1988, p. 9). "Sometimes passing on information can do more damage than good, causing other participants to retreat into their stereotypical perceptions of that other special population group.... they (troubled youth or disabled) could be judged and rejected before other participants ever meet them. The flip side of this issue is that some information which should be passed on is not and then there is trouble because of it" (ibid.). This is an issue that I faced throughout the project. I made decisions to disclose based on the situations that came up. For example, when we were in rehearsals, I was standing between an actor who suffers frequently from epileptic seizures, and one of the apprentices. When the lights began to flash, a potential seizure trigger, I took the apprentice aside and gave him a "crash course" in seizure care. Up until this point it was unnecessary, I felt, for the apprentices to know this confidential information since there were so many people around that were informed and would handle it. The issue of confidentiality often is an ongoing obstacle in research involving humans. The best way to deal with this difficulty seemed to be on a "needs to know basis".

Conclusion:

Investigation of other integrative projects provided a point of reference on which to design and implement our particular project. What I realize more clearly, in retrospect, is that the Apprenticeship Project was not like any other project that had been documented. I was able to heed some of the 'warnings' and potential difficulties of integrating two marginalized populations together, but like all human-based projects the real experience is completely unique considering the unique individuals involved. In addition to the danger of integration there were the complex outcomes that public performance and creative expression present. The process proved to be a very complicated series of events and parallel processes resulting from the myriad of elements and structures involved. I identify the principal elements as being: human relationships, time constraints or performance goals and the pressure of aesthetics. These elements are exposed and explored in depth in Chapter III.

Chapter 2:

There can be little doubt that youth, both as a topic for discussion and as a period in human existence, is of continual interest to most adults. As a group, youth are studied by psychologists, categorized by sociologists, worried over by parents, and are a constant source of enigma to educators. Seemingly endless efforts are made by adults to understand youth; to find new ways to live with them, accept them, discipline them, educate them; and to speculate about their eventual maturity.

Numerous theories on youth range from those that say youth constitute a definite subculture to those who view youth as a period of turbulence and a necessary transitory phase prior to adulthood. (Muro, 1973, pp. 1)

The Phenomenon of so-called "Youth At-Risk":

The above cited quote comes from a text entitled: Youth: new perspectives on old dimensions. It seems that the further away from this rite of passage the less adults 'understand' it and the more we want to understand.

I will not focus too much on the traditional "youth at-risk" label as I consider this mostly inconsequential to the project itself. As stated in the introduction, one of the mandates of the project was to avoid focusing on shortcomings. However, I do wish to address what the implication of the Alternative School system is in order to shed some light onto the individuals we wished to serve. For the pilot project, it was decided by the clinical co-ordinator of the Centre, that 'hard-core' youth at-risk would be avoided since we were unsure of how successful the integration process, itself, would be. "Hard-core", I presume, includes youth who fall into the stereotypes: violent, poor life management skills, destructive, angry, drug users, dropouts, suicidal, abused and all of the above resulting in academic failure or at least becoming at-risk of failure (Chino, 1996; Kronick, 1997;

Romines, 1992). "We tried to eliminate kids that had histories of violence or had potential behaviour problems, [that would be a separate group]. We realize that we have a vulnerable group that we were working with and we wanted to include kids that were interested and motivated first" (Clinical Co-ordinator, interview, June 2, 2000).

Below is the definition that I wish to refer to as it is most analogous to the definition in the school's handbook.

We can define at-risk as referring to a category of persons whose personal characteristics, conditions of life, situational circumstances, and interactions with each other make it likely that their development and/or education will be less than optimal. (Gordon and Yowell in Kronick, 1997, p. 5)

I learned, in my literature review that the common approach to the education at alternative schools is the "systems approach" (Kronick, 1997; Chino, 1996; Donmoyer, 1993). "As in any ecological system, change in one element precipitates change throughout the system to create meaningful change" (Kronick, 1997, p. 5). The Centre, if we follow this approach, became a part of the participant's educational system.

To clarify, as it seems necessary at this point, the aim of our project was not necessarily to 'change' the behaviour of the apprentices. The aim was to give them an opportunity to work with others and to give them access to a creative outlet. However, the side effects might be improved self-esteem and thus perhaps a change in attitude towards their own academic ability and thus a 'change' in school or the other systems. We were not approaching the youth from a deficit model but rather from the strength model. We asked them what they could and wanted to do, and we attempted to accommodate that.

Youth At-Risk and Research:

The creative arts was mentioned rarely in research about youth at-risk or within the alternative school mandate (Kronick, 1996; Donmoyer, 1993; English Montreal School Board, 1999-2000). Typically, art was seen as a frill rather than as a meaningful element in the fabric of alternative education. The projects where art was valued are generally after school private projects and activities where the youth have to make the extra effort to participate and commit. Our project is no different from these. What is interesting though is that this dimension may actually have positive results. By expecting the apprentices to make a commitment and the effort to be there we were asking them to be responsible. As well, we always trusted that they would be there and this may increase trust.

I suggest that the participants in our project do not fit a lot of the stereotypes of the "youth at-risk" label. The common criticism held by teachers is that traditional research documenting youth at-risk does not describe truthfully a lot of the students that are in the alternative school system. The new tradition in research is one of rethinking our portrayals of these subjects. There is a trend in shifting from objectifying to presenting 'thick descriptions' of the subjects that are studied.

In an attempt to 'protect' my research from becoming yet another documentation of generalization, I have attempted to present the apprentices mostly from their own perspectives. I also recognized that my observations can be meaningful in this thick description, as well. Other researchers in this field are starting to recognize the value of capturing and documenting the uniqueness of each individual student who is "at-risk" as opposed to only documenting the similarities and differences between other youth who are at-risk (Donmoyer, 1993, pp. 40). I do recognize that theoretical constructs, uncovered in

the broad traditional research, do provide a reference point from which to consider the descriptions.

Clifford Geertz, anthropologist, suggests that when a researcher is providing thick descriptions he or she is explicating the layers of meaning which exist in a particular situation. The focus once again is on the idiosyncratic, on “local knowledge” rather than abstract universal categories which, in traditional social science, subsume the local. Theory, according to Geertz, used in this kind of research is used largely as a rhetorical device. The goal of thick descriptions, in other words, is not the development of theory, even the sort of grounded theory associated with qualitative research; rather theory helps to structure discussions of the idiosyncratic. (Donmoyer, 1993, pp. 39)

Alternative Schools:

Certain features usually associated with alternative schools, including a clear mission, a small environment, a more personal relationship between students and teachers, clear rules, high standards, and a flexible schedule. (Paglin & Fager, 1997, p. 1)

Alternative schools, or rather The Outreach Schools as they are called in Montreal, have a specific mandate. They were officially established in 1976 originally to provide high school dropouts an opportunity to return to an educational setting and complete their secondary education. The system and objectives of these schools have expanded to include all at-risk students. Included in this at-risk label, according to The Outreach School handbook, are: “students who have had to leave their former high schools and students who, by choice, have rejected the traditional secondary school setting in favour of an alternative model. The students, in general, have lacked success due to a wide variety

of personal and academic problems" (English Montreal School Board, 1999, p. 1). The aims of the schools are to help the students rediscover the connection between school and life and to become high school graduates. "The schools provide students nourishing environments conducive to both personal and academic growth" (ibid., p. 2).

The aims of the particular school where we recruited the four apprentices are specific to this school:

The aim is to create a harmonious team consisting of teachers, students, parents/guardians, social workers and significant others working together:

- 1) To help students increase self-esteem, self-motivation and foster independence and self reliance in learning
- 2) To provide a structured, stimulating, supportive, student-centred environment designed to optimize student learning potential.
- 3) To provide the appropriate academic help so that students may
 - a) Re-enter a regular high school
 - b) Advance within the Alternative High School system
 - c) Be better prepared to enter the world of work
 - d) Feel better about their individual learning styles and abilities
 - e) Choose to remain in school rather than dropping out.

(English Montreal School Board, 1999-2000)

I propose that the Apprenticeship Project meets the first two criteria and through encouragement and flexibility to academic commitments we encouraged academic growth. We also went beyond these three aims, and provided a creative outlet, an opportunity to improve communication and people skills, and exposure to a post secondary setting. The

clinical co-ordinator's reflections on the aims of our program are stated below. They mesh well with the aims of The Outreach School.

I wanted them to see us as... to blur the whole thing about authority and adults and have them get a maturing experience too. They are given responsibility, they are given importance... and the whole point is that I hope that they will gain in their own self-esteem. For instance, one of them, when I was speaking to their mother, she was feeling that her son has always been different and been ostracized in certain ways and never put effort into academics and never succeed in academics. Where as now in this very small school she felt he was feeling much more accepted and much more motivated. And here we are giving him the opportunity to bring out his talent in music and interest in music and do it in this way.

(Clinical Co-ordinator, interview, June 2, 2000)

Youth At-Risk and Theatre:

The theories of Goffman and Skinner bring validity to our project. Erving Goffman (1959), Sociologist, identified the structure and intent of theatre performance as a way of understanding how and why a person controls his or her language conduct in any social system. He offered a dramaturgical perspective in which conversational interactions depend not on power and influence, but on organization and control based on individual choice (Anderson, 1992, pp. 133). Goffman suggested that during the course of a conversation, people have a range of actions available to them; and the particular actions selected are a matter of free choice. Goffman's dramaturgical perspective does not ask students to act out feelings because "acting them out does not clarify them" (Greene, 1973, p. 258). Rather dramaturgy represents a symbiosis of feelings, thinking, and action, through the theatre rehearsal process (Anderson, 1992, pp. 133).

For the most part, I agree with Goffman's perspective. Though I do have to bring his comment about clarifying feelings through acting them out, to task. "Acting out feelings" is at the heart of my work. I believe that there is a value in reexperiencing emotions through the distance of the theatre experience. Goffman, if he were to investigate drama therapy, would likely lean towards the creative expressive model of drama therapy. Therapists who use the creative expressive model perceive the therapeutic potential mostly in the process of creation rather than using the creative tools to problem solve. Our approach to this project, from my perspective, extracts therapeutic value from the creative expressive experience rather than from sharing the experiences of catharsis.

The Subjects (Apprentices):

Description of the Recruitment Process:

In December, of last year, we interviewed the four interested high school students. The students were from a range of different home situations. The interviews took about 45 minutes in which we reviewed their applications and attempted to get a sense of their commitment, and in addition a sense of their home life and any details that we might need to be aware of. At this stage we were unsure about what would happen in this integration project. We mostly were looking for empathy, sensitivity and dedication.

The four individuals were very keen, relatively (relative to the context of 'adolescence') enthusiastic young people with varying interests and much to offer. We had a dancer, an actor, a musician and a person interested in the technical aspect of the theatre. It seemed as if we had struck gold. Not only would we be able to offer the individuals something, we also would be getting some talent that could add to the aesthetics and

creation of the show. In addition all four had agreed to be part of the research study. It was a dream come true. I wrote the following in my journal, after the interviews:

I think that we have something here. Four kids with talent, interest and what seems like compassion. This actually might work. Not that I ever doubted it, but I ask myself how can I keep them here if they don't want to even be in school with their peers. I'm a pretty uncool 27 year old, it sure won't be me. And working with the Centre folk can be very challenging sometimes. I think, though that what will keep them coming will be their artistic interests. Art will keep them here. And maybe each other. Though they are not friends at school. What might come out of this is connectedness via this shared experience. (Nicola, journal excerpt, December 12, 1999)

The fact that the apprentices were only acquaintances at school could have been an issue. In a similar project of integration it was noted that: "Each group should be a moulded solid group first and only after they have evolved into a special cohesiveness would they be ready to reach out to other groups for interaction" (Lais & Smith, pp. 11). I don't think that, initially, the apprentices were that connected to each other. There was an awkwardness that I noted in them. The environment was new and they didn't seem if they felt comfortable confiding in each other. The first part of the process had a lot to do with creating a solid group among the apprentices.

Participant Profiles:

As stated above, we began with four participants, two young woman and two young men. In the second month, attendance started to significantly drop off for the two females. Eventually, they faded out, in early March, without much explanation. I heard about it through their teacher. I did not pursue this very vehemently. I wanted this

project to be something that they were personally committed to, not obligated to. There was some speculation about the reason for their withdrawal. This included home pressures, academic pressure, discomfort working with the actors (issues about personal space and touching came up in their early journals), the tutor commitment and general disinterest.

"Chino":

Chino is a fourteen year old in his first year (grade 8) at the Outreach School. He has a great passion for music and playing the guitar. Mostly he is self taught. He wears nail polish, eye make up and baggy clothes. By the time he finished our show he had two new face piercings. He has a close relationship with a boy, his age, who is autistic. I asked him, in our second private interview, to talk a bit about life as a student at his school, how he came to be there and who he defines himself to be. Excerpts from the interview follow:

N. Basically I am just finding out who Chino and Jim are. I just want you to tell me a little bit about yourself, your background, how you came to be at your school, when you started....

C. Um, well the reason I started at, at my school was because, um, I had a lot of trouble in school and stuff like that, just, just grasping most of the things, I couldn't really, I was kind of a little bit... okay... A LOT behind my class and mostly with the math thing that was my worst um, the teacher would explain it and a lot of times I would be shy to raise up my hand to be the only one that didn't understand so we looked into a lot of schools and I went for the interview at this school and they really liked me and, yeah, so I got chosen to go there and it's been great so far.

N. So it wasn't because of behaviour that caused you to go there. It was difficulties with academics.

C. Yeah more or less it was just academics, um, yeah the behaviour was probably a little bit of it, but I was mostly just having trouble with the work and everything.

N. Okay, so you are at the alternative school now... would you say that there has definitely been an improvement or, in your school.

C. ABSOLUTELY. 100%. It's just, yeah, it's because I guess for me the thing is that the school that I was at before this school had huge classes and sometimes there were like 30 or even 40 people in the class and you know the teacher is not going to like, it's hard to focus on one kid when you have 30 or 40 kids yelling at you trying to help you. And now I am in a class with like 5 or 10 people sometimes and it's just easier for the teacher to focus on that one kid who is having trouble and that is why I think that it has made such a difference.

N. Tell me what's it like to be at your school - (smile) is it crazy?

C. Uh, it does get crazy sometimes 'cause, you know, we are all like, pretty stupid... I, I mean stupid not mentally but like in our behaviour we are pretty idiotic...

N. Different from other adolescents?

C. Absolutely. Definitely, well I am probably the most different one with my sense of humour you know, like I still find fart noises funny... they make me laugh so hard... farts are awesome. Yah, so it is crazy at times... but I try to, when it really gets down to what is serious I focus on my work... most of the time.
(Chino, interview, May 26, 2000)

Chino caused some stir during the 6 months. There was some frustration about his behaviour and his detachment. Some of the actors picked up on this and told me that they didn't think that he cared.

"Jim":

I don't think that Jim trusts me, and while I attempt to gain this through aloofness, friendship, offering support he never truly seems to open up to me. (Nicola, journal excerpt, May 20th, 2000)

My approach to finding out about Jim was a little different. He was less interested in talking about himself. In his application he shared some information. He is in Grade 9, taking grade 10 history. He is bilingual with a weakness in written French. He likes computers and taking photos for L.O.V.E. (the Leave Out Violence publication for youth). "...that helps out with my artistic ability and I'm pretty good in drama." He has a brother who is 15, and a 17 year old sister that does not live at home. His parents are

divorced. He's "not sexist". Jim had some previous experience with people with disabilities "well, at my summer camp (trailer park camp) groups with disabilities were there and I would stick around with them and help them out with their supper and clearing up and I would put on a dance for them on Saturdays." When asked how he thought that the apprenticeship program could help him, Jim responded: "It can give me some higher credits in school also I will be less shy to work with people."

N. How did you end up at your present school?

J. I went there because I didn't like school, and my guidance counsellor sent me there. But, I didn't want to go. My mum sent me.

N. What didn't you like about school, in general?

J. It was boring, the homework and I still don't like it.

N. Did you have low marks in your other school?

J. I didn't do my homework and my marks were low...

N. Has this new school helped you?

J. So-so. But now I am getting fed up. Two years there.

N. Why?

J. Because the distance - it's like an hour and a half just to get there. (Jim, interview, May 26, 2000)

He has been at The Outreach School for 2 years now and looking forward to next year at, what he termed as, "regular school". Jim started working at McDonalds, when I first met him. Sometimes, he would work 3 or 4 night shifts a week. It didn't put any pressure on his time he told me. What I discovered after a few months is that Jim is a doer and less of a talker or processor. He was incredibly dedicated to the project in a tangible way and less interested in discussing the existential meaning in all of it. This may be obvious in the information below as he tends not to appear as much as Chino. However, Jim's presence

was very strong. He was noticed by many people by production time, including our stage manager:

He excelled in the initiative, he's a good person, he will do good in any job that he does. I could not have made it without him. He would come over and say "did you do this?" I gave him the license to do that. He took the initiative to go beyond the call of duty. When he did things he impressed people. I think that Jim always had initiative and a healthy work ethic. (Stage Manager, interview, June 2, 2000)

Investigative Procedure and Methodology:

Despite the considerable amount of literature pertaining to drama therapy with people with disabilities, the majority of studies have been written from the dramatherapist's perspective. No studies were found which explored the meaning of the dramatic experience using the voice and experience of the participants themselves. (Bieber-Schut & Mathieson, 1997/98, p. 7)

This study is a collaborative, phenomenological investigation into the meaning ascribed to this experience. The investigative procedure was aimed at exploring the presence of meaning in the experience (Polkinghorne, 1989). Based loosely on phenomenological inquiry, I devised a method that would bring some meaning and clarity to this experience without risking the subjective meaning for the participants and witnesses. All data including observations by others and myself was given equal consideration. The investigation was intended to be a co-research with the participants. I asked open-ended questions and invited them to respond organically, through journaling, to the experience. Journals and interview excerpts are recorded exactly as they were received, with grammatical and spelling errors. This relationship between researcher and subject had potential to yield positive outcomes including the feeling that their voice was

being heard. One of the participants told me that he loved seeing his words in print when I gave him a copy of the transcriptions. Some of the information that we uncovered through the reflective nature of the interviews helped me to determine their roles in the project. Phenomenological research acknowledges the limitations that language has on the re-construction of experience. "It (verbal/written language) is not a duplication of what was seen. It is a culturally conventional system of signs that indicates or points toward the prereflective reality" (Polkinghorne, 19, pp. 45). The limitations of language and the closed nature of traditional research methodologies that "speak of 'validating' rather than 'discovering the meaning of'", has led me to chose this methodology (Mishler, 1986, pp. 112). Every research design has it's shortcomings. It is my belief that a phenomenological inquiry is most effective in producing a respectful joint construction of meaning about the experience of working on this special theatrical project.

Method of Inquiry:

The data was gathered through three interviews and journal entries by the boys, my own journals and reflections. This information was divided into the four stages of our process. For each stage I performed the following three steps:

- 1) From the journal excerpts and interviews conducted in each stage, I extrapolated and classified the predominant "influences" on the experience (these influences include people and situations).
- 2) Under each influence subheading I provided excerpts from the interviews and journal entries and organized them linearly from the beginning of the stage to the end.
- 3) For each influence I identified themes that arose.

In Chapter III the themes, theory and case material are integrated and discussed.

The Four Stages of Production Creation:

Description of the Each Stage Content and Time Lines:

I have broken the process of creation down to four stages. Stage one consists of the first four months of creative collaboration of the play concept. Stage two involves ongoing creation of script and rehearsal of subsequent script, movement and music. Stage three involves the formal production and finally, stage four is closure. The process is described, impressions and outcomes are provided; commentary is given on the structure relative to the performative style frame; and themes that emerged in the interviews are identified and discussed. Some themes repeat themselves in each stage.

Stage 1 - Creation of the Group & Creative Collaboration:

Dramatic Play and Scenework: January to Mid-April:

For stage one, the apprentices were expected to be at the Centre from 12:00 until 1:00 pm for improvisational group work. (This was the lunch hour and leisure time for the actors.) They left school after second period and missed a class in the afternoon. They were expected to either return to school to catch up or catch up at home. From 1:00 until 1:30 pm the apprentices were to spend half an hour 'debriefing' the session with myself, the director and the drama students. From 1:30 until 2:30 pm the apprentices were to work on homework with me or with the tutor (once this position had been secured).

In-Service:

After the winter break we invited the four apprentices to an in-service training. The in-service was aimed at raising consciousness and sensitivity with regards to the actors. The in-service agenda was to be: an orientation to the population (a general

description of the participants home lives and working environment), definition of Creative Arts Therapies, the Centre's rules on touch and personal space, sensitivity to non-verbal cues and concerns about isolation and the forming of cliques. In addition, scheduling and logistics and restatement of the expectations regarding behaviour and time commitment for the Apprenticeship Project. Mostly, the main expectation was that they would attend the rehearsals and inform us in the event that they were unable to be there.

It took us three attempts to do the in-service. On the third attempt only Chino showed up. He expressed, in subsequent interviews, that it disappointed him that his teacher did not attend as promised. We attempted to pass on the information covered in the in-service to the other apprentices in other meetings. There was never another structured in-service. In retrospect I wonder if this might have helped to gel the group a little more. It started out very fractured and didn't come together for a long time.

Description of Stage 1:

The whole group involved in the project at this stage, included the four apprentices, four University theatre students and a handful of volunteers (including two second year drama therapy students and first year art therapy students). Drama games, relaxation, imagination and concentration activities dominated the first month. Transition into improvisation and scenework around the story of Alice in Wonderland began in mid-February. From my perspective, I felt that this was a difficult and uncertain stage, specifically for the Apprenticeship Project. Group dynamic theorists cite the first stage of group formation as crucial to the group cohesion. Keeping the apprentices engaged and 'hooked' into the process was essential. My focus was on establishing a relationship with myself and the apprentices, and facilitating appropriate relationships and behaviour between the actors and the apprentices. At first, the apprentices were integrated into the

formal process of debriefing with the drama students and director. My feeling was that this helped to make them feel included in the process of creation. Beyond that they seemed uncomfortable about offering input. We stopped attending these meetings and instead went to the University cafeteria together and informally debriefed the rehearsals, until 2:30 pm. It was mostly a social time for us to chat and be together.

Sometimes all of the apprentices showed up for the lunch hour sessions, sometimes one showed and sometimes none at all. We introduced a tutor at the end of January. This proved to cause more disconnection than engagement. I didn't keep an exact tally on the attendance. I would suggest that the boys attended more than the girls in the first stage, and still they were only there approximately 70% of the time that they were expected. Rarely would one show up if the other wasn't there. The project, at this stage, felt very vulnerable.

While I felt that the apprentices were connecting to the actors, I did not sense that they were connected to the creative process. In an interview with the clinical co-ordinator she addressed this issue:

At the beginning, the creative process, from my viewpoint was quite slow. I wanted them to feel the point of what they were doing and see the idea of a play which is what they were hoping to do and they did spend a lot of time improvising and in small groups. I can't speak for them, whether they felt hooked into the process early on or saw it as an opportunity to get out of school.

(Nicola, journal excerpt, January 29, 2000)

In the material below I have extracted the dominant influences that affected the boy's experience. I chose not to discuss the two young woman's process. I do not negate their influence or experience. They had a lasting impact on the actor's, as they often asked

after them. Their dropping out impacted Jim, Chino and myself. At first it rocked the already weak foundation of the Apprenticeship Program. I was convinced that Jim and Chino would follow suit. I began making excuses for the boys when they were absent, as noted by our resident dance movement therapist. I have explored the impact of the young women on Jim, Chino and on myself, rather than looking at the impact of the experience on them.

Influences on the Apprentices and Identified Themes in Stage 1:

The Actors:

On Monday February 7th we watched "Alice in Wonderland" I thought that it was really interesting. I especially liked Tweedle Dee and Tweedle Dum. I couldn't help but notice that some people were really getting into the movie. I really like it when we all sit in the circle and play games and stuff. I love watching other people's gestures and listening to other people's interpretations of things.

Sometimes I see people who are just not getting along with anyone else, or who just don't want to participate. Like Sara for example, she never seems to want to participate or share her thoughts on anything. I wonder how we are going to get someone like Laura to stand in front of a crowd and act. (Chino, journal excerpt, February 8, 2000)

Today we had a group and told stories about times when we had been wrongfully accused. I really like the story told by one of the participants. Not so much that I thought that it was a good story, but mostly because I barely hear him speak, every once in a while I look at him and he looks up and smiles at me, it seems like he is sort of in his own world, I always wonder what kind of things are going on in

his head. There's something about him that I really like. (Chino, journal excerpt, March 1, 2000)

Okay, one thing that I really learned and I only really learned yesterday, rather Friday... was to that um... 'cause Friday was when we really started to do anything with the play when we started to do the dance and everything... to help them, one really big important thing, more than anything else is um, patience.

Because some of them, it would take them maybe a hundred tries before they get the hang of something and you really going to have to be able to stick in there.

(Chino, interview, May 1, 2000)

N. Is there a lot of diversity and difference at your school?

C. Well, not really (laugh) , they're pretty much all the same, they pretty much dress all the same and listen to rap music and it's all the same... pretty much. It's like... there's a Provigo near our school and I go there sometimes and the kids like call me names and shoot stuff at me when I am walking by and you know... I get stereotyped by people - they either think I worship the devil or I am a homosexual... which I do neither. You know? I'm not gay, I don't worship the devil. And most of the time when that kind of thing comes a long, because of my sense of humour I will kind of push it in their face, you know, like wink at them, lick my lips just to screw with their heads, which I think is the best attitude to have towards it then to let it get to you.

N. So can you relate then to the themes in Alice.... and maybe with what our folks here at the Centre go through?

C. Yah, definitely! When some of them tell stories about, you know, like one time I was on the bus and Gordon was on the bus and I sat down and started talking to him and like, everyone was just like... you can write in brackets "mouth open" (frank's mouth wide open)... yah, just everyone was staring at either one of us and yah, I can definitely relate to what they are going through. (Chino, interview, May 1, 2000)

I was really scared when some people started to do summer salts on the mat. A participant tried it and almost snapped his neck but I was really scared when another person tried it cause you dont expect that from her. But she maid it yipi!!

Then there's another person that when she keeps on saying stuff like just like someone got murdered. It's scary. (Jim, journal excerpt, May 8, 2000)

The idea was that we were going to give them that with our guys and knowing that the tendency was that they would look to them as "cool guys" and they could sort of emulate them. We didn't want them, necessarily, to emulate everything!! Like the purple nail polish and the lip rings, which was a concern about presentation. However, it didn't seem to be that those fears were happening. (Clinical Co-ordinator, interview, June 2, 2000)

Themes: Shared experience, relationships, difference, sensitivity, concern, interest, patience, accepting limits, wrongly accused, victimization, leadership.

The Tutor:

Okay fine. I tell you. People are getting on my nerves and I don't know why so concerned with my school work unfair. I doing fine at school. Anyways the point is that I like the tutor but I really don't feel that it is my place to be there so that is the bottom line. (Jim, journal excerpt, March 17, 2000)

The purpose of the tutor was to build in was their academic success. So just to say I had another idea shortly after we started and that was to offer them a tutor so that for the time that they would miss they would have a chance for one on two or something... for intensive work if they could use that opportunity. I would fund raise to find the money to pay for the tutor because the school couldn't do that. And that was considered another opportunity that we were offering them. However, that again was not seen as necessarily a positive thing, it was seen as another obligation on their part. For one of them, anyway, there was resistance. So we decided that they would spend their extra academic time at school - we

would offer them that. We wouldn't get into that extra dimension. Because then we were getting into an authority conflict with them and that's not what we wanted to do. We wanted this to be separate from telling them that they had to stay for the tutor etc... Then they would build up resentment. We wanted this process to be something that they were feeling positive about. (Clinical Co-ordinator, interview, June 2, 2000)

Themes: Good intentions, misconceptions about needs, choices and ownership over the process.

Dancing:

Today was great and I didn't feel so good at first cause I was tired and at the end I was full of energy. There's one thing that lost me and it's when we started to dance. I can't really dance and I felt like a bum. I happy that we didn't have to do another tableau. I am really anxious to meet bob and start working on the play. *Jim also drew two designs for the mushroom and the caterpillar set pieces.*

(Jim, journal excerpt, April 3)

Themes: Engagement in the creative process..

Group Work:

Today we had groups again. Me and Jim got to be in charge of our own group, it was cool. We told stories of situations where we weren't treated fairly. (Chino, journal excerpt, April 7th)

N. What would you like more of? Anything in particular...

C. Definitely more of the discussion that we used to have. Or when we would, like, tell our stories or whatever or we would go around and have to say our names with a motion... like "BOB" (makes movement) or something like that, that was really fun. I just like going around in the circle and everyone telling stories and stuff like that, that was good... (Chino, interview, May 1, 2000)

Themes: Community, ritual, responsibility, pleasure, shared experience, leadership.

Drugs:

The past five weeks have bin really great. But wen you accused us of smoking a joint and we didn't that got me mad but apart from that every thing is going according to my plans. So I can realy have fun and thats it that all. (Jim, journal excerpt, May 8)

Theme: Wrongly accused.

Attendance:

I showed up and no one was here. No one told me. (Interview with Chino, May 1, 2000).

Their reliability and showing up and really feeling engaged was an issue for the first several months really. Just to make sure that they were going to show up and we didn't have to chase them and we didn't have to find out where they were and why they didn't call. So these were things that their responsibility that we really worked on that you were following up on. To get them to take responsibility - that if they couldn't come that they should inform us and that they should realize that people were waiting for them and that they were important. (Clinical Co-ordinator, interview, June 2, 2000)

Themes: Reliability, communication meltdown.

Dropping out:

N. The next question is about the fact that the girls dropped out. Why you didn't drop out and what kept you here?

C. I'm not a quitter (loudly spoken). I was, just well, just I personally just don't know why they dropped out . But, personally, I just wanted to stick with it... 'cause I didn't get bored with it, I was having a lot of fun still - probably I have to be honest - the biggest thing that kept me with it was probably the guitar because that was the first thing that my teacher mentioned to me that got me interested - he was like you know "there is handicapped people that you are going to be working with, helping them learn their lines and stuff like that... and you might even have a

part in the music” and ‘BING’ it clicked in right away... (Chino, interview, May 31, 2000)

Two of the people didn’t feel engaged enough in the process and the family influence was there and their academics went down so there was pressure on them to withdraw from this. Which was a shame because it was seen probably by the families as an extracurricular thing that was dispensable - this is a real shame. I felt frustrated. We went to a lot of difficulty to integrate the kids in this process and they were withdrawn and they could have really benefited, it would have been much better. But, everybody points out that adolescents, well, they’re not that reliable. (Clinical Co-ordinator, interview, June 2, 2000)

Themes: Reliability, commitment, withdrawal, outside influence, engagement in the creative process.

Stage 2 - Rehearsals:

End of April to June 14th:

Is it simply about human relationships and bonds? And through that the stigmas start to dissolve? The relationship between Chino and Gordon (one of the actors) is significant just in itself I think. And what about this new friendship between Jim and Chino? (Nicola, journal excerpt, May 1, 2000)

This stage came with a change of venue. The rehearsals moved to the area outside of the theatre space. As well, the roles were assigned to the actors. These roles were chosen based on the actor's expressed relation or engagement with the specific roles. We continued to improvise scenes and stories from the original text. With the assigned roles there came more clarity and containment. The boys still remained out of the loop in this stage. They often expressed confusion about their involvement. Since the beginning part of this rehearsal phase still included creation of the script through improvisation, the

structure was loose. In this stage the boys were expected to engage in the improvisations and to assist with the actor's process. Their roles and participation organically emerged through out the two months. Their focus turned towards each other and the stage manager for the most part. Their initial interactions with the stage manager developed into an important mentoring relationship. While they interacted with the actors to some degree I sensed a distancing. In child development they call it "parallel play" (alone) vs. "co-operative interaction" (together) (Lais & Tom, 1988, pp. 10). Sometimes the actors and the apprentices were just two groups sharing a space. The apprentice's experience seemed, for the most part, very isolated from everybody including myself in this stage. It might have been the influence of several factors including the introduction of the sound system and amplifier and the theatre as a big new playground with cat walk and interesting places to explore. It might have also been the fact that while we attempted to include them as much as possible, their school and exam schedule meant that they could only attend in the afternoons on Mondays and Fridays. The actors were there all day on Mondays and Fridays. Thus others often filled in for them and their roles emerged, often, while they were absent. This proved to pose a problem simply of continuity.

Their relationship with the stage manger was a significant factor. He often stayed late with the boys, giving them access to the sound system and the theatre at the end of the day. I negotiated with the boys that the hour and a half of rehearsal was to be focused on that process and the time after that would be reserved for "screwing around" (as termed by them). The connection with the stage manager, that I did not have with the boys, was partially responsible for keeping them in the process. They related to him on a very human level and seemed to keep the boys coming to the rehearsals and engaged in the process. I was very appreciative of his presence. He helped to get Jim involved in the technical side

and encouraged Chino's music interest by bringing in his own guitar for him. Since my responsibility was increasing in my role as assistant director, I valued that they had made a close connection with the stage manager.

By the end of May it was established what parts the boys would be playing. They were to be card people, flowers and workers in the scenes where the play moved from the dream world to real life experience. One of the scenes included a rap dance. It took me a few rehearsals to realize that this was not "cool" and I offered to withdraw them. At first they told myself and the director that it was fine. When I saw their lack of interest and potentially sabotaging disengagement, I pulled them out. They were very relieved when I did this. From then on they seemed to be a little more honest about how they felt about things and trusted that I would advocate for them. Chino began to call me his "manager" or "agent". Other areas of discomfort included dressing the actors before the performances. In addition to acting parts Jim naturally magnetized towards the technical side of things. Chino was offered the opportunity to do a guitar solo. This was not practised until performance week. It was my hunch that he was not convinced that this was not actually going to happen.

The Support Group:

A support group was established for the actors in this stage. The facilitator of this group explained the aim of the group and described her experience with the two boys.

My goals for the support group were to offer the participants emotional and psychological support as they went through the process of this play. It existed to give them an opportunity to express and share their feelings (concerns, fears, anxieties, hopes, pride, etc.) about the whole thing. It was also a place where they

could have questions answered about the process and their role in it. Like any support group, I feel that the most therapeutic element was the sharing - realizing that they all had similar fears and concerns, and we were all in this together... At the beginning I felt it worked well because we got to meet every day and address things as they came up. I felt like it served an important communication function, which probably wasn't the aim. Before we had a script I think a lot of them had no idea what was expected of them, and it caused lots of anxiety. So it was a place to reassure that it will all become clear as we go. It was also useful as we shared our tips and ideas on how to deal with stage fright and other fears. We also spent some time discussing the positive impact of the play - how they were proud that they were going to show the public what they could do. It was also the only time in the early days that we were actually in the theatre, so it helped them grasp the "performing" element better, and to see the logistics of where they would enter, exit, etc. Again, this wasn't an aim of the group but it became a benefit. I know It was hoped that it would be a drama therapy support group. We always met at the end of the day and they had been doing drama all day, so we relied mainly on talking. I was hoping to use some drama techniques to deal with stage fright, and relaxation, etc., but we never got to it. We did do the "magic box" a couple of times (a closure technique). It was too bad the group had to stop as rehearsals got more intense, particularly in the final week. Although at that point I probably wouldn't have been a good leader, because I was so stressed myself. In terms of the boys: Chino joined us a few times, and Jim, maybe once or twice? I seem to remember Chino more... I was glad to have them in the group, as they had similar concerns as the participants, so I think it helped the participants to know that everybody gets nervous, etc. Chino was very candid about being nervous for his

guitar solo, and told us how once when performing he made a mistake, and how he recovered and carried on. The story had an impact with the group. Sorry I can't say much about Jim... I can't remember any particulars. But I do remember he always helped organize the chairs and put them away afterwards (sounds like nothing but I appreciated it!). They both had a very accepting attitude towards the participants which I think the participants picked up on. I really liked how they related with the people, very simple and genuine. (Support Group Facilitator, June 7, 2000)

The Schedule:

The apprentices were expected from 12:45 to 2:30 pm on Monday and Friday until the beginning of June. Initially we expected that they would eat their lunch with the actors, however they usually had eaten or ate elsewhere once lunch time arrived. (The actor's routine did not change. They were expected to be there from 9:30 am to 2:30 pm, Monday and Friday, as per their regular clinical year schedule. This was deliberate for the sake of consistency.) The actors started coming every day starting the week of June 5th. It was requested that the apprentices came as much as possible. They did not start coming on the other days until June 12th.

We were faced with the difficulty of working around the exam schedule. Sometimes the apprentices came for full days, sometimes for half days. I was notified four weeks before the performances that Jim was writing a government exam on one of the performance days. We were not certain how we would deal with this, except to have someone fill in for him. I was concerned that replacing him so easily may infer that he and his participation was not valued and thus he might drop out. Thankfully he was not required to write the exam after all, and we did not have to face this issue.

Influences on the Apprentices and Identified Themes in Stage 2:

The Tights:

When we first started working on the show, I asked the boys about acting. They collectively told me that they would do it, but only if they didn't have to wear tights. It became a bit of a joke. As their roles emerged I began to wonder if the possibility of them wearing tights was actually going to happen. The director, with their consent, put them in the role of flowers and card people. When the costume designer asked them to try on their costumes, I came in to the change room after the fact. They were standing in the men's bathroom wearing brown leggings and a formfitting shirt. The definition of tights was brought to my attention when I claimed that the brown leggings were not in fact tights. (Tights *pl.n.*: one-piece clinging garment covering the body from the waist to the feet). The tights raised a lot of issues. For a time it seemed to be the main cause of their anxiety and thus of mine.

Themes: Issues of accommodation, flexibility, aesthetics vs. comfort.

Anticipation of the Performances:

I'm starting to get clearer on what I will be doing in the play. I know most of my lines and parts. The part that I'm most interested in however, is playing the guitar and having a sort of "sword fight" with the other guitarist. I'm mostly interested in the musical part of the play. (Chino, journal excerpt, June 8th)

Themes: Engagement in the creative process, focus.

Responsibility to the Show:

C. It's just a great feeling to know that you are helping out. Helping people. I'm not getting paid to do this. It's just a great feeling, you know? To be involved.

N. So you are just driven by that?

C. Well, can I be completely honest now? The reason that I started was two things: it was the music and that our teacher said that I would get a lot of extra credit. And I don't know if he has forgotten about that or what cause I haven't seen it. So now my goal has completely changed. It's not just to get marks and get out of here. It's completely changed. (Chino, interview, June 13, 2000)

Themes: Helping feels good.

The Actors:

N. Have your "opinions" changed towards people with disabilities since working on the play? What was your opinion about people who live with special needs?

C. No, it's always been the same. I learned to communicate with them more. It hasn't changed that much.

N. So you would chat with people on the bus that seemed different....

C. Yeah, I can just communicate better now. I'm just a lot more comfortable communicating with them and stuff like that. I was with Gordon the other day at the restaurant. I went with him. We were there with two other guys (actors). I asked them all if people ever stared at them a lot. I always talk to Gordon whenever I take the bus with him and people are like staring at us and stuff like that. And I asked them if people stare at them a lot and they said "yeah, people always stare at us" and I told them that I could relate to that, people always stare at me and say "ew, what's that??" (nose ring). So I told them just to ignore them and think a dirty word in your head about that person because that's what I always do. (Chino, interview, June 13, 2000)

N. It sounds like you are giving some advice and teaching some skills...

C. Yeah, it's giving and getting. Both sides. They give and they get.

N. What do you feel that you are getting back?

C. It's a great feeling to leave and know that I put in something. You know what I mean?

N. Supporting etc...?

C. Exactly. Like they were waiting for their train to come and I had to get going 'cause I had to get home for a certain time so I said "okay guys I'll let you go now". Gordon said "Why? Why do you have to go?" And I said "I gotta be home" and they said "just wait with us until the train comes" It makes me feel wanted.

N. It sounds to me like one of the best parts of this has been the relationships.

C. Yeah cause I don't feel wanted anywhere else...

N. Really?

C. No, just joking.

N. What about working on the play? Does that feel secondary to meeting the people.

C. Yeah. (laugh) It really does. I go here to meet them and talk to them. Obviously I am going to help with the play, 'cause that is why I am here, but number one for me is just seeing them... (Chino, interview, June 13, 2000)

N. How do you define your relationship with the woman that you paint roses with in the second act? She doesn't talk very much...

C. Yeah, that's the thing. We do the painting the roses part together and one day I just decided to sit down and talk to her. She was a bit shy at first and then after I did it every day I could tell that she was beginning to get comfortable with me. (Chino, interview, June 13, 2000)

N. Has your impression changed about people who live with disabilities?

J. It's been the same the whole time because I never laughed at them. I didn't treat them different. (Jim, interview, June 13, 2000)

Themes: Relationships, helping, caring, advising, learning, adaptation, communication.

Dressing the Male Actors Before the Show:

J. I don't want to dress people.

N. Okay.

J. I just despise dressing people. I just despise dressing myself.

N. Does it make you uncomfortable?

J. Yeah, uncomfortable to the max.

N. Okay we will take you out of it.

J. Thank you. (Jim, interview, June 13, 2000)

C. Well I guess the worst part was when I first started dressing people and when we first did the show all together for a practice, right through with no audience. Because I would get someone dressed and I would bring them out and then someone would say bring them back stage and then I would have to bring them back and it was just a real big problem. (Chino, interview, June 13, 2000)

Themes: Communication of discomfort, trust.

Stage 3 - Performances:

June 15th, 16th, 17th & 18th:

On the morning of our first show there was still a great deal of uncertainty about a few of the scenes and small details like the curtain call. These were things that had to be done an hour and a half before the audience entered into the auditorium. It was a stressful time for me and while I did try to keep an eye on the boys and keep them informed and involved, my time was limited to my responsibility as Assistant Director. This is what impressed me most about the boys. They took the initiative to either spend time with the actors or work on the technical details. I trusted them. There were a few times that I wondered if maybe I trusted them too much as they did create a stir with playing with the smoke machine and getting on the headsets during the production. But, I would have been suggesting that I didn't trust them if I sat down and briefed them on all of the stuff that they shouldn't do. Besides some of the best lessons learned are through natural consequences. Chino got an earful, literally, when he fooled around on the headsets and it never happened again... I wanted to ring their necks a few times, admittedly. I felt a deep responsibility for them and to them. (Nicola, journal excerpt, June 17, 2000)

In retrospect I was having a parallel process to the boys. A theme that I extracted from our interviews and our casual conversations was the issue of communication. Communication became a big issue come show time, and the boys expressed this as being a major frustration. They were both told to do things and then told the opposite by others. I felt this too and it was very irritating. I can imagine that it was just as much, if not more for the actors. This could be a combination of many factors including a problem of organization around stage management and direction.

At the end of all four shows, we had a question/answer period or a presentation of some sort with the audience. The boys flitted on and off the stage for these long periods of time. I looked over at Jim at the last show and saw him sitting quietly on a stage piece with his arm placed gently on the shoulder of our narrator. I had not seen much physical contact between Jim and the actors up to this point. I felt, in this moment, a deep sense of joy and happiness.

The Schedule:

The boys were expected to come two hours before each performance for warm ups, make-up and dressing. In addition to their role responsibilities on stage, the boys assisted backstage by bringing actors on stage. Jim assisted the stage manager, and Chino spent most of his free time sitting and talking with the actors in the back or running carefree around backstage. At this point I simply had to have faith that they would fulfil their obligations. There was no one available to guide them or to tell them what they had to do. I prayed that everything was clear. Jim brought his brother Dave for the first performance, offering his services as a runner. We were in desperate need and incredibly grateful to Jim for taking initiative. Jim's participation had exceeded any of my expectations at this point. He had stayed at the theatre past 8 pm most nights assisting the stage manager, often heading off to McDonalds for a shift then returning the next day. I heard him mention it only once, and this was because he had gone to a 11 pm shift after our gala performance; returned the next day for a noon performance and then back to McDonalds that night. His dedication and work ethic impressed everybody who was involved.

Influences on the Apprentices and Identified Themes in Stage 3

Audience:

i) Chino's Parents:

Chino's parents and Aunt were there on the Gala night. I asked them to fill out a questionnaire the day after the performance. The response was very positive. When I first met Chino's father he suggested that Chino's shyness may impede his ability to get up on stage and perform in front of an audience. I respected this and tried to give Chino many opportunities to withdraw from the solo part, but he stayed with it. I sent Chino home with a questionnaire after the last show. The first question (1) I asked was what it was like to see him on stage. Secondly (2), I asked them to comment on his interaction with our special actors:

1) It was wonderful! He loved being on stage and it showed. He seemed very natural. He is in his element on stage - it was beautiful to see him prompting Susan (the actor that he paints the red roses with), and dancing with her. It was obvious that he loved it!

2) It was gratifying. We are very proud of him. He has never been the type of person to ridicule handicapped folk, but it did his heart good to get to know, on a personal level, people who are challenged every day. (Chino's parents, Parent Questionnaire, June 18, 2000)

N. What about you, Chino? Did you feel as if you accomplished your goals?

C. Definitely. After the next morning after the show, on Sunday I was talking to my parents and they told me what a great job that everyone was doing and that made me feel good. (Chino, interview, June 19, 2000)

Theme: Self-esteem, pride, unconditional acceptance, relationships, belief in the innate goodness of the project.

(ii) Jim's Brother:

On the day of the first show Jim's younger brother arrived to watch the show. Jim, on his own initiative, introduced him to the stage manager and asked if he could help out. The stage manager jumped at this asking for four days of commitment from the 15 year old, to which he agreed. Thus we had a new runner. I asked Dave about his involvement

and impression, after the fact. What I learned was that he had no idea that Jim was working on a theatre production. He did, however, know that he was working with “handicapped people”. He immediately fell into the hectic role of runner with ease and adolescent curiosity. Buttons were pushed, smoke machines tried and questions asked. Not to mention raising the stress levels of technical staff with the introduction of a neophyte into a very structured and precise position. I was incredibly impressed by the young man’s sudden commitment to the show and acceptance of his responsibilities. Since he was the only family member or friend witnessing Jim's involvement, as unconventional as it was from the wings, I asked him how he responded to Jim’s participation. He told me that he wasn’t surprised that Jim was working with the actors as he is not one to judge based on appearance.

D. I think that it is something that he would probably do.

N. Why?

D. Because he’s not the kind of person who cares how somebody looks. (Dave, interview, June 21, 2000)

Jim also told me the same thing. In some ways I wondered if I was unfairly assuming that the boys would be judgmental to people with differences. My own over identification potentially contaminated their indifference to the actor’s disabilities.

Themes: Indifference, pride.

Teacher:

A teacher that had known Jim and his brother Dave, at their old school where they had both been kicked out of, happened to be at the performance. She approached the producer at the end of the show expressing a great deal of excitement about what she

perceived as "progress" in the two boys. She expressed that she was "incredibly impressed" by their involvement and by this project.

Themes: Pride, belief in the innate goodness of the project.

Absent Audience:

1) Dave and Jim's Mother:

Unfortunately, I was unable to ask Jim about his mom's absence at the show, after the fact. However we had discussed it, casually, previous to the shows. He told me that it was too far for her to come and she would probably be mad that she had to make the trip. Jim did not express a great deal of disappointment about this. His brother concurred in an interview that I had with him the day after the performances ended.

N. Would you like to have had her there?

D. It would have been something different.

N. But it's not important...

D. It's not that it's not important. It's just that my mum is not the type of person that would come. Even if we had school parent/teacher interviews she's not the kind of person that likes to go there. It's 'cause she already knows what they are going to say. (Dave, interview, June 19, 2000)

I imposed my bias that having their mum there was important. However, it is not her 'normal' behaviour for her to be there, therefore it was not expected and that makes it okay. Perhaps having Jim's brother there and involved was enough. Jim struck me as someone that does not do things for accolades or recognition but rather because he is committed to doing it and to doing it right. Their mum had reported to Jim's teacher ("head teacher") that she was incredibly proud and pleased with both of her son's involvement.

2) Head Teacher:

The apprentices' teacher vowed to attend one of the shows. He did not attend due to other commitments, which he explained to me three days later when I called him. Chino and I shared some disappointment about this in our final interview.

F. I kind of feel like he, um, he sort of... didn't really... like, care too much. I don't want to... maybe he did, I don't want to... I don't know... it's just that he told me a thousand times where he was going to be what he was going to be doing and he was never there once like he told me that he would be at the Centre the first time that I ever came here, like after the interview and he wasn't and then he said he was sorry that he missed it and then he wasn't there again, he even told me that he was going to bring the whole staff...

N. So you're disappointed?

C. Yeah, a little bit. And Jim also told me that ever since he got Jim into the Concordia thing he has been ignoring Jim a bit more... like "we're done with you, go to see them..." But I don't care too much 'cause I like here way more than I like school... so it worked out for both us....

N. I'm disappointed too.

C. Did he call or anything?

N. No.

C. 'Cause if I was going to do something like that I would have called and said at least why I wasn't going to be there... (Chino, interview, June 20, 2000)

Themes: Disappointment, (dis)trust.

Technical Assistance:

1) Stage Manager's Perspective:

Chino pushed the boundaries and started to bug me - but he's young. At times it felt like a mosquito buzzing in the ear, but I just acknowledged it by picking back. He was more reflective than a lot of adolescents. Their "not caring" attitude was refreshing. They were mostly just good to work with. They were an asset in real tangible ways - artistic and technical. Jim was exceptional technically. He used initiative during the show's run, pointing out things that I had forgotten and fixing

things that I couldn't. I trusted him. (Stage Manager, paraphrased from phone interview, June 20, 2000)

Themes: Reliability, creativity, initiative, irritating, sensitivity, trust

On Stage:

N. Did you feel fear? Stage fright?

C. For some reason I was really comfortable up there. I don't know why. Probably the guitar part that was a part where I had a bit of stage fright because that was part that I was afraid that I might screw up big time. But, I kind of reminded myself that we were improvising completely on that so if I screw up I could make it look like I wanted to screw up or I could just go into something else, so I was okay.

N. The guitar part that was...

C. Number one. That was the big thing.

N. And did you feel that you got everything that you wanted from that?

C. Yeah, totally.

N. So what was it like when you were playing the guitar? What were your feelings other than fear? Pride? or...

C. Well, it's a really great feeling and I have experienced it before when you are making music and you can see other people like nodding their heads and really getting into it. It's a really great feeling when you know that you are giving them pleasure. (Chino, interview, June 19, 2000)

N. Do you feel that your personal goals were achieved?

C. Yeah, you mean everything that I wanted to do? Yeah, it was all achieved.

N. And you want to do it again?

C. Yeah for sure. I had such a great experience. When I first started I was, like I said before, I was having doubts I wasn't sure if this was going the way I wanted and then as we started to get into it it was like the more we got into it, it was great, because the more we got into it the better it got like every day was better than the day before. Yeah, so that's why I want to do it again.

N. What was it that got better? Why?

C. I don't know. I guess maybe because I got more comfortable with the people and I started to know them better and I could actually talk to them. (Chino, interview, June 19, 2000)

N. Are you glad that it's done? Or not?

C. It's weird. Like I said, when I first started I kind of didn't like it at first, I thought it was kind boring but then every day as it started to move on I started to like it more and more. And there was a part where I had to keep lugging the guitar around to Bob's (friend), to my house and to here. I kind of wanted to leave the guitar part out just for the fact that I was tired of lugging it around everywhere. And then after when I finally got it to Concordia and played it at every show. I didn't want it to stop I wanted there to be more shows because I was having so much fun. (Chino, interview, June 19, 2000)

Themes: Acceptance, inclusion, pride, inspiration.

Stage 4 - Closure:

June 19th Cast Party:

The closure included the morning of rituals and activities reviewing the journey, saying goodbye to the characters and acknowledging things learned. In the afternoon we moved to the Centre for food and drinks. Chino was there and engaged. The night before, when I called him he asked if he "had" to be there. He said he would be there after I told him that he didn't "have" to be anywhere. He related to the actors through humour and lightness, as he has throughout the process. A few of the actors reached out to him for support and consolation. He was gentle and supportive at the same time as he announced that he was surprised that he was wanted. I hoped he did not feel that he had not been appreciated throughout the process.

I wondered, during the morning activities, if I had neglected to emotionally support Chino and Jim throughout the show's run. At times they both had a great deal of responsibility that went unnoticed. In some ways I think the production crew and myself took it for granted that they were capable of heavy tasks simply because they were young "able" bodies. One of the costume designers came frantically to me during the first show and said "What's wrong with Chino?? Does he have problems?" I was taken aback by this. I didn't want to make excuses for Chino. I

started by saying that Chino was 14 years old. She was aghast and this seemed to put things into perspective. Maybe I didn't give the production crew enough information in order to establish reasonable expectations. (Nicola, journal excerpt, June 19, 2000)

We started the morning with an active and fun game, then shifted towards review. The first activity was a song written by our music director (a music therapist). It was an opportunity to talk about the feelings associated with the show being over. The emotional atmosphere among the actors was intense. Chino asked "what's that word when you do something after you really wanted to do it?". Somebody offered 'accomplishment'. He said "Yah, I feel accomplished". For the rest of the closure we looked at what was learned and what we will miss. Chino joked about his costume having an effect on his performance. His affect was mostly light and jovial during the process.

Jim did not show up for closure. Two weeks before our Cast Party I presented the boys with the final schedule. Jim quickly surveyed it and said "Oh, Monday we have to be there all day?". I replied that it was the cast party and that by all means he had every right to choose not to attend but, that he would be missed if he didn't. He grumbled and walked away. At the risk of sounding paternalistic, I called after him "I think that it is important that you do plan on coming." He had worked a late shift at McDonalds right after he left the theatre at 11:00 pm, the night before. Dave was there at 12:30 pm for the party. I did not have the opportunity to speak to Jim about his involvement or about the end of the show.

Influences on the Apprentices and Identified Themes in Stage 4:

Closure:

I explained why we have closure to Chino. He expressed more connection with the significance of saying goodbye to each other rather than of deroling and saying farewell to the characters that he played.

N. So do you feel closed with this process? You might not see the actors ever again. Do you realize that?

C. I'm going to miss Gordon. That guy kicks ass.

N. But you're okay with that.

C. Yeah, I'm okay.

N. That's life, hey?

C. Yeah, you have to move on.

N. And do you feel that this morning was necessary for yourself, to say goodbye to the play.

C. Yeah, to say goodbye to everyone. I think about, like, the times that I used to spend time with them like when I used to go to the restaurant with Gordon after each session Yeah, that was fun and stuff. I will miss them. I think of those memories I have and that will let me go through. (Chino, interview, June 19, 2000)

Themes: Relationships, moving on, inspiration, integration of new skills.

Chapter 3:

Introduction to the Method of Discussion:

In this section I have attempted to tease out the effects of the experience. Further meaning and clarity is ascribed to the data presented in the previous chapter. The themes that I discussed are focused relative to the effect on the apprentice's experience, rather than as general themes. I have revisited the predominant themes and influences in relation to the theory presented in the first chapter. At the end of the chapter, I have identified the tangible and theoretical benefits that I perceive as resulting from this experience.

Predominant Themes and Influences - Revisited and Discussed:

The Performative Style Drama Therapy Frame:

Framing the experience attempts to answer the questions: "What is going to happen?", "How is it going to happen?" and "What is expected?". Framing attempts to clarify the experience. "Focusing" or directing, narrowing and clarify expectations etc... Framing also builds excitement, expectation and elements that propel the process. (Schoel, 1996, pp. 90)

It was difficult to truly 'frame' the experience for the boys as our only 'frame' was performative style drama therapy. Until the beginning of June, this existed as a very loose structure. Knowing where the boys would 'fit in' was uncertain. Essentially I had to gain their trust that all of this commitment would evolve into something worth while, even though half the time I was not completely certain where we were going either! It was difficult to sometimes build up the momentum needed to keep the project afloat. I gave the apprentices a copy of Winds of OZ to watch as an example of what 'could' happen. The nature of performative style drama therapy is such that the product comes to consummation via an elaborate series of stages. It's not as if we could visualize the end

result in order to have something to work towards. The 'end result' was still muddy at the end of March as we were still very deep in the process

I appreciate the fact that Jim and Chino's blind commitment was in itself an accomplishment. Jim did often ask what was going on, but stayed faithful, as demonstrated purely in the fact that he didn't drop out. Their attendance improved as they were given more responsibility and focus, it seemed. The very nature of the theatre frame implies that every role, big or small, is essential to the process. I think that this was understood by the apprentices as demonstrated in the rehearsal stage where themes of reliability, engagement, trust and focus emerged.

Only if we have trust can we go on a journey, and we can only go as far as our trust will let us for when we feel unsafe, we stop. (Casdagli, 1999, pp. 41)

Personal Relationships:

The predominant theme in Chino's reflections was his relationships with the actors. He recognized and discussed subtle and profound relationships as being equally important. He valued his relationship with Gordon, based on teasing and playfulness, and his almost non-verbal relationship with the woman that he assisted to paint the roses red, the same. "Communicating is a defining feature of relationships... good communication requires trust... it's about more than just spoken language" (Casdagli, 1999, pp. 100). Relating to others is a skill, I believe. I believe that Chino and Jim's relationship skills improved within this experience. They demonstrated patience, empathy and inclusion more and more as the process progressed. I witnessed two very shy young men, in January. When I looked over and saw Jim's arm around the narrator it struck me that this experience had profoundly affected Jim's ability to relate to people.

Audience:

The director of the Welsh theatre company/training centre called "Arts for Disabled People", Peter Oliver, said: "You immediately put the audience into a position of patronizing..." his wife and co-producer agrees "Anathema to me would be an audience that says "that was good... considering"" (Hood, *Theatrum*, 1992, pp. 16).

According to Foucault, we live in a society where evaluation or normalizing judgement has replaced judiciary and torture as a primary mechanism of social control: This is a society of the ever present "gaze" (White, 1990, pp. 24). Audience is the extreme form of the gaze. The theme of feeling judged emerged in some of Chino's commentary. He shared the experience, in relation to the themes in "And Alice Dreams", of being ostracized for looking different. This similar experience of suffering was something that Chino felt comfortable discussing and offering advice to the actors from his lived experience of it.

Self-Esteem:

Learning directly connects with self-esteem. Authentic learning, which happens as a result of interest and trust raises self-esteem, and that change can cause real intelligence in taking care of one's self practically and experientially. Practice in taking learning risks and in improving relationship skills with others can lessen fear of failure and boost confidence so that when mistakes are inevitably made or things don't work out, they can be tolerated by the perfectionists amongst the participants... (Casdagli, 1999, pp. 119)

When I first met the head teacher of the referral school he said to me: "anything that works on self-esteem and I'm in!". Self-esteem makes us survivors and self-esteem, according to a lot of literature, does not often exist in adolescents who find themselves weak academically. Is this the cause or the effect, one may ask? Self-esteem involves the

inner eye and how we see ourselves, or as discussed above: the gaze. We have internal censors or critics that in adolescence seem most fragile. Alice, in our adaptation, goes through a rite of passage. We can interpret it as analogous to the rite of passage of adolescence. The rite of passage is defined by White as:

...phases of: transition; separation phase (from one status, aspect of identity, or role that is determined to be no longer viable for the person concerned), betwixt & between phase (characterized by some discomfort, confusion, disorganization, and perhaps heightened expectations for the future) and reincorporation phase (characterized by the arrival at some new status that specifies new responsibilities and privileges for the person concerned). (White, 1990, p. 6)

Lost in a world unknown, facing negative influence and exclusion, mixed messages, and finally (and ideally) Alice reaches independent self-actualization as expressed in her singing her solo "I Can". She combats the judgement of her 'audience' (the characters in the story) and emerges independent and confident.

"Sometimes when our self-esteem is low or delicate, which it can be when we are confronted by the new and the unknown, it is difficult to own and not to feel owned by a process. Owning the material is a form of empowerment" (Casdagli, 1999, pp. 32). I am unable to evaluate whether we did actually "improve" the boy's self-esteem. I unpack the concept of self-esteem as consisting of feeling good about oneself and accepting one's unique strengths and weaknesses and relate to the apprentices. That most certainly did occur in both of the young men. When people "nodded their heads" and got into Chino's guitar solo it made him feel good about himself. He owned that part of the show. He wanted the shows to keep going, he told me. Jim stayed late at the theatre whenever he was not working. During that time he was given positive feedback on his contribution and

about his initiative. He owned the role of technical assistant. The very fact that he offered his technical assistance indicates to me that he had become aware of his unique strength. I can only assume that it felt good if he kept volunteering.

Closure:

The cast party that was to follow our production was brought up by the actors during the rehearsals, sometimes more often than the production itself. Including by the apprentices. I wonder if it felt like the reward. Closure is the final stage of the drama therapy process. It can be the most difficult phase for the participants and for the group leader. The termination must be treated with great sensitivity. Termination may bring up old experience of ending as well as purely relate to the fact that the unique group is dissolving. It is important to listen to the wisdom of Renee Emunah, in her chapter entitled Post-performance depression and the integration of success.

The theatrical performance is a climatic event, bringing forth a tremendous sense of release, exhilaration, and fulfilment. But treading on the heels on this intense rush of excitement is a feeling of emptiness... the transitory nature of performance accentuates the feeling of emptiness; when a performance ends, the product ceases to exist, etherealizing the actor's sense of accomplishment. Moreover, the collaboration process inherent in theatre, fostering intimacy and emotional bonding with one's fellow actors makes the loss at the conclusion of performance all the more formidable. (Emunah, 1994, pp. 295)

This stage of performative style drama therapy is considered, by Emunah, to require the dramatherapist's utmost attentiveness. The focus is on closure, celebration and review. As well, it is a time to assist the individual to integrate the experience into day to day life (Emunah, 1994). It is a time where we celebrate the journey of the performance, whilst

acknowledging the difficult moments. It is also a time of launching autonomously into our separate worlds with the new knowledge and experience held closely to our hearts. I can not assume how little or how much of an impact the apprentices, themselves, had on the participants and vice versa. Experiences and events in adolescence seem to come and go at a rapid pace. Often the luxury of time does not exist in order for the reflection process to occur. "A thought, idea, or connection may lie dormant for a long time before it is needed or understood by the participant" (Casagadali., pp. 119). Perhaps, at that time, the closure was more important for the Centre participants since it signifies more than just the end of the play, but also the end of their two year cycle at the Centre. Jim and Chino were a part of this cycle for only six months.

There were several layers to our particular closure. I was saying goodbye to the apprentices and to the actors. These were two groups that I had experienced intense and very disparate experiences with. This will be a challenge in terms of the apprentices. How do I continue to keep it alive and magical for them? It's a matter of having faith that it is just as important for them. The Centre participants will continue to keep a connection through the 'graduate program' which essentially serves as a constant reminder of the glory of the production. I must try to help build bridge between the boys and the Centre.

Communication:

The crux of the argument for the positive value that this project brings to the apprentices comes from Lemke, an educational theorist, as stated:

Education does not do enough to empower people to place in their hands tools they can use for their own purposes and the skills to use them" The skill of choosing strategies for expressing relationships, within the context of conversational interactions, is characteristic of the theatre communication experience. Trying out

alternative ways to communicate and to make choices is the primary purpose of the theatre rehearsal process. (Anderson, 1992, pp. 133)

Chino and Jim often expressed their frustration about the lack of communication during the rehearsal period and the actual performances. This is interesting since theatre is cited as an experience where one may discover new ways of communicating. The apprentice's communication skills with the actors seemed to become more complex, including bringing gifts, sharing music and non-verbal communication. However, basic communication with the apprentices suffered. While they noticed a lack of communication coming to them, not once did they call me to tell me that they would be absent, even after I asked them every time they left. Is this just part of the state of being adolescent? Or were they simply behaving like their role models? Looking beyond oneself is sometimes difficult in the chaos of every day's change and challenge, perhaps. Communication may be the only thing that actually keeps a young person grounded in that moment.

Identification of Benefits:

The benefits that I have discussed are subjective and based on my own values. These range from tangible to existential benefits. One of the exciting practical benefits as identified by Jim is future opportunity. The stage manager offered Jim a contract job cleaning up the theatre, over the summer. It was felt, and communicated to Jim, by the stage manager that he would reap a lot of benefits from this process. Both Chino and Jim expressed an interest in theatre for the future. Chino was interested in the role of music director and Jim in lighting designer. This may not have been an option if we hadn't exposed them to the process of theatre.

Both boys agreed that the University setting had very little impact on them. In fact Jim told me that, now that he had seen students working so hard and never going out,

there was no way that he would attend University. On the other hand, Dave (Jim's brother) mentioned to me that now that he had seen the campus he was going to definitely go there when he graduated. Chino was indifferent to this impact. Perhaps this aim was an unrealistic ideal.

Chino and Jim both expressed pride in their participation on some level. Whether it be in helping the actors or in their individual contributions. I interpret pride as being analogous to self-esteem. Chino told me that all of his friend's mum's were proud of his involvement.

A very tangible benefit is the friendship that emerged between Chino and Jim. Chino had expressed to me that he related to very few people his own age. Jim struck me as quite autonomous as well. This friendship built out of this shared positive experience strikes me as being very solid.

Conclusion:

I identified the most tangible benefits as emerging out of the formal performance stage of the project. This is a subjective observation. Chino did state that he wasn't there primarily for the play, but more for the performance. It is the performance aspect that brought and held this group together but it is the relationships and the process, I believe, that kept it alive and fixed. There was a community-connectedness that I saw exemplified and solidified with the hugs, handshakes and shared laughter at the end of the whole process.

The trust built in previous work together gives us permission to work with the clients on this process. This show is not about deficiencies or limitations, but about the human condition. The actors do live an extreme experience of life. We

all ask ourselves “who are we”, we’ve all been left out and we all have had dreams to be or do something else. (Nicola, journal excerpt, April 27)

Conclusion:

Two months have passed since the project came to an abrupt close. The six months dedicated to the collaboration, creation and production of “And Alice Dreams” has left me with a deep sense of accomplishment. Accomplishment about the end result and accomplishment about the work and creativity offered by the apprentices. A feeling that I hope that the apprentices share with me.

It was mostly the relationships formed between the actors and apprentices that emerged as the most significant element for the apprentices. With the relationships set as a solid framework the 'production goal' was feasible. On the one hand I was not surprised by the connections forming between the actors and apprentices, and on the other I was surprised by the intensity. Chino and Jim made it very clear that they were deeply effected by their relationship with some of the individuals. They were effected on many levels. When Chino spoke of his relationships I perceived him having many roles with the actors. These roles included as friend, as advocate, as an assistant to their physical disability needs, as a nurturer, as a voice, as a motivator and as a general support. A complicated series of roles that he comfortably and unconsciously played and juggled. Through playing these integral parts in the actor's lives, Chino discovered and enhanced his pre-existing interpersonal skills. It was through these interactions and his leadership role with the actors, that I feel that Chino's self-esteem and confidence was boosted. There is no quantitative data that proves an increase. I rely on my subjective observations and on Chino's interview excerpts to communicate this 'change'.

I witnessed, as well, therapeutic effect of performative style drama therapy process, itself, on the apprentices. The engagement in the actual creative process and product increased over time. Chino showed a great deal of ownership and engagement on

stage, when performing his guitar solo. While he did express a great deal of shyness, he did state that he didn't want the show to end. I believe that in Chino's case the performance was the most beneficial. This is where he shined and blossomed. The audience validated Chino's talent, abilities and contribution.

Conversely, Jim seemed to be more engaged in the process of creation. Creating sets, assisting with lighting design and with stage management duties in preparation were the elements that seemed to keep Jim coming back. The actual performances themselves seemed to hold less appeal for Jim than they did for Chino. He complained about having to work on the shows. The fact that he did not invite his mother may be an indication about his disinterest.

It is my belief that this project, was a 'success'. We achieved our goals and then some. In this case performative style drama therapy created a community atmosphere that paved the way for meaningful relationships, opportunities to succeed both creatively and socially, and offered the apprentices opportunity to explore their inner potential. Our project also served as a path to open up the dialogue desperately needed to discuss the misconceptions about "at-riskness" and "handicapped people".

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Annex 1: Summary Protocol Form

1. **An Experiment in Integration: Working with "Youth At-Risk" in Performative Style Drama therapy at The Centre for the Arts in Human Development (Concordia University).**
2. **The Centre for the Arts in Human Development in alliance with Concordia University's Creative Arts Therapies Program created and supports this pilot project.**
3. **The primary participants in this study are two adolescents from XXXXXXXX School. XXXXXXXX school caters to students with special academic needs. The apprentices (as they will be called) are between the ages of 14 and 17 years old in grades 8 and 9.**

The participants at the Centre for the Arts in Human Development are adults with Developmental and Intellectual Handicaps. The Centre offers day treatment in the Creative Arts Therapies to the participants, two full days a week. The participants live in group homes, foster homes and family homes through out Montreal. This study focuses on the apprentice's experience of working with the Centre participants, on a formal public theatrical performance.

4. **The apprentices were recruited, for the "Creative Arts Apprenticeship Program" at XXXXXXXX High School. When the students were interviewed for positions in this project they were informed that I was interested in doing a research project on their experience. Please see Consent Form. They were verbally informed that they were not obligated to participate in this project and that refusing to consent would not result in their removal from the program.**
5. **i) Each apprentice has been given advance warning about what will be required of them, should they chose to participate in the research portion of the Apprenticeship Program. The research activity is very sensitive and unintrusive. The apprentices will be working as co-researchers on this project. As part of the requirements of a school related project, they are required to keep a journal documenting their experience. I have requested that I may read this when they are completely comfortable doing so. I have offered the option to write "Please do not read" on the top of the page when they wish it to remain confidential, as noted in the attached Consent Form. In the consent form I have indicated that the data gathering portion of the project will not change the schedule that they have already agreed to for the program itself.**
 - ii) **The issue of cultural differences is present. Each apprentice comes from a diverse cultural background that will be respected and openly discussed. The apprentices are to be oriented on the culture of the participants at the**

Centre. The orientation will present an understanding of the participant's living arrangements and the other communities that they participate in.

iii) The apprentices will be receiving a grade based on their participation in the "Creative Arts Apprenticeship Program". They will not be graded on their participation in the research nor will they receive a payment of any form. The journals, that will be used as a tool to gather information, will not be graded instead the apprentice's teachers will keep track of whether they were handed in or not.

iv) I have stated that their identity, including their school, will remain completely anonymous. The interviews both in audio form and transcribed will be kept in a secure place that only I have access to. The transcriptions will be read only by myself and my two research advisors. The apprentices may request to listen and/or read their own individual and group interviews at any time.

6. A) A sample "Letter of Information" and "Consent Form" is attached.

B) N/A There will be absolutely no deception in this research. I have made every step to avoid deception or misrepresentation.

C) As indicated in the "Letter of Information" I have stated: "You are under no obligation to participate in this research project. Your choice to decline participation will not result in your removal from the program."

D) There are no foreseeable low-level risks conceivable in this research project. With regards to the Apprenticeship Program itself, there are many support networks in place to avoid or confront potential psychological risk. I work as the co-ordinator to the apprentices. My main duty is to advocate for the best interest of the apprentices. In addition, a support group exists as a supplementary network intended to provide added support to anyone that requires it.

E) In my "Letter of Information" I have committed to informing the apprentices of the material and quotes that I wish to include and only do so upon their written approval (this will be done at the end of the process by signing each portion that I consent to include). I have also indicated that the apprentice's identity will remain anonymous, therefore they will be called by pseudonyms.

F) I have clearly raised the issue of confidentiality in the "Letter of Information" by indicating that I will keep their identity anonymous. In addition I have stated that all confidential information will be kept secured and be only assessable to myself. The only other individuals that will read the transcribed interviews are my two research advisors.

G) N/A

7. The main concern that I have with regards to the ethics of this project is that I may be inadvertently partitioning them into a “special population”. Since they are from a non-mainstream school specializing in kids with histories of behavioural difficulties and related or indicative learning disabilities I will indicate this in my study. My objective is not to prove that "youth at risk" need experiences like this to improve their behaviour or school performance. My main objective is to present their experience relative to the individuals not to the “special population” that in the past they may have been consigned to. This sensitive issue will be regarded with care.
8. Ultimately the main goal of the “Creative Arts Apprenticeship Program” is to provide a healthy and positive experience that builds self-esteem, concrete skill and sensitivity to humanity. It is the goal of this research project to document this experience. In documenting this I would hope that, in the future, integrative projects like this one may be considered for their extensive therapeutic and educational value.

Annex 2: Letter of Information

**Centre for the Arts in Human Development
Concordia University
*Pilot Project: The Creative Arts Apprenticeship Program
Research Project - Letter of Information***

February 14, 2000

Dear Participant:

As part of your participation in the Creative Arts Apprenticeship program, you were previously informed that you would be involved in a formal research project related to the program. Your role, as was loosely described in December will be that of co-researcher. It is my goal to present a research report that captures and documents your experience from your perspective. The primary aim of this research is to document your experience and thus to present what this project has meant to you and what it has meant to myself. Through out the course of the project (January 20, 2000 to June 19th, 2000) the following will be requested of you:

1) To participate in three audio taped group interviews.

Tentative Dates: February 28th, May 29th and June 18th, 2000.

The interview questions will be presented to you a week before the date. There will be a maximum of 5 questions that will address what the experience has been like for you, up to that point. This will take approximately 1 hour and will be part of our meeting at the end of the rehearsal period, therefor will not have any impact on the existing schedule.

2) To participate in one audio taped individual interview:

Tentative Date: April 17th and/or May 1st

The same applies as above.

3) To keep a weekly journal documenting your thoughts, feelings and ideas about your experience in the project. I may suggest that you discuss topics that arise in our 'debrief meeting' at the end of each rehearsal period. These are to be a page in length and will be read by myself and XXXXX XXXXXXXX, Head Teacher at XXXXXXXX School. As agreed upon with XXXXX, these journal entries will not be marked, they will only be accounted for on a weekly basis. I will ask your permission to photocopy an entry or part thereof, if I would like to use it in my research project. As was discussed, in the event that you wish for myself or XXXXX not to read the content of the journal, you will simply write "Please, do not read this" at the top of the page and this will be respected. You may specify myself or XXXXX, in the case that you would like only one of us to read it.

In addition to your contribution, my agreement is as follows:

1) To keep a journal of my experience, relative to my participation with you and on the project, specifically. This journal will be available to you to read at any time.

2) Upon completion of the data gathering portion of this research I will present to you all of your material that I wish to include in the written report. I will not use any of the information gathered until I have received your written consent that the chosen statements are in fact yours.

Your identity and school will remain anonymous. The information obtained in this study will be kept in the strictest confidence. The audio tapes and transcriptions will be kept in a secure place which only I will have access to. You may review the transcriptions of your own individual interview and the group interviews at any time. The only people, other than myself, that will be allowed to read the transcribed interviews are my two research advisors. This research, upon completion, will be bound and made available, publicly. You are under no obligation to participate in this research project. Your choice to decline participation will not result in your removal from the program.

Thank you very much for your time. Please do not hesitate to approach me with regards to the content of this letter of information. You will be given a copy of this letter and consent form for your personal files. I look forward to working collaboratively with you on this exciting project!

With Sincerity,

Nicola Bangham
(XXX) XXX-XXXX

Annex 3: Consent Form

**Centre for the Arts in Human Development
Concordia University
Pilot Project: The Creative Arts Apprenticeship Program
Research Project - Consent Form**

I have read the "Letter of Information". I have been given all necessary information and have had all of my questions answered.

I, _____ agree to the requests presented, in the letter of
information, with the following restriction(s):

Signature of Participant: _____

Signature of Parent or Guardian (if under 14 years old): _____

Witness: _____

Date: _____

I, Nicola Bangham, agree to abide by the restrictions and fulfil my own requirements as stated in the "Letter of Information".

Signature of Researcher (Nicola Bangham): _____

Witness: _____

Date: _____