A Phenomenological Study of Drama Therapy's Viability inside the High School

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Abstract

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By Tricia Amundson

For the field of drama therapy, research pertaining to its efficacy, although beginning to grow, is still desperately lacking. Indeed, there are many drama therapists working in the environment of the public high school and, although it has been documented that drama therapy is an effective therapeutic method for the adolescent population, there is very little research proving that it is effective within the high school, itself. Moreover, it seems that there is a desperate need for change within the high school system; with atrocities such as the shootings at Columbine as glaring indicators. Thus, through a phenomenological investigation of a drama therapy program conducted within a public high school, this study sets out to secure drama therapy's presence within this context. The facilitator of the drama therapy program, the head teacher at the school and the five girls who participated in the program were all interviewed in an attempt to ascertain the experience itself. This study highlights, then, how one might develop and facilitate a drama therapy program within a public high school so that both the needs of the school as well as the therapeutic needs of the participants might be adequately met.

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Table of Contents

Introduction

It seems obvious to me that most of us who are in the helping professions are there because we have experienced trauma first-hand, have recovered from said experience and now want to help other people move through their own pain. Indeed, this is true for me, however, in my case, most of the trauma I experienced might have, in fact, been avoidable. I mean, of course everything happens for a reason and, certainly, we keep making what are commonly referred to as *mistakes* until we grasp what we need to know in order to move forward from said life pattern. However, it seems to me that these *mistakes* might be avoided, or at least experienced far less frequently, if we were all to begin sharing with others our own personal wisdom. I realize that this notion is idealistic, but just the same, this realization is what led me to my own profession and, in fact, to the writing of this research paper and, so, in the following paragraphs, I will attempt to elaborate upon this notion: on its history within my life, on how it applies to my work, and on how its manifestation led to the idea for this paper.

During the time in which one is engaged with the exploration of his/her identity, the sense of self is likely to be somewhat weaker than when the core identity has finally formed. Of course, the actual degree to which the sense of self is weaker will vary from person to person, dependant upon the presence of stressors known to exacerbate insecurity, i.e. divorce, parental drug use, sexual/physical abuse, inability to cope with stress, etc. Interestingly, it is at this time that one also has to face the extraordinary power of peer pressure, which often taunts one with drugs, sex, violence, etc. Thus, at a time in which the sense of self is somewhat weak, the choices one must make carry with them a profound potential to completely alter the course of one's life. Indeed, these are

choices which might be better dealt with when one is feeling secure. However, this is the nature of adolescence – it is a time in which one must explore who they are, and often, it is a time in which one's sense of self is fragile; moreover, it is a time in which one must make profound life choices while simultaneously asserting independence from the family structure, and even authority in general, in preference for the guidance offered by peers. Unfortunately, what we then have is a potentially disastrous equation; however, it does not necessarily mean that one will inevitably make terrible or irreversible decisions during this life-phase. Just the same, it is under the influence of the aforementioned criteria that we might surmise that adolescents would benefit from a source of support (aside from one's family, or teachers, or even peers) offering educated guidance, with the goal of strengthening the sense of self in order to enable greater clarity in decision-making and, thus, the power to avoid traumatizing experiences (by my definition this is a description of what I will often refer to as preemptive or preventative therapeutic work).

Indeed, my own adolescence was rather tumultuous, and certainly, I, like so many others, felt that I was all alone. Of course, my family was supportive; however, during the life-phase of adolescence, the readiness of one's family to offer support is often irrelevant as it is typically difficult to relate to one's parents at this time. My peers were another story – certainly we supported one another, but we all had our own issues. Depression, drug abuse, rape, promiscuity, abortion, self-mutilation, suicidal ideation, anorexia, bulimia, etc. were all **normal** parts of our world. In fact, these *issues* were so normal to us that we were unable to see their actual magnitude; indeed, virtually no-one sought help – we tried to help one another but neither did we believe that we needed it nor did we know what to do. I certainly never thought to seek support; in fact, it never crossed my

mind, not even after the occurrence of a particularly traumatizing event – an event which in fact, weakened an already vulnerable sense of self, nearly annihilated my self-esteem and left me officially lost. Unfortunately, I was so traumatized by what had happened that I began to believe that I had deserved it, and so, instead of seeking help I actually continued to put myself in dangerous and potentially self-deprecating situations, thereby continuing the deterioration of my own self-esteem – a vicious cycle had been set in motion and it would be sometime before I would find my way out.

I did not actually come face to face with my pain – I didn't know how to. I was lost. Have you ever heard the expression that "whatever doesn't kill you only makes you stronger"? I hated that expression back then. I wasn't stronger, I was weaker. The aftermath of this event was unbearable; in fact, my post traumatic stress resulted in an eating disorder, which was met by those around me with one of two very different sentiments: "You look great!" and "Are you on drugs?" But although all of this was truly horrible, I still did not think to seek support – not until my boyfriend at the time suggested it, and when he finally did, I was relieved. I think I needed someone to validate my pain before I could feel that I deserved to be helped (a sentiment not unlike that which is often expressed by my suicidal adolescent clients). My point here is that I was a victim of circumstances which I believe could have been avoided. Had support been readily available; had someone been there to say that what we dealt with on a daily basis was not normal or okay; had I had the opportunity to work out what was going on inside me, thereby clarifying my own sense of self, I may have developed the strength to evade dangerous situations or, at the very least, to stop the vicious cycle that had been set in motion, where each new traumatic event further exacerbated my situation, making it all

the more plausible for me to experience yet another traumatic event. But without knowing where to turn or who to talk to, I simply sunk deeper into a world where I had forgotten who I was – driven further and further away from even the concept of help.

That was over eight years ago and, indeed, I am a very different person today. Certainly, my feelings toward that age-old adage that *whatever does not kill us only makes us stronger,* have changed. I see now that my own experiences during adolescence have made me who I am today. Moreover, I see that had I not experienced life as I have, I may not have been motivated to involve myself with life in the way I have (post traumatic stress was something I actively, albeit unknowingly, dealt with through a stringent and self-imposed exploration of self: activism, yoga, an introduction to meta-physics, and theatre were the most prominent amongst those activities which contributed to the restoration of my physical and mental well-being). Indeed, had I not approached life as such, which may have never happened, save for my past life experiences, I may have never discovered what I now see to be my purpose in life. But, although it must now seem that I am a supporter of the philosophy that *everything happens for a reason,* which in fact I am, I do not believe that enduring pain is the only way to tap into one's own wisdom or sense of self.

In fact, the way I see it, the wisdom garnered from one's own experience with trauma might be shared with other people, thus, infusing others with insight and in so doing, encouraging their own wisdom. In other words, those who have experienced trauma and who have in turn learned from their trauma might be capable of utilizing their experience to teach others, to help others develop their own sense of self and, so, to encourage informed decisions thereby helping others to avoid painful experiences.

However, it is not necessary for healers to have experienced trauma for them to truly help another individual. Any healer with a warm and caring heart, who possesses good intentions, might be capable of helping another being. But perhaps those who have actually experienced trauma are driven to help others avoid trauma; to help others negotiate their lives so that they avoid making *mistakes* – at least, this is true for me.

Being an adolescent in today's high school *seems* to be extraordinarily difficult. In fact, I have it in good-faith that kids are asked on a near-daily basis if they'd like to try drugs; the pressure for girls to be thin has apparently grown in strength as has the occurrence of eating disorders (websites have even surfaced which actually teach girls how to become anorexic!) and violence has reached an all-time high, with the occurrence of the youngest school shooting in history. The pressure teens are faced with seems to be greater than ever and, unfortunately, traditional vessels of support seem to be somewhat clogged; families are increasingly busy and parents are often necessarily preoccupied with money; schools are typically over-populated and teachers are over-worked. Hence, it begins to become obvious why I contend that the teens of today need additional guidance/support and, truly, I feel that I might be able to help. I might be able to help adolescents to contemplate and to discover who they are; to sort out the world around them, so that with increased clarity, they might be capable of honing their ability to control their lives. Indeed, by making decisions they feel comfortable with, they might be able to pass through this life phase with integrity and self-confidence.

It must now seem that what motivates me is my desire to protect and, certainly, this is true, although there are other factors which motivate me. I look around the world, today, and I grow sad. I don't know why I have been given this heart that seems to bleed

for the world and all that is unjust; I especially question this when I grow hopeless and cynical. Nonetheless, I know that my purpose here, in this world, in this time and space, is to make a difference and, for me, that difference is to help adolescents avoid trauma while becoming all that they are capable of becoming. I know that I am idealistic. I know that in spite of any attempt to help another human being avoid trauma, people will do whatever they need to do in order to fully learn their own lessons (in fact, I know that it may have been futile for anyone to have attempted to help me). But just the same, I know that we all have the capacity to self-actualize and I aspire to help others discover this potential within themselves. I want to offer a glimmer of hope and it seems to me that people today are looking for this glimmer. Indeed, the adolescents with whom I work have expressed this same desire and this, more than anything else, is what leads me to believe that it is possible to work preemptively. In fact, I have seen, with my own eyes, the merits of this work; I have seen within my own clients a strengthening of their self-esteem and of their core identities; I have even seen them avoiding trauma. But unfortunately, the merits of preemptive therapeutic work (particularly within the environment of a public high school) have yet to be validated within my own field; hence, the reason for this study.

This study thus attempts to ascertain how a for-credit group drama therapy program (that is, a therapeutic group formatted for the classroom and, thus, for which participants had to receive a grade to be credited toward their overall grade point average), designed to encourage and support the process of identity development, was experienced by the five adolescent girls who participated in the program. It is intended that the study will demonstrate whether or not they benefited from the program and in

what way(s) they benefited; the head teacher's perspective, as well as my own, will also be explored. Thus, it will be through the utilization of three different perspectives that this program's potential therapeutic viability will be determined. In this way, the primary purpose of this study is two-fold; it will answer, phenomenologically, how the participants experienced the program; and it will answer the question of whether or not this for-credit group drama therapy experience was therapeutically viable for the five participants involved.

Literature Review

Adolescence might be thought of as a time of transition between a world of childhood expectations and dependencies, toward one of new adult challenges and responsibilities. Indeed, it is a time of trials and tribulations and yet, also, a time of adventure and self-discovery; adolescence is a transitory time – a time when we are compelled to explore in some depth, the questions: who am I, where do I come from and where am I going? Specifically, it is the time in one's life in which his/her authentic identity, or concrete sense of self, truly begins to blossom. However, the overwhelming pressure to conform to cultural stereotypes (i.e. women = heterosexual wife and mother), often interferes with this developmental process and according to Pipher (1994), adolescent females are particularly vulnerable. In fact, members of this population are at risk of being catapulted into the world of adulthood without a stable sense of self, which is unfortunate because instability within one's core sense of self can in fact lead to social and emotional distress of serious concern i.e. depression, eating disorders, low sense of self-worth, etc. (Boyd, 2000; Pipher; Polos, 1995; Woodman, 1985).

The risk of identity-instability, a term used to refer to a state of confusion relative to one's role in the world (Marcia, Waterman, Matteson, Archer & Orlofsky, 1993, refer to this as *identity diffusion)*, is salient for adolescent females in particular because *it seems* that they often deny their own feelings, desires, and perceptions in order to achieve social acceptance and, therefore, are likely to desire acquiescence with social standards; thus, it seems likely that the adolescent female will feel compelled to adhere to cultural stereotypes in spite of the simultaneous desire to honor who they feel they authentically are – this is where the potential for identity-instability lurks (Emunah, 1990; Harter,

1990; Pipher, 1994; Santrock, 2001; Stern, 1991). Moreover, social stereotypes specific to women are typically ridden with mixed messages: "…achieve, but not too much; be polite, but be yourself; be feminine and adult; be aware of our cultural heritage, but don't comment on the sexism…" (Pipher, p.44). These messages are contradictory and confusing; they demonstrate that if the young woman does indeed integrate cultural stereotypes into her identity, she has not only to negotiate the aforementioned conflict between social stereotypes and the authentic self, but also, the conflict which exists within the cultural stereotype, itself, therefore, further provoking the identity-instability already threatening to brew within the young woman as she embarks on the quest of identity formation.

The struggle to define oneself amidst a society with such great expectations can actually cause levels of internal turmoil significant enough to cause *identity diffusion,* a state of identity status which occurs when the adolescent becomes overwhelmed and so, shuts down, resulting in the lack of a unified core within the self (Marcia et al., 1993). Lori Stern (1991) refers to this as the *shutting down* or the *disavowal of the self,* a process in which the authentic identity is suppressed due to the overwhelming pressure to conform, and unfortunately, those who do shut down are at risk of developing an incredibly low sense of self-esteem, which can actually lead to the manifestation of mental health issues, i.e. depression, eating disorders, etc. (Boyd, 2000; DeHart, Sroufe & Cooper, 2000; Pipher, 1994; Woodman, 1985).

Certainly, some people are more inclined than others to develop problems as aforementioned (eating disorders, etc.). Variables to consider as contributors in mental illness include, but are not limited to, a genetic predisposition, exposure to mental illness,

high levels of stress, etc.(Sarason & Sarason, 1999). These factors cannot be prevented; however, the aforementioned struggle to establish a confident sense of self might also be regarded as a potential contributing factor in the onset of mental health issues (this struggle has the potential to trigger *identity diffusion* and, thus, a low sense of self-worth and other related problems) – a contributing factor that might actually be avoidable. If sufficient guidance was available during this developmental phase, the pressure to conform to cultural stereotypes might be clarified, thereby encouraging authentic identity development; hence, the onset of identity-instability/*identity diffusion* and related mental health issues would potentially be minimized. Indeed, parents and teachers and others are usually available; however, the exploration of identity is often highly personal, which gives rise to the supposition that there might be preventative significance in therapeutic programs designed to support this developmental phase (Grof, 1994; Polos, 1995; Woodman, 1985); to determine the most effective therapeutic treatment, the concept, *to have a stable sense of identity*, must first be understood.

Identity is often thought of as a structure composed of several parts, in which each part must be well-developed in order to develop this *stable sense of identity*. In fact, several identity theorists seem to agree on three major parts: past experience, personal ability, and societal expectations; additionally, social interaction seems to be imperative (Grotevant, 1992; Harter, 1990; Marcia, 1980; Youniss, 1983). Therefore, it seems that, the therapeutic treatment must include the following four ingredients:

1. An exploration of past experience.
2. An exploration of roles/identities in order to determine personal ability/interest.
3. An exploration of cultural stereotypes and societal expectations.

4. Peer interaction.

Thus, therapeutic treatment designed to negotiate identity development should be capable of satisfying each of the major components of identity (as outlined above), and, therefore, group drama therapy seems an optimal method. However, in order to maintain safety within the therapeutic context the therapeutic process would unfold inversely to the list above, i.e. past experience would be explored only after establishing significant levels of trust. The following list outlines how group drama therapy meets the aforementioned criteria:

1. Group drama therapy is intended to be a group process; therefore, the need for peer interaction is easily met. Moreover, drama therapy affords participants the opportunity to openly discuss who they are through representational symbols, or metaphors. In other words, the use of metaphor affords participants discretion when exposing their inner realities; thus, working to create a sense of comfort with the experience of being witnessed.

2. Sociodrama is a technique employed by drama therapists. The technique requires the therapist to help the group discern the socially-based theme/issue that the entire group is grappling with. This issue is then explored through dramatic enactments and verbal dialogue, thereby enabling participants to clarify how they are affected by the world around them (Sternberg & Garcia, 2000).

3. Drama therapy makes ample use of role play, which affords participants the opportunity to temporarily *try on* a role; thereby giving them the ability to discern how they feel about the role before actually integrating it into their own identity (Landy, 1992).

4. Psychodrama is a technique available to drama therapists, in which participants are guided through visceral explorations of their past experiences. Participants are thus enabled to separate the self from the past, which, in turn, enables them to work through residual emotions; thus, the past can be more completely understood and therefore, integrated into the whole (Blatner, 2000).

Thus, by providing an opportunity in which adolescent females can safely explore their identities, group drama therapy offers effective external support, aside from one's typical support systems (Boyd, 2000). This is important because an unbiased space, in which uncomfortable components of one's identity might be non-judgmentally explored, seems to be crucial to the development of authentic identity – under normal circumstances authentic self-expression is immensely challenging due to the extraordinarily powerful influence of social values/cultural stereotypes (Pipher, 1994; Stern, 1991; Woodman, 1985). Hence, drama therapy can pose as a rite of passage, defined by Grof (1994) as a ritual or ceremony which marks the transition from one life phase into that of another; and by Polos (1995), as a ceremony which helps adolescents, in particular, to acknowledge their identity and, thus, to move on into adulthood, in which identity formation is supportively explored, thereby helping young women negotiate their transition from the world of adolescence into that of adulthood.

The therapeutic work being considered here is preventative in nature in the sense that it is designed to support adolescent females as they actively explore their identity, thereby helping them to avoid the experience of being overwhelmed with the task of identity achievement and, thus, the state of identity diffusion (Marcia et al., 1993; Woodman, 1985). However, people generally seek therapy only after specific

problems/issues become manifest (problems particular to adolescent girls are relative to depression and rebellion, i.e. eating disorders, suicidal ideation, promiscuity, drug abuse, etc. [Pipher, 1994]). Similarly, adolescent females would not likely seek therapy in order to avoid the potential of identity-instability; rather, therapy would likely be sought only after identity-instability had resulted in the manifestation of specific psychological/social problems. To be clear, I am not suggesting that unless drama therapy is administered adolescent females will succumb to problems, such as the ones aforementioned, due to the identity-instability which may or may not be aroused as a result of the imposition of cultural stereotypes. I am simply suggesting that if adolescent girls are able to participate in a drama therapy group aimed at the exploration of identity, potential problems/issues might be altogether avoided; however, creating interest within this population to participate in such a group proposes a challenge because preventative therapy is not typically sought out. However, this might be easily rectified – if people do not seek preventative therapy, it must be brought to them; thus, preventative therapeutic programs must be made readily accessible to the intended target population.

Adolescents spend a large majority of their lives at school: five days a week, eight hours a day, ten months a year. It, therefore, seems the ideal milieu through which to offer preventative therapeutic programs intended for the adolescent population; specifically, drama therapy groups intended for adolescent girls interested in exploring identity. In fact, drama therapy is currently conducted within this sector. However, research pertaining to its efficacy within this framework is extremely limited. Note that the work done by public high school guidance counselors is not disregarded. In fact, it seems that there would be space within the high school setting for preventative programs

without overriding the role of the guidance counselor – guidance counselors are expected to oversee the entire student body and with increasing student loads have become extremely busy; therefore, implementing group counseling programs, as an adjunct to the guidance counselor, might be in fact necessary, if indeed the needs of the *entire student body* are to be met (Zinck & Littrell, 2000).

Indeed school-based mental health programs are becoming more prevalent; in fact, although research in this area is still lacking, "the effectiveness and necessity of therapy in a school setting is no longer contested between school psychologists and counselors" (Wengrower, 2001, p.109). In spite of this, however, research pertaining specifically to effectively administered, therapeutic treatment within the high school setting, is desperately lacking. Thus, the most appropriate/effective psychological tool(s) for use within this particular context has yet to be established. This, then, is the purpose of this study: to investigate the therapeutic gain/s made through the application of group drama therapy facilitated within a high school setting.

Methods

The following section surmises the methodological steps taken to conduct this study, within the context of the psychological methodology known as, *phenomenology*. Phenomenology was initially considered for this research because of the researcher's personal interest in phenomenology as a philosophy. It is the researcher's belief that, in attempting to understand another human being, one must try to comprehend how the other constructs and perceives their world by determining how he/she experiences life events; however, these events must also be understood in their own right if one is to understand how the event is actually experienced. This is, essentially, the art of phenomenological psychology. Phenomenology, then, is an effective tool through which to garner deeper understanding of human experiences and, therefore, can be particularly useful in illuminating phenomenon which is not yet well understood. The deficiency of the research pertaining to drama therapy and its efficacy within the public high school system, thus, ultimately led to the use of phenomenology as the research method of choice. Contained within the following paragraphs is a brief description of phenomenological psychology, as well as the research design itself, including the role played by the researcher, the process of data collection and analysis, the process of member-checking (or participant verification of the researcher's results), and ethical considerations.

Phenomenological Psychology

Phenomenological psychology supports the idea that we intentionally, that is to say, we *consciously* create meaning relative to our life experiences, through which we then understand our experiences – we do not simply look at the facts which constitute the

experience in order to understand it. However, the facts do influence *the way* in which we *experience* the phenomenon. Therefore, the task of a phenomenological researcher is to attempt to make coherent the personal meaning attached to a phenomenon while simultaneously considering the factual entities of which the phenomenon was comprised and how these entities shaped the process of meaning-making.

In this study, the phenomenon is for-credit group drama therapy, conducted within a high school environment, and, in order to understand this phenomenon, it must be examined on two separate accounts. One account requires us to examine the facts of which the experience was comprised, while the other account involves examining how the program was experienced by those who participated in it; by understanding both of the aforementioned, we, then, have the potential to truly understand the phenomenon.

The Research Design

In accordance with the phenomenological research approach, the interviews occurred following termination of the drama therapy group. Note that grades for this program, although obtained prior to commencing the research, were assigned only after the interviews were completed, so that, participant responses might not be influenced by the assigned grade (Colaizzi, 1973). All five clients were interviewed in an attempt to determine how they experienced the phenomenon in question. According to Stuart-Smith (1994), the interview format of research offers an effective mode through which to communicate with adolescents. In addition to the participant interviews, an interview was conducted with the head teacher; also, an attempt made to discern my own subjective experience of the phenomenon. Each of the aforementioned points of view was used, in a method of triangulation, to answer the primary research question.

The Role of the Researcher

Against the grain of phenomenological theory, the therapist and the researcher, here, were unavoidably, one in the same (Quail & Peavy, 1994). However, in order to offset the personal biases arising from this dual-role, the therapist-researcher attempted to discern her own perspectives and opinions regarding the experience prior to commencing participant interviews, thus, enabling her to understand how these might inadvertently affect the research. Moreover, the therapeutic process was terminated before initiating the research; it was intended that this would encourage those involved to separate the two experiences and, thus, to elicit honest interview responses. However, during the research process the researcher found it more difficult than she had anticipated separating these two roles. Participant criticism, though not ill-received, was difficult to accept without affect. In fact, the researcher is convinced that her discomfort within these moments was visibly apparent and likely affected the research, however minimally. In spite of this, it seems that the dual-role became truly difficult at only one interval. Before the second level of member-checking (participant verification of the researcher's results), the researcher realized that participants held very different perspectives regarding their therapeutic experience and, thus, became worried that the more critical perspectives might be harmful to those holding positive perspectives. The researcher did not want to compromise either the research or the therapeutic process; thus, the decision was made that, during the second level of member-checking, the participants would independently read the discussion and make applicable changes before debriefing the impact, and/or the potential impact, of the research process on the therapeutic experience.

Data Collection

Interviews were semi-standardized and thus, were composed of predetermined questions (Appendix A, B, and C). The semi-standardized format of interviewing permitted the researcher to focus the interview, thereby creating opportunity to compare and contrast interviewee responses (Berg, 2004). In support of employing triangulation, the participant interviews, the facilitator interview and the interview conducted with the head teacher were all composed of similar questions.

It was intended, in accordance with the phenomenological research approach, to tape and transcribe the interviews. However, due to the fact that the researcher played the dual-role of therapist, it was determined that it might be difficult for the participants to openly discuss any criticisms concerning their experience (Pennebaker, 1997). It was therefore decided that the interview data would be gathered via typed material; thus, after introducing the participants to the interview questions, the researcher invited them to type their answers into a laptop computer.

According to Pennebaker (1997), writing about one's experiences works to slow down one's thinking processes, thereby helping one to organize his/her thoughts and, so, to promote a deeper understanding of both the event/experience and of the self. This in turn, encourages a more complete resolution of the experience in question than can be achieved through only talking. Unfortunately, this format of interviewing is significantly limited by the fact that the ability to probe participant responses is removed, which was a serious consideration in the implementation of the aforementioned process for data collection (however, it seemed more important to the researcher to create an opportunity

for participant disclosure of program criticism). The interview process then was composed of the following steps:

1. The researcher first briefs the participant by providing her with an explicit description of the research/interview process (Appendix D).

2. The researcher reviews the interview questions with the participant, affording her an opportunity for clarification (the participant is permitted to ask questions).

3. The participant is instructed to select a pseudonym and is then instructed to provide answers to the questions via a laptop computer.

4. After completing the interview the researcher asks the participant what the process was like for her and if she might like to discuss further any of the questions.

5. The participant is then invited, if she so desires, to add to her answers, marking the end of the interview.

The aforementioned interview steps were, however, only followed for one of the six interviews. At the onset of the first interview the participant disclosed significant discomfort with her typing skills as well as with her writing in general, expressing that she does not typically share her writing with anyone. She was reminded that her confidentiality would be respected and, as such, agreed to continue with the interview as instructed; nevertheless, she seemed to remain uncomfortable. The second interview, conducted with the head teacher, elicited a similar response, thereby inspiring the researcher to adjust the interview format. Thus, from that point on, the interviews were transcribed by the researcher at the time they were conducted (the therapist-researcher conducted the interview whilst at the same time she typed participant answers into the

laptop computer). Only minimal data was lost as a result of this format of transcription and, in return, the researcher was permitted to probe interviewee responses.

Data Analysis

The interview guide, or rather, the predetermined interview questions functioned to create major topics/categories around which the interview data might be organized; thus, the interview questions themselves provided an analytical framework or system of classification (note, however, that although questions were constructed to both organize the data and guide the analysis, data pertaining to specific categories was still found throughout the interview) [Patton, 1990]. Thus, after collecting the interview data it was thoroughly analyzed by the predetermined categories, following which, it was analyzed by the theme or mood indicated within each piece of data (Neuman, 1997). A cross-case analysis was then employed, in which participant answers to similar questions were compared and contrasted in an attempt to determine a thematic description for each category of questioning (Neuman). The steps in this analysis, then, were formulated according to the theories of both Patton and Neuman; what follows here, is an outline of these steps:

1. The interview questions functioned as major categories through which the data was seen to be organized.

2. The interview script was coded utilizing the aforementioned categories. In some cases, the predetermined categories fit perfectly with the data; in other cases the data elicited new categories and in other cases still, the predetermined categories had to be eliminated altogether as a result of their lack of compliance with the interview

data. In any case, this process elicited a finalized list of major categories for each of the following: the combined participant interviews, the interview conducted with the head teacher and the facilitator interview.

3. In addition to the aforementioned, interviewee responses were analyzed by the theme which emerged from the data. That is to say, the researcher attempted to determine not only the major category of each response, but also the mood or feeling contained within each response, i.e. a response may have been categorized as Group Dynamics, with the theme, or feeling, of *authenticity*; indicating that the interviewee experienced group dynamics authentically. Note that the researcher attempted consistency, when labeling the interview data, i.e. the same thematic label was used when two or more interviewee responses elicited the same feeling state. Note also that the interview script may contain data representative of more than one category.

4. Upon completion of the analysis, member-checking was employed. That is to say, each of the participants involved were required to comb through the analysis, ensuring that they agreed with the researchers thematic assessment of their responses. Changes to the analysis were made where appropriate.

5. The interview script was then set aside; the categories, along with their relative themes, were analyzed independently of the script. The

researcher made a list of all of the themes, organizing them by their appropriate category. Similarities/patterns, contained within the themes, were then sought. Those themes seen as very similar in nature were combined. This process of analysis worked to create a very specific list of themes, for each major category. Note that this process was independently completed for each of the following: the combined participant interviews, the head teacher interview and the facilitator interview.

6.   In order to verify the final list of themes obtained for each major category, the themes were, once again, applied to the interview script. Interview script verifying the thematic labels was documented.

7.   The discussion/interpretation was then written. Each major category, along with the final list of themes relative to each category, was utilized as a guide. Note that in writing the discussion, the researcher wove together the ideas expressed by each of the following: the combined participant interviews, the head teacher interview, and the facilitator interview.

8.   At this point, member-checking was employed a second time. Participants were each given a copy of the discussion to read and were afforded the opportunity to make suggestions and/or corrections. Applicable corrections were applied, thereby, marking the end of the research process.

Member-checking

As aforementioned, member-checking requires the researcher to review with the participants the research results, thereby providing the participants with the opportunity to verify whether or not the researcher has appropriately comprehended their interview responses. In this particular study there were two-levels of member-checking. The first occurred after the completion of the final analyses, at which point, each participant, including the head teacher, was given a transcript and instructed to make changes to it (only one minor change was indicated). The second level of member-checking occurred after completion of the discussion/summary of the interview analyses. At this time, each participant was given a copy of the discussion to read through and to make changes to if applicable (only one technical change was indicated).

Ethical Considerations

The research process required the researcher, in the role of the therapist, to design and conduct a for-credit drama therapy program. The participants in the program were made aware at the onset that there would be a research component upon termination of the therapeutic component (preliminary consent forms [Appendix E] were thus signed). Approximately two months before termination of the therapeutic group, the research process was discussed in more detail. A proposal was given to the head teacher to review, following which, official approval to conduct the research was granted. The participants were then given an opportunity to voice their questions and/or concerns. Informed consents (Appendix F) were signed by participants in the presence of the head teacher

(who also signed the forms) and were then sent home to be signed by the primary parent/guardian of each participant. Follow-up calls were made to the parents by the researcher, inviting the parents to phone the researcher and/or the school with any questions and/or concerns they might have concerning their daughters participation in the research process. Photocopies of the signed forms were made and distributed to both the parents and the school for safe-keeping.

Factual Entities

In the spring of 2003, my colleague and I worked collectively to create a practicum site at the high school in question here. At the school's request we presented a drama therapy workshop open to anyone who wished to participate. The students responded positively, requesting the head teacher of the school to permit the inclusion of a drama therapy program in the upcoming academic year (2003-2004). This request was approved by the school board and my colleague and I were thus asked to design a long-term drama therapeutic program, open to any students who desired to register for it. The program went relatively well. In fact, the following academic year (2004-2005), my colleague and I were both invited back – a blatant indicator that the program had been perceived as a success and, thus, likely demonstrated its' therapeutic viability.

The inclusion of this program within the school demanded that the program be designed to meet the needs of both the school and the clients; the needs of one could not supersede the needs of the other. The following paragraphs will thus highlight the school, its philosophy and the academic requirements which the drama therapy program had to uphold; the drama therapy program, itself, will then be described, with particular attention given to the design for meeting students' needs.

The School

Philosophy. The school, at which the drama therapy program was introduced, although *public*, in the sense that it must adhere to the same curriculum followed by other public schools, is actually considered *alternative* because it is grounded in the principle of community – meaning, that it is guided by a philosophy different from that of the typical public high school. In fact, this high school creates the environment of

community, perceived as fundamental to their students' growth as people, by virtually

dismantling the characteristic teacher-student hierarchy that defines most mainstream

schools. Moreover, it is co-managed through the cooperation of students, parents and

teachers, which works to create an atmosphere of equality and simultaneously empowers

students, thereby facilitating their journey toward adulthood.

      Population. In order to promote healthy relationships between all members of the

community enrollment is limited to 130 students (grades 9-11). Students who have

transferred over from schools with dense populations have indicated that the feeling of

camaraderie, which exists at the school in question here, does not exist at their former

schools, and cannot, quite simply, because there are too many students at these other

schools. Unfortunately, however, the students have divulged that even at this school the

feeling of camaraderie seems to be waning; they speculate that this might be because

some people register here for the wrong reasons; misinterpreting community to mean that

what exists at this school is a *laisser-faire* environment where anything goes, so to speak.

      Grading. In spite of the fact that I intended the program be solely therapeutic the

local school board determined that it had to be for-credit (no reason was specified). I

accepted this condition but requested that the grades be assigned as pass or fail, based on

attendance. Unfortunately, this request was refused. The students had to be given a

percentage grade, to be determined, in conjunction with attendance, through graded

assignments. However, note that grades were assigned as such: 75% attendance; 25%

project completion, and that, students were informed projects would not be graded for

aesthetic value.

Scheduling. The program was designed to fit into the academic calendar, beginning in September of 2004 and terminating at the end of May 2005 (before the commencement of final exams); thus, it was intended to be an eight-month therapeutic program with two 1 ½ hour sessions (Tuesdays and Wednesdays: 15:00 – 16:30) per week, equaling 51 sessions total.

The space. In the first year of the drama therapy program, the restricted amount of available space in the school resulted in the utilization of a storage room for our therapeutic work. (My colleague used one of the classrooms for his group). Indeed, it was, to a large degree overcrowded and gloomy, however, the school's head teacher was quite keen on cleaning up the space, as were the students whom participated in the group and so, over the course of the academic year the space became less of a storage room and more of a drama therapy room. In spite of this, the room declined fully blossoming into a therapeutic space as it somehow refused to leave behind the memory that it once was a storage room.

The second manifestation of this program, however, brought with it an evolved drama therapy space. The room now carried with it an entire year of life experience as a therapeutic space; moreover, time was taken this year before commencing therapy to complete the room's transformation – anything leftover from the storage room was removed, decorations and posters were brought in, and the room was painted with various murals including hand-prints of the group's members. Indeed, the storage room is now only a fading memory; drama therapy has an official space within the school and as such, a sense of worth and repute.

The Drama Therapy Program

Program Objectives. The program was intended to be solely therapeutic, utilizing drama therapy to facilitate identity development for a group of adolescent girls. Aside from this, therapeutic goals included the following: encouraging both self-expression and self-esteem, normalizing and working through issues common to adolescence (i.e. body image), fostering individuality and inter-member commonalities, etc. Note that the group was limited to girls-only as it was anticipated that the aforementioned goals might be met with greater ease without the presence of male peers; in fact, it has been documented that such an environment often permits girls to express themselves more freely (Zinck & Littrell, 2000).

Structuring of individual groups. Each 1 ½ hour group was similarly structured: reminders relative to approaching deadlines, changes in scheduling, instructions for take-home assignments, etc. were generally given at the onset of the group; following which, the group partook in a minute of silence marking the official point of departure for the next 1 ½ hours. Note that at the commencement of this program, in the fall of 2004, I suggested that the group collectively decide upon a ritual (intended to encourage group cohesion) to be performed at some point during our meetings; the minute in silence to be taken at the beginning of each group was their self-imposed ritual – it remained unchanged throughout the year. Following the opening ritual was a metaphorical check-in, in which the participants would equate how they were feeling in the here and now with whatever symbol had been chosen (i.e. a color, an animal, a weather system, a cartoon character, etc.). The drama therapist typically selected the metaphor; however, by approximately the tenth week of the program, the participants themselves were

volunteering their own ideas, even requesting to check-in *sans* metaphor opting instead to share their actual feeling states. The *guts* of the session, or the main action, followed the check-in. Warm-ups were not often employed because the check-in was usually effective in eliciting the material/theme to be worked with. At the completion of the main activity, time was allotted for what shall be referred to as a sharing circle, in which, participants might share with one another what had been learned during the session (the sharing circle was intended to encourage integration of the therapeutic work but must be regarded as separate from the group closure). The closure was a ritual which marked the end of the session; an activity referred to as the Magic Box, in which each member might throw away and take out any thing, emotion, and/or event, etc., was often used for this.

Participants. The drama therapy group was composed of five adolescent girls between the ages of fourteen and seventeen; all five are North American with diversity in their ancestral backgrounds. Four of them were in grade eleven at the time and looking toward graduation and college while the fifth was in grade nine and so, only at the beginning of her journey through high school. They attended this school, in particular, because they felt, by and large, that they did not fit into the mainstream school system, or rather, that the mainstream school system did not fit with who *they* were. In fact, many students attend this school because its' student population is small and because it encourages community; moreover, most of the students who attend this school are independent, creative thinkers – a reality which has not been conducive to them within the customary school structure.

It should be noted that three of the four older girls participated in the 2003-2004 drama therapy program in addition to the 2004-2005 program and, moreover, that the

four older girls had been socializing with one another, outside of the school context, prior to the commencement of therapy. Thus, alliances between group members existed at the onset of the program and, in fact, seemed to contribute to the rapid development of trust within the group. However, lest we not forget that the youngest group member, whom was only in her first year of high school at the time, did not know the other girls prior to the program; even so, making a niche for herself within the group did not seem to be problematic.

Themes and individual issues. All five girls were consciously seeking to self-actualize and all were wonderfully self-aware. In spite of this, they were encouraged to continue to develop the skill of self-reflection, done in order to encourage the development of their authentic identities. Thus, the impact of cultural stereotypes and other relative forms of social conditioning were explored. Their most stringent collective struggle seemed to be an attempt to resolve: the conflicting emotions of despair, felt for the *loss* of their childhood selves; of resentment, toward accepting the responsibilities of adulthood; and of excitement, in gaining independence from their parents and other authority figures. In an attempt to reconcile this issue – that of feeling alone in the world with that of needing to feel independent but yet, to still feel a sense of belonging, they were encouraged to honor and respect their uniqueness and, simultaneously, to recognize their shared human experience, and thus the fact that they are not alone in this world.

Specific examples. In order to demonstrate the program's efficacy, highlighted here is an example of an assignment given to the participants in the drama therapy program, illustrating that the program effectively elicited and supported participants' therapeutic needs.

The assignment, entitled *Photo-journal*, required students to take pictures of their environment; directions of what exactly to photograph were intentionally vague in an attempt to inspire authenticity (each participant was given a disposable camera which they were instructed to fill with photos). When the film was developed, participants were instructed to *meditate on* their pictures; to look into themselves in an attempt to identify with the thoughts and emotions evoked by the pictures; artwork, poetry, music lyrics, etc. were, then, to be attached to the photograph in an attempt to create a photo-journal page representative of the aforementioned (each participant was instructed to complete a minimum of five pages).

When the pages were complete, the participants created, within their drama therapy room, a miniature art gallery. Each participant choose her own section of the room in which to set up her display; fabric, colored paper, chairs, etc. could be used to decorate the display, as well, the display had to be titled. For five sessions, thereafter, each participant was given an opportunity to present her display to the group; group members were permitted to ask questions about the display, which the artist freely answered. Topics addressed included: perception of reality, identity, drug use, body image, relationships, divorce, loss of childhood, childhood trauma, parental drug use, bullying and peer interaction, etc. The aforementioned issues demonstrate, then, that, although the participants in the program were not in crisis, they were grappling with issues best addressed within a therapeutic setting, which gives rise to the therapeutic viability of this work.

Ethical considerations. This drama therapy program gives rise to two major

ethical considerations: the potential effect of grading therapeutic work and the issue of

confidentiality; these issues were both addressed within the therapy. Grading was

discussed relative to the fact that it is, at least in theory, unethical to grade therapeutic

work; the potential impact of this was explored and students were encouraged to address

their concerns within the group. Although the students expressed no concern regarding

the grading, it is possible that this factor may have still affected the therapeutic process in

one way or another. For example, participation equated for a significant portion of the

grade, thus, it is possible that students may have been inclined to participate in the

process in spite of the fact that, at times, it may have been more important for them to

express feelings of rebellion by refusing to participate. Another potential example of the

negative influence of grading therapeutic work might be that the actual grade a student

receives from the therapist could affect the therapist-participant alliance; moreover,

grading might create an environment of competition between the group's participants.

For the aforementioned reasons, amongst others, grading and its potential effects were

often discussed within the group context; it was intended that we become increasingly

aware of the vast array of possible consequences arising from the act of grading

therapeutic work, so that we might soften their effect upon the actual therapy.

Furthermore, the fact that the students were actively involved in the formulation of the

grading scheme seemed to help inspire a sense of empowerment and control over this

unavoidable reality; indeed, this therapeutic program would not have been possible unless

designed as a for-credit class. Additionally, the issue of confidentiality was candidly

discussed and students were encouraged to ensure, to the best of their ability, that they

were comfortable with whatever they might be revealing. Furthermore, students were

encouraged to address any concern they might have regarding the fact that other students

in the school were aware of the identity of the drama therapy group members. Note that

there were no serious concerns or issues brought forth by the participants themselves.

Perceived Experience: Analyses

As previously discussed, the interview questions themselves functioned to create

major topics/categories around which the interview data was organized; thus, the

interview questions provided a system of classification. However, given the nature of an

open-ended interview, responses did not always fit with the question from which they

were evoked; thus, the researcher had to stringently analyze each piece of interview data

in order to determine which category the data fit with. Indeed, sometimes the researcher

was lucky and the response data fit with the question (or category) that had been asked;

however, responses were often not copasetic with the question, leaving the researcher to

determine exactly which category the response might belong to. This was done by first

scanning through the predetermined categories in order to see if the interview data might,

in fact, fit with another available category. However, if this was not possible, then an

entirely new category was developed; new categories were determined utilizing both the

data itself, and the researcher's subjective opinion. Consequently, responses sometimes

generated new categories while on the other hand, lack of data, sometimes resulted in the

elimination of categories. The data was, thus, thoroughly combed in order to establish a

finalized list of the major categories contained within the data. This process, as

aforementioned, was repeated independently, for each of the following: the participant

interviews, the head teacher interview and the facilitator interview (thus, a finalized list

of major categories was developed for the participant interviews, the head teacher

interview and the facilitator interview). The data was also analyzed by theme. In other

words, each piece of dialogue was deciphered first by category and, then, by the specific

theme or mood of the dialogue; in fact, the theme indicates the feeling or attitude of the

interviewee in regards to the category in question. This process of analysis was repeated for each interview; therefore, the participant interviews, for example, were each organized both by category and by theme. It was at this point in the analysis member-checking was employed and applicable corrections were made.

The next step required the researcher to set aside the interview script, thereby isolating the major categories and their corresponding themes. The researcher, then, combed through the themes, looking for similarities and patterns, thereby, condensing the list of themes falling under each category. Once again, this was done independently for both the head teacher interview and the facilitator interview. Moreover, this process of analysis was performed on the participant interviews as a cross-case analysis, which is to say that, all of the themes found within each participant interview were combined together and documented under their corresponding categories. Thus, the researcher then, was able to understand the interview data simply by looking through the themes relative to each category. It was through this process of analysis that the interviews could be wholly understood and interpreted, thereby permitting an answer for the primary research question.

What follows then, is the analysis for each of the seven interviews conducted, beginning with the facilitator's interview. Each synopsis contains a description of the interview's major categories and of how the categories changed as a result of the analysis. It also contains the analysis, itself, organized both by the category the interview data is seen to belong to, and by, the corresponding theme/s elicited by the interview data. Following this, is a brief description of the themes themselves, and of how they changed in the second stage of analysis. The interview script is then set aside, isolating the major

categories, their corresponding themes, and the interview data that defends them. Note that when interview script is repeated, in any of the following analyses, it is repeated because the script, itself, contains data representative of more than one major category; therefore, the same data may appear more than once; however, when it does in fact seem to repeat itself, note that the major category under which it falls, is different than it was the last time.

The Facilitator Interview

Contained within the following paragraphs is a synopsis of the facilitator analysis. Interview questions and original transcripts are appended (Appendix A and G).

The semi-structured interview elicited the following eight categories:

1. Purpose of the Program

2. Perceived Need for the Program

3. Program Goals

4. Desirable Facilitator Experience

5. Undesirable Facilitator Experience

6. Effects of the Program on Participants: Changes in Participants

7. Effect of the Program on School Life

8. Effect of Grading

The process of applying the aforementioned categorical codes to the interview data elicited a number of changes in the codes. Purpose of the Program was removed as its similarity with the code, Program Goals, was recognized. Additionally, three new codes were conceived, they are as follows: Perceived Participant Experience, Group Dynamics and Future Recommendations. Thus, the final categorical codes:

1. Perceived Need for the Program

2. Program Goals

3. Desirable Facilitator Experience

4. Undesirable Facilitator Experience

5. Perceived Participant Experience

6. Group Dynamics

7. Effects of the Program on Participants: Changes in Participants

8. Effect of the Program on School Life

9. Effect of Grading

10. Future Recommendations

Within each piece of interview data the categorical code was sought as was the theme or

mood of the categorical code. The analysis is thus as follows:

Perceived Need for the Program

Of course my own high school experience served as a sort of template for my
understanding of the experience of being an adolescent girl and thus, of what might be
missing during adolescence – what might help them to move through this phase of life
with increased self-awareness and health. I know that from my experience as an
adolescent their were many serious issues with which we struggled and I see that today as
well …there has been a definite increase in both the level and degree of school violence.
Things just don't seem to be getting any better…
THEME: TRAUMATIC PERSONAL EXPERIENCE
THEME: SOMETHING MISSING FROM HIGH SCHOOL EXPERIENCE
THEME: ADOLESCENTS CONFRONTED WITH SERIOUS ISSUES
THEME: INCREASE IN SCHOOL VIOLENCE

Why did you choose to facilitate this class?
My own adolescence was rather difficult and in retrospect I saw that had there been more
support or an opportunity to discuss and share issues and concerns it may have actually
been possible for me to have worked through some of what was going on inside of me
thereby helping me to perhaps avoid some of the more difficult experiences that I had. I
realize now of course that the past can't be undone nor do I regret the past, I only feel that
there was a lack of support to help us cope with issues, which it seemed actually led to
experiencing trauma. My friends and I were confronted with very serious issues like

eating disorders and rape and pregnancy and abortion... perhaps had we had an opportunity like the one I created at this high school we would have felt more supported, thereby, enabling us to make better decisions... and it seems important to mention that although we may have had supportive families, there were not very many of us who were actually comfortable talking to our parents about what was really going on in our lives.
THEME: TRAUMATIC PERSONAL EXPERIENCE
THEME: PERCEIVED LACK OF SUPPORT
THEME: ADOLESCENTS CONFRONTED WITH SERIOUS ISSUES
THEME: PERCEIVED LACK OF COMFORT DISCUSSING ISSUES WITH PARENTS

Program Goals

What was the purpose of this class?
This class was designed to support adolescent girls through this life-phase; to help them navigate personal crises and as a place to discuss feelings and identity. The over-arching goal was that it might help participants to define more clearly who they are and in so doing, to strengthen the sense of self, thereby, helping them to negotiate their lives with greater clarity and ideally then, to help them make healthy life decisions.
THEME: OFFER SUPPORT
THEME: UNDERSTAND FEELINGS
THEME: UNDERSTAND SELF
THEME: STRENGTHEN CORE SELF
THEME: ENCOURAGE HEALTHY DECISION MAKING

I really wanted to do something that might make a difference in a young person's life – help to instill them with hope... But I must reiterate the notion that I wanted this to be a program that would help adolescent females in a preemptive manner; it wasn't intended to help girls through crises, it was supposed to help prevent crises.
THEME: ENCOURAGE HOPE
THEME: PREEMPTIVE WORK; ATTEMPTING TO HELP AVOID CRISIS

Why did you choose to facilitate this class?
NB: The following dialogue is repeated as it contains information specific not only to the category, Perceived Program Goals, but also to the one illustrated here, Program Goals. Note that there are several examples of this phenomenon occurring throughout the analysis.

My own adolescence was rather difficult and in retrospect I saw that had there been more support or an opportunity to discuss and share issues and concerns it may have actually been possible for me to have worked through some of what was going on inside of me thereby helping me to perhaps avoid some of the more difficult experiences that I had. I realize now of course that the past can't be undone nor do I regret the past, I only feel that there was a lack of support to help us cope with issues, which it seemed actually led to experiencing trauma. My friends and I were confronted with very serious issues like eating disorders and rape and pregnancy and abortion... perhaps had we had an

opportunity like the one I created at this high school we would have felt more supported thereby enabling us to make better decisions… and it seems important to mention that although we may have had supportive families, there were not very many of us who were actually comfortable talking to our parents about what was really going on in our lives.
THEME: PREEMPTIVE WORK; ATTEMPTING TO HELP AVOID CRISIS THROUGH THE APPLICATION OF ADDITIONAL SUPPORT

What goals did you have for the program? Were you able to meet those goals?
I wanted, ideally, to help these girls to avoid trauma and, of course, this is an extraordinary undertaking, if not altogether impossible, but this was my over-arching goal and I wanted to accomplish this by helping them to negotiate the process of identity development – to help them find clarity regarding who they are in this world and who they want to be. I also wanted to simply create an environment in which they might feel supported and comfortable to discuss their lives in a group context, so that they might learn from one another.
THEME: PREEMPTIVE WORK; ATTEMPTING TO HELP AVOID CRISIS
THEME: UNDERSTAND SELF
THEME: UNDERSTAND SELF RELATIVE TO OTHERS
THEME: OFFER SUPPORT

To this end I am still not sure what it was about but I can say that I was always careful to explain to the girls that they should only reveal what they are comfortable revealing and that if I ask something which they are not comfortable answering that they must tell me. So I tried to help them share and be open and, also, to maintain their own boundaries. I would however recommend that in the future I might screen participants beforehand in an attempt to have a diverse group – people from different social circles.
THEME: ENCOURAGE PARTICIPANTS TO UNDERSTAND AND MAINTAIN THEIR PERSONAL BOUNDARIES

Desirable Facilitator Experience

Tell me about your experience in this class? What was it like for you as a facilitator?
Certainly, it was both an enjoyable and a difficult experience. Enjoyable because I was able to effectively design a program which seemed to helping and I love what I do – I love being able to help people and I think that this program was able to do that.
THEME: ENJOYED HELPING OTHERS

It seemed that there was something going on within the group that the girls weren't comfortable talking about. I often felt that perhaps I was pushing them too far but when I questioned this they would say "no". I realized, however, that I had to work harder to contain the group, which seems to me something which an inexperienced therapist, such as me, needs to do to maintain safety within the therapeutic context.
After this, these awkward moments were fewer and further between but they still existed; however, I knew at this point that I was doing what I could; still I worked harder to improve my own role as therapist.

THEME: (AS A NEOPHYTE GROUP THERAPIST) FACILITATOR WORKED HARDER TO CONTAIN THE EXPERIENCE, WHICH HELPED TO MINIMIZE FEELINGS OF DISCOMFORT (THIS WAS DONE THROUGH THE INCREASED APPLICATION OF DRAMA)

Was there anything you found helpful or satisfying? Can you describe what that was?
What I found most helpful was the ability of the participants to truly share themselves with the group, to be there and to try their best to really be a part of this experience. Certainly, they were not always comfortable and I'm sure that they weren't always able to be honest but I still feel honored that they were able to commit to the therapeutic process and, truly, I felt that they did. They really invested themselves in this and it wouldn't have been possible without this.
THEME: PARTICIPANTS COMITTED TO THE THERAPEUTIC PROCESS TO THE BEST OF THEIR ABILITY

Undesirable Facilitator Experience

There were times, however, when I didn't know what was happening for my participants – there would be a feeling of discomfort and when I questioned why there wasn't always a response and, so, this feeling would just linger and I wouldn't know what it was about.
THEME: PERCEIVED PARTICIPANT DISCOMFORT
THEME: PARTICIPANTS UNWILLING TO DISCUSS DISCOMFORT
THEME: LACK OF CONTAINMENT
Perceived Participant Experience

I don't know if this program actually helped anyone to avoid trauma but I am aware that it provided the participants with a supportive environment. During termination of the therapeutic process it was revealed that this had been an important place for them, were they felt comfortable and supported, even if they weren't always able to openly share what was going on inside of them. In fact, there were many participants who revealed that they had developed a deeper sense of trust... so it seems that this was an important place for them. During the group, they were able to discuss issues such as drug use, body image, familial stress, school stress, etc. So I have no doubt that the program helped them to feel supported and helped them to explore who they are within a larger context.
THEME: PARTICIPANTS EXPERIENCED A SUPPORTIVE ENVIRONMENT
THEME: PARTICIPANTS REVEALED THE PROGRAM WAS IMPORTANT FOR THEM
THEME: PARTICIPANTS DISCUSSED RELEVANT ISSUES WITHIN THE GROUP CONTEXT
But I began to wonder if perhaps this awkwardness within the group was at all related to the fact that the participants knew one another outside of the group and, perhaps, that there was interpersonal conflict of which I was unaware...
THEME: CONFLICT BETWEEN GROUP MEMBERS EXISTING OUTSIDE OF THE GROUP EXPERIENCE EFFECTS THE GROUP EXPERIENCE

Group Dynamics

Have you noticed any changes in the students whom participated in the program? Can you describe some of those changes?
The group itself definitely evolved; there was a definite sense of togetherness throughout the last phase of the group, which led me to believe that the process was working and unfolding in a timely manner. They were eventually able to share and discuss relevant issues, which, they themselves brought to the therapy. I think as well that each of the participants were able to feel comfortable within the group and so were able to share more of themselves and of what was going on for them. Thus, I believe that they were all able to feel secure within the group and so were able to develop deeper levels of trust. Through which I was able to witness more of who they are and, thus, was able to develop what felt like authentic relationships with them. Within the group, then, I saw each participant changing, becoming more confident and open with themselves.
THEME: EVOLUTION OF THE GROUP; ESTABLISHMENT OF THE FEELING OF TOGETHERNESS
THEME: TRUST ESTABLISHED WITHIN THE GROUP ENABLING PARTICIPANTS TO SHARE MORE OF THEMSELVES
THEME: AUTHENTIC

Effects of Program on Participants: Changes in Participants

I don't know if this program actually helped anyone to avoid trauma but I am aware that it provided the participants with a supportive environment. During termination of the therapeutic process, it was revealed that this had been an important place for them, were they felt comfortable and supported, even if they weren't always able to openly share what was going on inside of them. In fact, there were many participants who revealed that they had developed a deeper sense of trust... so it seems that this was an important place for them. During the group they were able to discuss issues such as drug use, body image, familial stress, school stress, etc. So I have no doubt that the program helped them to feel supported and helped them to explore who they are within a larger context.
THEME: PARTICIPANTS REVEALED THAT THEY HAD DEVELOPED A DEEPER SENSE OF TRUST
THEME: PARTICIPANTS WERE ABLE TO GET A BETTER SENSE OF THEMSELVES RELATIVE TO OTHERS

Have you noticed any changes in the students who participated in the program? Can you describe some of those changes?
The group itself definitely evolved; there was a definite sense of togetherness throughout the last phase of the group, which led me to believe that the process was working and unfolding in a timely manner. They were eventually able to share and discuss relevant issues, which, they themselves brought to the therapy. I think as well that each of the participants were able to feel comfortable within the group and so were able to share more of themselves and of what was going on for them. Thus, I believe that they were all able to feel secure within the group and so were able to develop deeper levels of trust. Through which I was able to witness more of who they are and thus, was able to develop

what felt like authentic relationships with them. Within the group then I saw each participant changing, becoming more confident and open with themselves.
THEME: INCREASED PARTICIPANT CONFIDENCE
THEME: INCREASED PARTICIPANT OPENNESS

Effect of Program on School Life

Did you witness any impact the program may have had on school life at large?
No, I did not. But I was only at the school when I had groups so there was really no way for me to observe this. So, I can't honestly answer this question. On the other hand, I did not witness any negative effects and my participants did not bring to group any negative experiences.
THEME: INABILITY TO WITNESS AFFECT OF PROGRAM ON SCHOOL LIFE
THEME: NO NEGATIVE EFFECTS OF PROGRAM ON SCHOOL LIFE BROUGHT TO GROUP

Effect of Grading

What was it like to grade students for their work in this class, i.e. therapy session?
Initially, I was very troubled by the idea of grading a therapeutic experience; however, I was able to develop a scheme with which I was very comfortable. I wanted to grade entirely on attendance, as that to me seems the most important aspect of therapy – just being there. So, participants only had to show up to get 75%. Projects which coordinated with the major program themes made up the rest of the grade; these projects were not graded on aesthetics but on completion – penalties were given for late assignments. Moreover, the grading scheme was discussed with participants beforehand and they were invited to make suggestions – I was very candid about the difficulty of grading a therapeutic experience and wanted to ensure that they knew that their experience within this program was about what they learned (or experienced), and not about the grade.
THEME: GRADING THERAPEUTIC EXPERIENCE INITIALLY TROUBLING
THEME: COMFORTABLE GRADING PARTICIPANT ATTENDANCE
THEME: COMFORTABLE WITH GRADING BECAUSE IT WAS DISCUSSED OPENLY WITH PARTICIPANTS

Future Recommendations

To this end, I am still not sure what it was about but I can say that I was always careful to explain to the girls that they should only reveal what they are comfortable revealing and that if I ask something which they are not comfortable answering that they must tell me. So I tried to help them share and be open and also to maintain their own boundaries. I would, however, recommend that in the future I might screen participants beforehand in an attempt to have a diverse group – people from different social circles.
THEME: SCREEN PARTICIPANTS BEFOREHAND
THEME: THE PROGRAM MIGHT BENEFIT FROM THE INCLUSION OF PARTICIPANTS COMING FROM MORE DIVERSE SOCIAL CIRCLES

Was there anything you found unhelpful or unsatisfying? Can you describe what that was?

I didn't find anything unhelpful but in the future I would like to make greater efforts to involve myself with the school and with the guidance counselor. It felt somewhat separate from the school and I think that this type of service, with more communication between me and the teachers, and even parents, might benefit the students more. But then, on the other hand, perhaps what made it feel safe for these girls was that it was their own thing. It would be interesting to research this idea further.

THEME: INCREASED COMMMUNICATION WITH TEACHERS AND GUIDANCE COUNSELOR AND PARENTS

THEME: POSSIBILITY THAT PARTICIPANTS BENEFITTED FROM THE FACT THAT THIS WAS THEIR OWN THING – INTERESTING RESEARCH IDEA

Themes

In order to determine existent patterns within the themes the data was set aside, isolating the themes, so that they might be easily analyzed; this might be referred to as the final analysis, in which a very specific list of themes, relative to each of the major categories was developed. In the first major category, Perceived Need for Program, there were initially 6 theme clusters, in the final analysis there were 3; the category Program Goals went from 10 major themes to 6; Desirable Facilitator Experience remained the same with 3; Undesirable Facilitator Experience went from 3 to 1; Perceived Participant Experience went from 4 to 3; Group Dynamics remained the same with 3; Effect of Program on Participants: Changes in Participants went from 4 to 3; Effect of Program on School Life went from 2 to 1; Effect of Program on Grading remained the same with 3 and finally, the category Future Recommendations remained the same with 4 major theme clusters. The finalized list of themes, then, is highlighted here (interview script verifying the finalized list of themes is also documented here):

1. Perceived Need for Program

Themes:

a. Traumatic personal experience

Of course my own high school experience served as a sort of template for my understanding of the experience of being an adolescent girl and, thus, of what might be missing during adolescence

b. Perceived lack of support

My own adolescence was rather difficult and in retrospect I saw that had there been more support or an opportunity to discuss and share issues and concerns it may have actually been possible for me to have worked through some of what was going on

c. Adolescents confronted with serious issues

I know that from my experience as an adolescent their were many serious issues with which we struggled and I see that today as well …there has been a definite increase in both the level and degree of school violence. Things just don't seem to be getting any better…

2. Program Goals

Themes:

a. Understand self

The over-arching goal was that it might help participants to define more clearly who they are.

b. Understand self relative to others

…to discuss their lives in a group context, so that they might learn from one another.

c. Understanding and maintaining boundaries

To this end, I am still not sure what it was about but I can say that I was always careful to explain to the girls that they should only reveal what they are comfortable revealing and that if I ask something which they are not comfortable answering that they must tell me. So I tried to help them share and be open and, also, to maintain their own boundaries.

d. Personal growth and confidence

...and in so doing, to strengthen the sense of self thereby helping them to negotiate their lives with greater clarity...

e. Comfort and support

I also wanted to simply create an environment in which they might feel supported...

f. Preemptive work; attempting to help avoid crisis

I really wanted to do something that might make a difference in a young person's life – help to instill them with hope... But I must reiterate the notion that I wanted this to be a program that would help adolescent females in a preemptive manner; it wasn't intended to help girls through crises, it was supposed to help prevent crises.

3. Desirable Facilitator Experience

Themes:

a. Enjoyed helping others

Enjoyable because I was able to effectively design a program which seemed to helping and I love what I do – I love being able to help people and I think that this program was able to do that.

b. The experience was contained through the increased application of drama

I realized however that I had to work harder to contain the group, which seems to me something which an inexperienced therapist, such as me, needs to do to maintain safety within the therapeutic context. After this, these awkward moments were fewer and further between but they still existed; however, I knew at this point that I was doing what I could; still I worked harder to improve my own role as therapist.

c. Participants committed to the therapeutic process

What I found most helpful was the ability of the participants to truly share themselves with the group, to be there and to try their best to really be a part of this experience. Certainly, they were not always comfortable and I'm sure that they weren't always able to be honest but I still feel honored that they were able to commit to the therapeutic process and, truly, I felt that they did. They really invested themselves in this and it wouldn't have been possible without this.

4. Undesirable Facilitator Experience

Themes:

a. Perceived participant discomfort; lack of containment

...there would be a feeling of discomfort and when I questioned why there wasn't always a response and so, this feeling would just linger and I wouldn't know what it was about.

5. Perceived Participant Experience

Themes:

a. Participants experienced a supportive environment

During termination of the therapeutic process it was revealed that this had been an important place for them, were they felt comfortable and supported, even if they weren't always able to openly share what was going on inside of them.

b. Participants able to discuss relevant issues within the group

During the group they were able to discuss issues such as drug use, body image, familial stress, school stress, etc. So I have no doubt that the program helped them to feel supported and helped them to explore who they are within a larger context.

c. Conflict existing outside of the group experience effects the group experience

But I began to wonder if perhaps this awkwardness within the group was at all related to the fact that the participants knew one another outside of the group and perhaps that there was interpersonal conflict of which I was unaware...

6. Group Dynamics

Themes:

a. Evolution of the group; establishment of the feeling of togetherness

The group itself definitely evolved; there was a definite sense of togetherness throughout the last phase of the group, which led me to believe that the process was working and unfolding in a timely manner.

b. Trust established within the group enabling the participants to share more of

themselves

Thus, I believe that they were all able to feel secure within the group and, so, were able to develop deeper levels of trust. Through which I was able to witness more of who they are...

c. Authentic

...thus, was able to develop what felt like authentic relationships with them.

7. Effects of Program on Participants: Changes in Participants

Themes:

a. Participants revealed that they had developed a deeper sense of trust

In fact, there were many participants who revealed that they had developed a deeper sense of trust...

b. Participants were able to get a better sense of themselves relative to others

I have no doubt that the program helped them to feel supported and helped them to explore who they are within a larger context.

c. Increased participant confidence

Within the group, then, I saw each participant changing, becoming more confident and open with themselves.

8. Effect of Program on School Life

Themes:

a. No effects of program witnessed

I was only at the school when I had groups so there was really no way for me to observe this.

9. Effect of Grading

Themes:

a. Grading therapeutic experience initially troubling

Initially I was very troubled by the idea of grading a therapeutic experience

b. Comfortable grading participant attendance

I was able to develop a scheme with which I was very comfortable. I wanted to grade entirely on attendance, as that to me seems the most important aspect of therapy – just being there.

c. Importance of discussing grading with participants

I was very candid about the difficulty of grading a therapeutic experience and wanted to ensure that they knew that their experience within this program was about what they learned, and not about the grade.

10. Future Recommendations

Themes:

a. Screen participants beforehand

I would however recommend that in the future I might screen participants beforehand...

b. Diversity in participant social circles

...people from different social circles.

c. Increased communication with teachers and guidance counselor

I didn't find anything unhelpful but, in the future, I would like to make greater efforts to involve myself with the school and with the guidance counselor. It felt somewhat separate from the school and I think that this type of service, with more communication between me and the teachers, and even parents, might benefit the students more.

d. Research idea: how might participant experience differ with increased

communication of the program facilitator with the teachers and/or the guidance

counselor?

But then, on the other hand, perhaps what made it feel safe for these girls was that it was their own thing. It would be interesting to research this idea further.

Head Teacher Interview

Contained within the following paragraphs is a synopsis of the analysis of the interview conducted with the head teacher; both the interview questions and the actual interview transcript have been appended (Appendix B and H).

The semi-structured interview elicited the following categories:

1. Perceived Program Goals

2. Head Teacher's Goals

3. Desirable Effects of the Program

4. Undesirable Effects of the Program

5. Effect of Program on Participants: Changes in Participants

6. Effect of Program on School Life

7. Effect of Grading

However, after application of the aforementioned categories to the interview data, there were a couple of changes. The category, Desirable Effects of the Program was removed, as every notable *desirable effect* concerned perceived *changes in the participants*; thus, the former was removed in favor of the latter. Additionally, one new category was elicited from the interview data, this category has been labeled, Desire for the Program. The final categorical make-up is thus as follows:

1. Perceived Program Goals

2. Head Teacher's Goals

3. Desire for Program

4. Undesirable Effects of the Program

5. Effect of Program on Participants: Changes in Participants

6. Effect of Program on School Life

7. Effect of Grading

The interview conducted with the head teacher was thus coded; however, it was coded utilizing not only the aforementioned categories but also with themes indicating the mood of each piece of data. The analysis is as follows:

Perceived Program Goals

In your opinion, what was the purpose of this class?
Discovery... self discovery through drama with someone who could guide them.
THEME: SELF-DISCOVERY
Identity development?
Yes and to discover how you relate to others, in a group, in the school, outside the school...
What do you mean when you say: how you relate to others?
Where do I stand with what this person is telling me? Does it touch me? Why am I angry when this person...? Why do I react...?
Helping them understand their feelings?
Yeah and to be able to... distance... how could I say this...?
Improve...?
I wouldn't say improving... normalize?
Accepting/experiencing the range of possible feelings?
Yes and at the same time the ability to uh... I want to use that word and it's just there...To understand the reaction that you have to the outside world – you first understand the jumble inside and then how you relate to the outside world and why and how it affects you...
Self-reflection; the time in between the feeling and the response?
Yes.
THEME: UNDERSTANDING SELF RELATIVE TO OTHERS

And you equate that with the drama?
Definitely. A real sense of self-reflection... I'm still looking for the word...but you know just the ability to say this is too much and I am going to remove myself from the situation – not to avoid it but to come back with a clearer mind.
THEME: UNDERSTANDING SELF RELATIVE TO OTHERS
THEME: UNDERSTANDING FEELINGS

Head Teacher's Goals

Why did you choose to include this program as a course at your school?
Because the kids wanted it – they were enthusiastic and they had it last year and they were really keen on having it and I thought if it is going to help them... they can really use this... (Omitted in order to maintain confidentiality) really need it. They would do shit to feel cool but now do this less...I definitely relate their new skills and their ability to manage problems effectively to the drama. There were big changes in (omitted) – this helped them to be able to confront what was bothering them. (Omitted) with guys bugging her...talking about it in group and then discussing it gave her the strength to say something. (Omitted) loved the fact that she could talk to the grade elevens.
Do you think she has developed a better sense of self?
I think so. It was really important for her.
THEME: STUDENTS REQUESTED THE PROGRAM
THEME: STUDENTS NEED TO DEVELOP LIFE SKILLS

Desire for Program

Therapy is not scary anymore to the other kids then?
Definitely.
THERE WAS AN INTERRUPTION HERE.
I'm really, really happy...I'm really sad if we aren't able to keep it and this is a very little price to pay to give them life-skills... We (you and I) built a relationship where we understand each other (in reference my understanding of academic protocol and his understanding of drama therapy and its place within the school).
THEME: SMALL PRICE TO PAY TO GIVE STUDENTS LIFE-SKILLS
Do you think they get these skills otherwise?
 No. I think they are told how to behave and are expected to behave... but this was never important (learning life-skills)... this education is more of an English thing... When I talk about this in the French sector they are looking at me (as if) we are here to *educate* them. They (the kids) don't have family activities... They learn certain skills...small talks, how not to behave – but an awful lot of this is not at home anymore. People are too busy; people want to be friends to their kids. And in school, because of the violence, they learn what they need to learn to survive – I need to be a bitch or a victim, because of the violence... learn how to survive and just hope the bully won't deal with you. Drama helps people to deal with the bully in a way to set you free – (bullying can also happen) in a relationship or with parents, you know, "Please, it would break my heart if you don't go to college..." They can learn how to confront this.
THEME: FAMILIES ARE OFTEN TOO BUSY TO TEACH CHILDREN LIFE-SKILLS
THEME: VIOLENCE IN SCHOOL TEACHES STUDENTS HOW TO SURVIVE BUT NOT HOW TO BE FREE
THEME: DRAMA THERAPY HELPS STUDENTS LEARN TO SET THEMSELVES FREE FROM BULLIES

Is there anything you'd like to add?
Pity we don't know if we have the money to do it again, especially at (this school). Because we get kids who really, really need attention and a therapeutic setting but are not ready (for a therapeutic setting). 20% are on anti-depressants – it's enormous (the need) – they've had these other therapies throughout their lives but the drama therapy is less threatening. Right now drama therapy is experimental and the beauty of being experimental is that you don't judge yet. Everything is okay and I think that is the beauty of it now.
THEME: LACK OF MONEY
THEME: STUDENTS NEED TO DEVELOP LIFE-SKILLS
THEME: DRAMA THERAPY NORMALIZES THERAPY
Before it gets corrupted?
I don't want to be cynical but it seems that when it's normalized it gets corrupted. You're building it now and so everything is up to you.
(Data missing)
So you try to teach them the same things on a regular basis?

Yeah. So that's why I believe in this… and the kids were really enthusiastic. But we would need at least $5000 for you two and another $4500 for art – the whole school has art… But we have to look at how many kids are benefiting…
THEME: STUDENTS REQUESTED THE PROGRAM
THEME: LACK OF MONEY
THEME: NEED TO SERVE MORE STUDENTS

Undesirable Effects of Program

What did you find unhelpful/unsatisfying?
No, no, no – not at all.
THEME: NO UNDESIRABLE EFFECTS

Effect of Program on Participants: Changes in Participants

What did you see as the benefit of this skill?
When (one of the participants the program)… when I told her she would be out of the prom organization… I should have said we are rearranging…but I burst at her… but her typical reaction would be "fuck you too!" But she said I 'm feeling angry I have to go and the next day she came to speak with me… and because of drama she was able to remove herself from a situation that would have been potentially explosive as well she was able to talk the next day rather than ignoring the situation…
THEME: PARTICIPANT LEARNING TO THINK BEFORE REACTING

Why did you choose to include this program as a course at your school?
Because the kids wanted it – they were enthusiastic and they had it last year and they were really keen on having it and I thought if it is going to help them… they can really use this… (Omitted in order to maintain confidentiality) really need it. They would do shit to feel cool but now do this less…I definitely relate their new skills and their ability to manage problems effectively to the drama. There were big changes in (omitted) – this helped them to be able to confront what was bothering them. (Omitted) with guys bugging her…talking about it in group and then discussing it gave her the strength to say something. (Omitted) loved the fact that she could talk to the grade elevens.
Do you think she has developed a better sense of self?
I think so. It was really important for her.
THEME: PARTICIPANTS LEARN TO MANAGE PROBLEMS EFFECTIVELY
THEME: PARTICIPANT ACTIVELY DEALING WITH A NEGATIVE SITUATION AS OPPOSED TO AVOIDING IT

Effect of Program on School Life

Tell me, what was it like having this program at your school? What sort of impact did the program have?
What's interesting was that only those 5 girls were interested, now a lot of people are. What they hear and what they have seen…now everyone wants to have drama next year…and they are asking me, "Can we pay for it? Can we fundraise?" – Cause they

don't give a shit about therapy anymore. They see that it is not therapy in the sense that you are sitting in front of a shrink and analyzed... They like the fact that this school allows for special places... most of them have problems interacting and they see the results in the kids and how they are better able to cope... Would they be able to withstand the content? I don't know... They like the secretive place (in reference to the location of the drama therapy space) and it seems glamorous... but are they aware of all the effort... the vulnerability they have to put themselves through to make this worthwhile...

THEME: CHANGES IN PARTICIPANTS OBSERVED BY OTHER STUDENTS
THEME: INCREASED DESIRE FOR DRAMA THERAPY
THEME: DRAMA THERAPY NORMALIZES THERAPY
Well, this is my job, to help them...
But I don't think they understand the effort. I think it would be good for the kids (who participated) to talk with the other kids to see how it was for them... to see that it was a lot of work but that you learn life skills... and the idea that I shouldn't react like this and why am I reacting like this...

THEME: ABILITY OF STUDENTS TO COMMIT TO THERAPEUTIC WORK QUESTIONED

Have you noticed any changes in the students whom participated in the program? Can you describe some of those changes?
(Omitted) was able to redirect herself in a potentially explosive situation with me... and she was right. But when I snapped I just thought, "Ah fuck." I didn't talk to her but I know she is an extrovert... we talked then and (omitted) talked to her and then we talked again and then we discussed it in class and they were like, "Whoa! You admitted it (that I had snapped)!" And I was, "Of course. What? Am I going to give you a wrong skill in life?" And (omitted) was able to joke and laugh about this... she was still feeling hurt but was able to let it go... before she would be bringing up the last time and the last time and the time before... She will not admit that what she did was not okay but she was able to withdraw and I was able to speak with her and the school nurse talked to her and two days later we talked and we were able to... This was a big accomplishment for her and she commented on this for herself too... and she was so proud of herself. And so that's a major... I know that with her it is the most visible one.

THEME: PARTICIPANT LEARNING TO THINK BEFORE REACTING
With (omitted)?
They had a drawback the other day but they left (the school) and were able to talk... something happened between them but they were able to skip a class, know what the consequences would be, but what was more important was that this (their drawback) would not get worse... this needed to be resolved.
And before?
Typical female emotional narrative...
Passive aggressive...
Passive aggressive manipulation... What we consider is the typical male emotional narrative is the punch... So instead of manipulation they were able to leave and skip and know the consequences and know that what was more important for them in the moment was to talk about this.

THEME: PARTICIPANTS ACTIVELY RESOLVING INTERPERSONAL CONFLICT AS OPPOSED TO REACTING WITH PASSIVE-AGGRESSIVITY

And for anyone else?

For (omitted) confronting her bullies. But already that with (omitted) is a major benefit – the group gave her tools and she was able to take a course of action... major conflict resolution... but at the same time the therapy comes in and she has to look at herself and say, "This has happened before, but I wasn't able to say anything..." So she had to look at, "Why do I put myself in these situations?" Before she would have avoided the situation... I told her that there are other ways (to deal with this kind situation) – but she was not ready yet for that... if she starts looking too much at her self... this is too much. She said, "I'm totally comfortable with who I am." I told her that passive aggressivity is a choice but not maybe the best choice. I suggested she bring it back in the drama and talk about it...

But she is not ready for this deeper self-reflection?

Even adults can't do this... (Omitted) was able to say, "I'm totally comfortable with myself." But not, "Why is this bullying happening?" But she is slowly establishing this kind of self- analysis... (Asking) why is this happening to me and what am I doing to bring it on?

THEME: PARTICIPANT ACTIVELY DEALING WITH A NEGATIVE SITUATION AS OPPOSED TO AVOIDING IT

What did you find useful/helpful/satisfying?

I think I've said... the fact that they were able to discuss (things) and then come to me... like I've already said.

THEME: PARTICIPANTS LEARN TO MANAGE PROBLEMS EFFECTIVELY

Effect of Grading

What is your opinion concerning the fact that the students received a grade for this particular course?

I think in many ways we have no choice... we couldn't have this... it would be so complicated with the board. At the same time... attendance (in reference to the grading schema)... if they are always there all the time... But in drama therapy I understand now that if they are here and they participate (they get a grade)... What if they don't participate?

If they are here and they are not participating, well, for some people it can be counter-therapeutic to force them to participate or to kick them out and sometimes what they need is just to be accepted for wherever they are at and sometimes that is to sit and not participate, but eventually they will come around and join in the group and at that point, it will be on their own terms and so, they won't feel forced.

Yes and sometimes someone can be participating but taking up too much space.

You are okay then with the grading?

I had to be... and I know you enough and how you work and I see the progress... At first, not knowing...it seemed sort of Lucy Goosey... What's this? Everyone gets a grade just for showing up? And now I know it is just a different way to evaluate.

THEME: GRADING REQUIRED FOR PROGRAM'S INCLUSION IN SCHOOL

THEME: GRADING SCHEME INITIALLY QUESTIONED
THEME: GRADING SCHEME EVENTUALLY UNDERSTOOD AND
ACCEPTED

Themes

In order to determine existent patterns within the themes the data was set aside

and the themes themselves were analyzed; this might be referred to as the final analysis.

In the first category, Perceived Program Goals, there were initially 3 significant themes,

in the final analysis they were grouped into 2 major theme clusters; the second category,

Head Teacher's Goals, remained the same with 2 major themes in the final analysis;

Desire for Program went from 9 to 5 ; Undesirable Effects of the Program remained the

same with 1; Effect of Program on Participants: Changes in Participants remained the

same with 4; Effect of Program on School Life from 4 to 3 and finally, the category,

Effect of Grading remained the same with 3. The categories and their major theme

clusters are highlighted here (script has been included as evidence supporting the

inclusion of each theme):

1. Perceived Program Goals

Themes:

a. Understanding self

In your opinion, what was the purpose of this class?
Discovery… self discovery through drama with someone who could guide them.

b. Understanding self relative to others

Identity development?
Yes and to discover how you relate to others, in a group, in the school, outside the
school…
What do you mean when you say: how you relate to others?
Where do I stand with what this person is telling me? Does it touch me? Why am I
angry when this person…? Why do I react…?

2. Head Teacher's Goals

Themes:

a.   Student requested the program

Why did you choose to include this program as a course at your school?
Because the kids wanted it – they were enthusiastic and they had it last year and they were really keen on having it...

b.   Students need to develop life-skills

I thought if it is going to help them... they can really use this... (Omitted in order to maintain confidentiality) really need it. They would do shit to feel cool but now do this less...

3. Desire for Program

Themes:

a.   Small price to pay; lack of money

I'm really, really happy...I'm really sad if we aren't able to keep it and this is a very little price to pay to give them life-skills...

b.   Families are often too busy to teach life-skills to children

They (the kids) don't have family activities... They learn certain skills...small talks, how not to behave – but an awful lot of this is not at home anymore. People are too busy; people want to be friends to their kids.

c.   Violence in school teaches how to survive but not how to be free; drama therapy

teaches how to be free

And in school, because of the violence, they learn what they need to learn to survive – I need to be a bitch or a victim, because of the violence... learn how to survive and just hope the bully won't deal with you. Drama helps people to deal with the bully in a way to set you free – (bullying can also happen) in a relationship or with parents, you know, "Please, it would break my heart if you don't go to college..." They can learn how to confront this.

d.   Drama therapy normalizes therapy

Is there anything you'd like to add?

Pity we don't know if we have the money to do it again, especially at (this school). Because we get kids who really, really need attention and a therapeutic setting but are not ready (for a therapeutic setting). 20% are on anti-depressants – it's enormous (the need) – they've had these other therapies throughout their lives but the drama therapy is less threatening.

e. Students requested the program

Yeah. So that's why I believe in this… and the kids were really enthusiastic.

4. Undesirable Effects of the Program

Themes:

a. No undesirable effects

What did you find unhelpful/unsatisfying?
No, no, no – not at all.

5. Effect of Program on Participants: Changes in Participants

Themes:

a. Participants learn to manage problems effectively

I definitely relate their new skills and their ability to manage problems effectively to the drama.

b. Participants learn to think before reacting

What did you see as the benefit of this skill?
When (one of the participants the program)… when I told her she would be out of the prom organization… I should have said we are rearranging…but I burst at her… but her typical reaction would be "fuck you too!" But she said I 'm feeling angry I have to go and the next day she came to speak with me… and because of drama she was able to remove herself from a situation that would have been potentially explosive as well she was able to talk the next day rather than ignoring the situation…

c. Participant actively dealing with a negative situation as opposed to avoiding it.

And for anyone else?
For (omitted) confronting her bullies. But already that with (omitted) is a major benefit – the group gave her tools and she was able to take a course of action… major conflict resolution… but at the same time the therapy comes in and she has to look at herself and say, "This has happened before, but I wasn't able to say anything…" So

she had to look at, "Why do I put myself in these situations?" Before she would have avoided the situation...

d. Participants actively resolving interpersonal conflict as opposed to reacting with

passive-aggressivity

With (omitted)?
They had a drawback the other day but they left (the school) and were able to talk... something happened between them but they were able to skip a class, know what the consequences would be, but what was more important was that this (their drawback) would not get worse... this needed to be resolved.
And before?
Typical female emotional narrative...
Passive aggressive...
Passive aggressive manipulation... What we consider is the typical male emotional narrative is the punch... So instead of manipulation they were able to leave and skip and know the consequences and know that what was more important for them in the moment was to talk about this.

6. **Effect of Program on School Life**

Themes:

a. Changes in participants observed by other students; increased desire for program

Tell me, what was it like having this program at your school? What sort of impact did the program have?
What's interesting was that only those 5 girls were interested, now a lot of people are. What they hear and what they have seen...now everyone wants to have drama next year...and they are asking me, "Can we pay for it? Can we fundraise?"

b. Drama therapy normalizes therapy

Cause they don't give a shit about therapy anymore. They see that it is not therapy in the sense that you are sitting in front of a shrink and analyzed...

c. Ability of students to commit to therapeutic work questioned

But I don't think they understand the effort. I think it would be good for the kids (who participated) to talk with the other kids to see how it was for them... to see that it was a lot of work but that you learn life skills...

7. Effect of Grading

Themes:

a. Grading required for program's inclusion in school

I think in many ways we have no choice... we couldn't have this... it would be so complicated with the board.

b. Grading scheme initially questioned

At first, not knowing...it seemed sort of Lucy Goosey... What's this? Everyone gets a grade just for showing up?

c. Grading scheme eventually understood and accepted

You are okay then with the grading?
I had to be... and I know you enough and how you work and I see the progress...
And now I know it is just a different way to evaluate.

Participant Interview Analysis

Contained within the following paragraphs is a synopsis of the participant

interview analyses. Interview questions and original transcripts are appended.

The semi-structured interview elicited the following six categories:

1. Perceived Program Goals

2. Participant Goals

3. Participant Experience

4. Effect of Program on Participant: Changes in Participant

5. Effect of Program on School Life

6. Effect of Grading

Application of the categories to the interview data resulted in a few categorical

transformations. Participant Experience broke down into two categories: Desirable

Participant Experience and Undesirable Participant Experience and two entirely new

categories were elicited: Group Dynamics and Effect of School Life on Program; everything else remained unchanged.

1. Perceived Program Goals

2. Participant Goals

3. Desirable Participant Experience

4. Undesirable Participant Experience

5. Effect of Program on Participant: Changes in Participant

6. Group Dynamics

7. a. Effect of Program on School Life

   b. Effect of School Life on Program

8. Effect of Grading

The data was thus coded utilizing the aforementioned categories; however, each piece of data was coded not only by category but also by the theme. The theme indicates the mood or the opinion each piece of data contains concerning the relevant category. The interview data was thus organized across-participants, both by category and by theme, as follows.

Perceived Program Goals

Lisa:
In your opinion, what was the purpose of this class?
I believe that the purpose of this class was to try to better understand one's feelings and opinions on common problems. Those common problems were brought up by ourselves during discussion.
THEME: UNDERSTANDING SELF RELATIVE TO OTHERS
THEME: UNDERSTANDING FEELINGS

Iasha:
In your opinion, what was the purpose of this class?
For more than one person to come together and share experiences.
What would come from this? What benefit would there be?

Growth, comfort, security; to support each other and maybe gain introspection… by putting yourself in a new circumstance you'll automatically learn something…

And the benefit would…

Growth, comfort, security…

Do you feel then that you would get this from any new situation?

It's something you're not really looking for but through this kind of guided experience these kinds of things come up…

So, the structured and guided element of the program helped to elicit this (growth, comfort, security) for you?

Yes.

Anything else you might have seen as the purpose for this class?

To have fun.

THEME: UNDERSTANDING SELF RELATIVE TO OTHERS

THEME: COMFORT

THEME: GROWTH

Sarah:

In your opinion, what was the purpose of this class?

I thought it was probably to relax the students, to get them in touch with the innermost part of themselves, to cool down a little… to be a little break in school life, to take them away little?

THEME: UNDERSTANDING SELF

THEME: RELAXATION

And you said that you also saw this to be for the inner most self?

This is the part you usually don't think about. You know? The spiritual part of you. You know? That sounds really cliché but you know it's there…..

What did you see as the benefit of that?

What do you mean?

How did you see that benefiting your life?

It makes you more aware of yourself…less aware of how you appear outwardly and more aware of who you are… so it gives you more confidence, a little, to know that part of yourself better and the ability to realize that it doesn't matter how you appear to others.

THEME: CONFIDENCE

THEME: UNDERSTANDING SELF

THEME: UNDERSTANDING SELF REALTIVE TO OTHERS

Sachelle:

In your opinion, what was the purpose of this class?

I thought it was more for your, um, kind of an experiment, not an experiment but a test trial to see how a group of youth connected in a school environment… To clarify and to help ease teen matters… to discuss it in a group where they might not otherwise have the opportunity.

THEME: TESTING VIABILITY OF GROUP THERAPY IN HIGH SCHOOL

THEME: UNDERSTANDING SELF RELATIVE TO OTHERS

THEME: EASE TEEN MATTERS

Charmelia:

In your opinion, what was the purpose of this class?
I thought it was mostly to do therapy and using drama as a way to reenact emotions and to put yourself in the moment of what you are thinking or feeling....

So, to understand more, your feelings?
Yeah, understand them sort of through action instead of just talking.
THEME: UNDERSTAND FEELINGS
THEME: UTILIZE DRAMA TO CONDUCT THERAPY IN PREFERENCE OF TALKING

Okay, anything else?
To understand each other...like different people still find similarities...Well, the group aspect is sort of giving and taking...

So, to learn about yourself through meeting others?
Yeah. To learn from other people learn... to listen to other people... and learn to get feedback from a few different people instead of just one person.
THEME: UNDERSTANDING SELF RELATIVE TO OTHERS

Participant Goals

Lisa:

Why did you choose to register for this class? What goals did you have for yourself? Were you able to meet your goals?
I chose to register in this class because I had heard good things from other people. I have been in many one on one therapy sessions but every one has failed. I was curious to see what group therapy might be like. The goals that I placed on myself when entering the class were that I should be open minded to new things and that I should be patient with others. I believe I did quite a good job with my goals but at times did find myself growing impatient with the others (of course I gave them no less respect than I would other wise).
THEME: DEVELOP OPEN-MINDEDNESS
THEME: DEVELOP PATIENCE

Iasha:

Why did you choose to register for this class? What goals did you have for yourself? Were you able to meet your goals?
A place where I could relax... a break from the regular school stuff... and I like doing talking more than like art or something like that kind of thing and I was there last year...A place where I could feel comfortable and just be and have fun...

To have fun (smiling)?
... not necessarily have fun... but to learn from people...

There's nothing wrong with having fun.
(smiling and nodding)... and get to know people I would not necessarily know...

Why might that be important to you?
I like getting to know people... I learn from people...

For growth?

Yeah.
THEME: RELAXATION
THEME: BREAK FROM SCHOOL
THEME: HAVE FUN
THEME: LEARN FROM OTHERS
THEME: MEET OTHERS
THEME: GROWTH
(Participant stated here that didn't have personal goals; hence the following question)
No goals for yourself?
Not this year... last year I had more concrete goals... I don't feel like I'm lacking in something... I feel like I 'm very (trails off)...
THEME: NO PERSONAL GOALS
Did you have this goal of experiencing growth from other people?
... like I had like wants and stuff but I feel like a goal is something like... ah... very personal... it was a personal goal to meet people and grow but it just kind of happened...
So you didn't say to yourself before you began this program that this is what I want?
No.
Maybe it was more the outcome then, than it was your intention?
Yeah.
Anything else?
To be comfortable in expressing myself or doing acting stuff cause it was supposed to be drama therapy...
It wasn't drama therapy?
More therapy, less drama, you understand...
(Nod).
...maybe it was drama but I just unconsciously got comfortable with it and it was just like roles I play and so I didn't look it as drama...
THEME: DEVELOP COMFORT WITH SELF-EXPRESSION
THEME: DEVELOP COMFORT WITH DRAMA

Sarah:
Why did you choose to register for this class? What goals did you have for yourself? Were you able to meet your goals?
I'm not going to lie... to get know people... I wanted to get to know people here and I thought what better place than drama therapy where everyone is talking deep and all unguarded.
THEME: MEET OTHERS
How did you see that this would benefit your life?
Cause I got here and I didn't know too many people, so it seemed like a good opportunity, like a club or something.
Did you have any other personal goals?
To be a little less self-conscious; to break free of that a little, to be a little more open with people and I thought that maybe this class could help with that.
THEME: CONFIDENCE

Were these two goals linked for you?
Yeah.

Sachelle:
Why did you choose to register for this class? What goals did you have for yourself?
Were you able to meet your goals?
I didn't want to take drama therapy at first but I suck at art and that was the only other option... although I am an "arteest"... and I've taken it all my life...My mom was like go take it (drama therapy)... and I remembered kids in drama who seemed needy... and wore bright colors and... But I came here and it was totally different and the only drama was incorporated into the therapy, it was incorporated into what we wanted...we didn't just do like skits or something... I think I took it out of curiosity too, and that art is always there as a fallback...
LAST YEAR
THEME: ONLY OPTION ASIDE FROM ART
THEME: PARENT ENCOURAGED PARTICIPANT TO PARTAKE
THEME: CURIOSITY
Was that this year or last year?
This year I was all for it. I knew what to expect. At the end of last year I wanted there to be drama therapy again this year.
And this year did you have any personal goals?
Maybe. I think I saw the opportunity to gain stuff that I might not have had last year... there were a lot of strong characters and I had more issues and I held back... and this year a lot of those people were gone... there are not as many kids this year... but it was more that I could take stuff that I might have wanted last year... and not necessarily outwardly to express within the group but my own way of taking things that I wouldn't have bothered with last year....
THIS YEAR
THEME: GROWTH

Charmelia:
Why did you choose to register for this class? What goals did you have for yourself?
Were you able to meet your goals?
Um... I was interested in the group aspect and I knew that last year was sort of like the first time, so I wanted to see sort of how it would progress...I didn't know how it was going to change but I knew it was going to change somehow cause last year was the first year it was done....I was also interested to see what it would be like with other people...yeah... I was mostly interested to see what it would be like in a new group...
THEME: CURIOSITY
How did you think that this would benefit you?
I can learn new things from different people. Not necessarily by them telling me something but by observing them and learning what they are about...
Learning about new people enhances your perspective?
Yeah.
And how do you see that benefiting you?
I don't know...

To learn from other people... to enhance your perspective... so, to like open your mind?

Yeah.

And do you think that you accomplished this goal?

Yeah.

THEME: LEARN FROM OTHERS

Desirable Participant Experience

Lisa:

Tell me about your experience in this class? What was it like for you?

I found it very interesting. For the most part I found it very enjoyable and different to what I had been accustomed to. I liked our discussions and games we played. It felt very comfortable and relaxed. I didn't feel judged in anyway and I even enjoyed hearing others talk about their problems and opinions on things. What I enjoyed most of all was the social atom. It gave me a good look at some of my relationships and made me think twice about things. Although I had a great time most of the time there were classes that I didn't feel like being there. Almost all of those were for personal reasons such as being tired, stressed or physically ill.

THEME: COMFORT

Iasha:

Why did you choose to register for this class? What goals did you have for yourself? Were you able to meet your goals?

A place where I could relax... a break from the regular school stuff... and I like doing talking more than like art or something like that kind of thing and I was there last year...A place where I could feel comfortable and just be and have fun...

THEME: AN OKAY PLACE TO BE

Tell me about your experience in this class? What was it like for you?

What do you mean?

Well, you said that were able to come into a contrived situation and feel comfortable and that that was important to you?

Yeah.

Well, is there anything else about your experience that may have been important to you?

What do you mean?

Well, what was interesting to you?

... doing all the different things and getting to know different people and learning and seeing the end product at the end... you know, just to see the (trails off)...

The way the group had evolved?

Yeah.

What did that feel like, why was it important to you?

It feels like we each had an impact on each other and that (trails off)...

THEME: MEETING OTHERS

THEME: EVOLUTION OF THE GROUP

THEME: IMPACT ON ONE ANOTHER

Well, the lack of comfort, the lack of openness and honesty, the lack of involvement…it could be people's readiness to go to those places…That's a normal part of any therapeutic group and certainly it can be frustrating… Did it make you feel like you couldn't be where you needed to be?
Yes, sort of. I feel like I found purpose in every little thing that we did but I don't think that everyone did… but in the end it was rewarding to see that they liked it in the end even if they didn't like every little thing that we did.
THEME: EXPERIENCE OF GETTING SOMETHING OUT OF EVERYTHING

What was that like for you?
Good… cause it felt like we were helping her as she was speaking about it, so it was empowering…
It gave you hope?
Yeah. And like I really can make a difference.
THEME: FEELING OF EMPOWERMENT
THEME: FEELING OF HOPE

Sarah:
What do you think contributed to that togetherness?
The activities we did helped a lot. I'm not too sure. I think also they were just nice people and you were a really nice and laid back drama teacher – so you didn't make us feel like it was work… I don't know exactly what made it happen.
THEME: DIDN'T FEEL LIKE WORK

You said that this feeling of togetherness was something you could look back for this sense of confidence… So do you still get that sense of..?
Yeah.
Is there anything else you remember about your experience?
I don't know…I mean looking back it blurs together and I mean that doesn't mean it was bad…the biggest thing I can remember was the last day…cause I mean I'm trying to remember specific things like when I went home and was like that was really cool or made me feel good …
So there were these times when you were able to feel like it was really cool or made you feel really good?
Yeah.
You just don't remember specifically?
No.
THEME: FEELING GOOD
How did these times then, when it felt really good or cool personally affect you?
I felt really enlightened…cause I would think that none of my other friends would be doing this or thinking this… cause they think it's lame or they don't have time for stuff like this…
THEME: FEELING ENLIGHTENED

If there was any impact on your school life, can you describe it?
Socially I'm pretty sure it made me a bit more confident about myself and when I talked about those guys (people this participant was having problems with) in this class and they (the other participants) said it's horrible... it gave me a bit more confidence and courage... So having them there to say that really gave me the courage to keep hanging in there...
THEME: FEELING SUPPORTED

Sachelle:
What contributed to this change in your perception?
Just being in the group more than five or six times... not just signing the papers (the consent forms and group contract) but getting to know the people... like this is a fun place... we do what we need to do not what needs to be done...
THEME: APPRECIATION FOR FLEXIBILITY WITH CLASS PLAN
THEME: DIDN'T FEEL LIKE WORK

I really liked the fact that I didn't always like everyone all the time... This year I didn't feel like it was so important to put on a façade... When I felt like I was uncomfortable, I felt it was okay. Like it was kinda cool...like this is my own place to be...
THEME: AUTHENTICITY
And I really liked it better (than last year) cause there were so many stories we are not supposed to talk about...
THEME: APPRECIATION FOR INTER-MEMBER DISCLOSURE
I liked playing games and the fact that when I come here... it's like we need to get this done, but everyone else feels like playing games so let's play games...
Things aren't always so black and white and tedious...
THEME: APPRECIATION FOR FLEXIBILITY WITH CLASS PLAN
THEME: DIDN'T FEEL LIKE WORK
Even when we are going to do an activity and you think it's going to suck... But in the end you get something out of it every time...
THEME: EXPERIENCE OF GETTING SOMETHING OUT OF EVERYTHING
Can you elaborate on this idea that it was your own private place? What did this give you?
A feeling of home in a school... I feel like this is my comfort room... at first it had a really sterile hospital feeling (before the room was decorated) and I liked that part of it too... cause I would come in here and play the piano... and I just liked to be here and everything kind of fell into place when we painted the room...And I just felt really comfortable...
And when anyone else came in here I felt like they were going through my room...
Cause we always come out of here having a good time...
It's a girl's clubhouse too... not like a boy's space but for girls...
It was safe and sacred and we all had that understanding that made it an okay place to be...
THEME: A FEELING OF HOME IN A SCHOOL
THEME: COMFORT
THEME: SECURITY

THEME: AN OKAY PLACE TO BE

Do you think then, that it enhanced your relationships with the people you already knew?
Yeah.
In what way?
More stuff in common... more stuff to talk bout....it's just kinds of like ....this isn't the kinds of stuff you'd be doing outside ....this is original to here....like how we feel.....like if we are talking in the park about this stuff the conversation will just drift off...here it's like organized, well, here it drifts off too, but it snowballs in this organized way and it always comes back... It adds something to people when you can talk about this stuff and not just superficialities... But there is still something there that wasn't there before...
Wasn't there before? What do you think that it is?
Just knowing each other... You get to like adjust to other people's personal ... not adjust... but you get a feeling for someone....you just get a taste of their energy ...their being....you just kind of get a sense of who they are...
THEME: MEETING OTHERS
THEME: INCREASED DEPTH IN RELATIONSHIPS WITH GROUP MEMBERS KNOWN PRIOR TO THE ONSET OF THE PROGRAM
THEME: AUTHENTICITY

If there was any impact on your school life, can you describe it?
Well, I think it would just be kind of repetitive. The whole just passing smiles in the hallway. And not having to think do I really know this person...will this person be my friend tomorrow... It's not like a social issue... We know what we are about and we know what we do... It's like a club – we both belong to something...
THEME: AUTHENTICITY

Okay. Is there anything else you might like to add? Anything we haven't already touched upon?
My favorite activities?
Sure.
The social atom and I liked the random social atom cause it's not planned out and I like when you leave and you come back and everyone has to make assumptions...
I like that one too.
I'm totally like a little kid, "Let's play games!"
Well it's fun.
Yeah. It's fun!
THEME: HAVING FUN PLAYING GAMES

Charmelia:
And what benefit would this serve?
It allows you to be more honest about what you are actually feeling because in a controlled environment where ... you're supposed to really act them out and I don't know... Because it's a controlled environment you are not necessarily as vulnerable

because you start small and act it out and it progresses to something else and it's not as threatening as if you have to talk about something specific…
THEME: DRAMA THERAPY ALLOWS PARTICIPANTS TO BE MORE HONEST
THEME: DRAMA THERAPY EXPERIENCED AS LESS THREATENING THAN VERBAL OR TALK THERAPY

Um…. Do you think that this was just a part of the experience or do you think that you would have liked to see it change?
Oh, I think that it was part of the experience and it did change, just very late. I think that everyone got a chance to… not everyone, but maybe the people who were more closed off got a chance to open up…. (Omitted) well just like when she reenacted (omitted)… I thought that was really helpful to her. I thought that was a better way of getting things off her chest than directly talking about things.
THEME: DRAMA THERAPY EXPERIENCED AS LESS THREATENING THAN VERBAL OR TALK THERAPY
So it would have been helpful to have made more use of drama then?
Yeah, cause it sort of allows them to play a different role until they feel comfortable coming back to what they originally talked about or wanted to explore and there's also no pressure to get somewhere….
THEME: DRAMA THERAPY EXPERIENCED AS LESS THREATENING THAN VERBAL OR TALK THERAPY

This idea of one person being focused on …can you talk a little bit more about that?
I don't know sometimes it would just seem like it was one on one therapy, yet the group remained…I think it was… obviously you can't focus on everyone at the same time in that kind of way and the group is just a different kind of experience….
The use of the drama then, as you said earlier, might have helped?
Yeah I think that would have really helped and I think that I got more involved too (when drama was used) and then when it was one on one we were all involved and then it usually felt okay… It was more the times when we would just talk and the rest of us would just be talking or just listening…
THEME: DRAMA THERAPY EXPERIENCED AS LESS THREATENING THAN VERBAL OR TALK THERAPY
THEME: THE USE OF DRAMA WORKS TO CONTAIN THE THERAPY

Undesirable Participant Experience

Lisa:
Was there anything you found unhelpful or unsatisfying? Can you describe what that was?
I can't think of anything but I know the only time I got really upset was when we started discussing things (such as body image) that made me upset on a personal level. Those are things one can't avoid.
THEME: PERSONAL ISSUES TRIGGERED

Iasha:
But you didn't want to violate that relationship which existed outside of the class?
Yeah. That's why sometimes it felt like it was on the surface of everything... but at the same time it is not individual therapy...but maybe others felt like it was superficial, cause there was no honesty...
Cause you know what is honest outside of the class?
(Nods)
THEME: SUPERFICIAL

Sarah:
Tell me about your experience in this class? What was it like for you?
Near the second half I like it a lot. At the beginning I was a little unsure. I felt it was a little bit too spiritual and deep... and not right for me... but later it became... more for me...it was just this cool thing...it was a really cool experience having that sudden togetherness...
THEME: INITIALLY FELT TOO SPIRITUAL; TOO DEEP

Was there anything you found unhelpful or unsatisfying? Can you describe what that was?
One thing and I mean it's in the most nicest way possible. Sometimes there would be these little silences in our group and I hate awkward silences and sometimes there would be a lot of them and I didn't like those.
Was there anything that you might attribute to this?
I'm not sure. They would come up ... and you wouldn't say anything and we would be just looking around...
Looking around?
Just seeing if anyone was going to do something.
And what might you have thought could have been done?
I don't know. Maybe if you see them coming up you could say something.
Like what?
I have no idea. Just like start another topic or tell us what to do if we are going to do another activity.
So, you have no idea what those silences might have been about?
No. It's hard to say now that the class is over and all packed up.
You said that they came up often?
Kind of I think.
What is often to you?
Like once per week, on average.
And do you think it affected your experience?
No, not at all. It's just something I remembered.
So, how do you think that your experience would have been different if those silences hadn't existed?
I don't' think it would have been much different.
THEME: AWKWARD SILENCES

Sachelle:
Was there anything you found unhelpful or unsatisfying? Can you describe what that was?
Or anything you would have changed or anything like this?
Nope I can't think of anything.....
Are you sure?
Yeah. I'm thinking really hard actually... No, everything seems to have been pretty cool...pretty helpful...
THEME: NOTHING WAS EXPERIENCED AS UNDESIRABLE

Charmelia:
How did it get in the way?
Um...some people wanted more therapy and some people found that too overwhelming. And those are kind of two opposites that sort of clashed. Yeah and I think that some people found it overwhelming at times and its been overwhelming for me too and I think that some people took it more lightly.
What made it overwhelming exactly?
Um...it was overwhelming to see other people overwhelmed and it was overwhelming to see people share things they weren't comfortable with sharing...sometimes I think people got angry.
Why?
Because they wanted different things...
THEME: EXPERIENCE OF BEING OVERWHELMED BY THE THERAPY

How do you think that might have affected your experience?
I wasn't as ready to go into therapy as I would have been... if everyone, I guess, if everyone wanted to. Like, I sense that they didn't think it was stupid but I sensed that it was overwhelming at this time or they weren't ready and I know what that's like if you don't want to do therapeutic stuff – you just really don't want to do it.
Okay...
I mean sometimes I didn't want to either. Cause I do kind of like one on one better as with everything.
THEME: EXPERIENCE OF BEING OVERWHELMED BY THE THERAPY

Tell me about your experience in this class? What was it like for you?
Um, uh, well I'm going to start with the negative...
Okay.
Sometimes I didn't want to come in just cause...
Mmmhmm...
Just because I wouldn't always want to hang out in a big group with people... I mean I liked everyone here but um...
So, why was that?
Sometimes I felt like there was just all these different things... all these different ideas flying out everywhere... not everyone gets attention... sometimes its focused on one person and everyone is looking around... and when you are focused on, it just sort of feels like everyone is just there...

I also think I learned how to better work with people and even when we did that journal cause it was taking all these people's things and putting them together... and in projects and stuff I like working on my own and doing them in my own way....so I liked that....
THEME: LACK OF CONTAINMENT

Okay, I want to go back to what you said initially... How do you think that affected your experience...can you talk more about that?
I just find things can get overwhelming when it's a therapeutic process and we are actually doing therapy and... Some people are comfortable with that and some people aren't...and sometimes I found that overwhelming....there are times when it was more cooperative....
THEME: EXPERIENCE OF BEING OVERWHELMED BY THE THERAPY
What caused it, do you think?
When people are just left with their own thoughts... when others are talking or when people talk and things are brought up or when one person is focused on and everyone is just left there with the thoughts in their head ... I just saw a lot of people with overwhelmed looks on their faces and it's kind of the end of the day and I can see how people just want to play games or something at the end of the day...and some things could have happened that day where it either puts you in the mood or it doesn't...and that effects the experience for other people and for you...
How would you have changed it then, so that there wasn't this feeling?
I have no idea. Maybe it would have helped if it was in the morning. Yeah, I don't know what else....that's the only thing that I think would have definitely helped...I really don't have any idea....
THEME: LACK OF CONTAINMENT
THEME: EXPERIENCE OF BEING OVERWHELMED BY THE THERAPY

Effect of Program on Participant: Changes in Participant

Lisa:
Tell me about your experience in this class? What was it like for you?
I found it very interesting. For the most part I found it very enjoyable and different to what I had been accustomed to. I liked our discussions and games we played. It felt very comfortable and relaxed. I didn't feel judged in anyway and I even enjoyed hearing others talk about their problems and opinions on things. What I enjoyed most of all was the social atom. It gave me a good look at some of my relationships and made me think twice about things. Although I had a great time most of the time there were classes that I didn't feel like being there. Almost all of those were for personal reasons such as being tired, stressed or physically ill.
THEME: INCREASED SELF-AWARENESS

Iasha:
Did you have this goal of experiencing growth from other people?
... like I had like wants and stuff but I feel like a goal is something like... ah... very personal... it was a personal goal to meet people and grow but it just kind of happened...

So you didn't say to yourself before you began this program that this is what I want?
No.
Maybe it was more the outcome then, than it was your intention?
Yeah.
THEME: GROWTH THROUGH MEETING OTHERS

Would you say you met your goals then?
Yeah.
You feel you are able to express yourself more?
Yeah cause I felt more comfortable with the people in this group.
Has that transferred to outside of this group?
I feel more comfortable so I can act or do drama cause I feel comfortable in this group...but I felt comfortable this way coming in...
So, you learned to feel comfortable with these people...
I generally feel comfortable with most people... when it is a closed and intimate setting it is less comfortable but I learned to trust the process...
This was able to happen for you in a small intimate setting... where you were able to feel comfortable to express yourself...
Yeah cause it's not very natural coming in with these specific people and doing these specific things...outside there is no plan for it and so it feels less uncomfortable to begin with...
Being comfortable with strangers in a contrived situation was important to you then?
It just happened that I was able to feel comfortable and I knew it would eventually...
THEME: LEARNED TO TRUST THE PROCESS
THEME: COMFORTABLE EXPRESSING SELF IN GROUP

So what does that give you?
A sense of certainty and knowing that every little thing I'm doing affects someone else and that what they do affects me.
So would you say that this is something that you learned?
It was clarified.
So, like a deeper understanding of this?
Yeah.
THEME: INCREASED AWARENESS OF LAW OF ACTION-REACTION
And so does that give you this sense of security in life or...
Well it gives me a sense of worth, because my being is...everyone affects everyone else... and also a sense of trust and wanting to understand more of whom you are and how you impact people and how they impact you...
THEME: INCREASED SELF-WORTH
THEME: INCREASED TRUST
THEME: INCREASED AWARENESS OF LAW OF ACTION-REACTION

Sarah:
If there was any impact on your school life, can you describe it?

Socially I'm pretty sure it made me a bit more confident about myself and when I talked about those guys (people this participant was having problems with) in this class and they (the other participants) said it's horrible... it gave me a bit more confidence and courage... So having them there to say that really gave me the courage to keep hanging in there...

THEME: INCREASED CONFIDENCE

THEME: INCREASED COURAGE

So you were able to change the situation?

Before I thought if I just didn't show that it mattered to me... but that wasn't working... but when they (the other participants) said keep doing it – keep being cool and it would eventually work and it did work...

So now those people leave you alone?

Pretty much.

And what does that feel like?

It feels pretty cool. They still do it sometimes and I don't know if it's kidding or mocking but I don't really care cause I don't look at it as bad it's just socializing with people in my class – it's cool.

So being able to stay with it enabled you to change your attitude about it?

Yeah (smiling).

THEME: POSITIVE CHANGE IN PERCEPTION OF SOCIAL LIFE

Sachelle:

What might have contributed to that change?

I think, uh, recognizing that the class was significant when it finished last year...before then the class was just a class for me... but when it finished something really changed for me... and I realized that that really was an important place whether or not I was contributing... but that I was still there... and that was a really cool opportunity that no one else has at any other school... and that I won't be able to have it if I don't take it.....

THEME: REALIZING THE IMPORTANCE OF THE PROGRAM IN ONE'S LIFE AFTER TERMINATION OF FIRST GROUP

Were you able to meet your goals then?

I think so. I felt more comfortable as a participant in the group...last year I wasn't afraid of being judged but it was still fresh and new and I didn't know what to expect... but I realized this year that it wasn't about what it was expected to be but more about just doing the activity...

THEME: COMFORTABLE EXPRESSING SELF IN GROUP

THEME: LEARNED TO TRUST THE PROCESS

How did your perception change?

With people's social atoms, when I saw that everyone had a different one...and some would cry and some would laugh... and it wasn't about who's was funniest or most dramatic... and even watching it was different than doing it... and that drawing it and just seeing it on paper and knowing what it was supposed to be like was different than actually being in it... That you can take what you want from it...

THEME: REALIZATION THAT YOU CAN CHOOSE TO TAKE WHAT YOU WANT FROM AN EXPERIENCE

So, you realized that it's about what you take from it as opposed to what you think you might get from it?
Mmmhmm. What you expect to get from it and what you get from it are totally different and I think that this year I learned not to expect things and just to take things....
THEME: LEARNED TO EMBRACE THE EXPERIENCE FREE OF EXPECTATION
So again, what you take from that is the sense of comfort?
Mmmhmm. You also learn form other people... to see how someone else would do their self-box... other ways of seeing things or doing things... that you just would have thought are ridiculous...or serious... but you realize it's not because someone else thought of it...
THEME: GROWTH THROUGH MEETING OTHERS
So, it expanded your perception?
Mmmhmm. It's almost like self-awareness...realizing that I've never done it that way and so thinking well how come I didn't think of it that way... so it's like therapy...
So it helps you get to know yourself to see...
Mmmhmm... the different things around you...
THEME: INCREASED SELF-AWARENESS

Charmelia:
How did you think that this would benefit you?
I can learn new things from different people. Not necessarily by them telling me something but by observing them and learning what they are about...
Learning about new people enhances your perspective?
Yeah.
And how do you see that benefiting you?
I don't know...
To learn from other people... to enhance your perspective... so, to like open your mind?
Yeah.
And do you think that you accomplished this goal?
Yeah.
THEME: DEVELOPED OPEN-MINDEDNESS

Tell me about your experience in this class? What was it like for you?
Um, uh, well I'm going to start with the negative...
Okay.
Sometimes I didn't want to come in just cause...
Mmmhmm...
Just because I wouldn't always want to hang out in a big group with people... I mean I liked everyone here but um...
So, why was that?
Sometimes I felt like there was just all these different things... all these different ideas flying out everywhere... not everyone gets attention... sometimes its focused on one person and everyone is looking around... and when you are focused on, it just sort of feels like everyone is just there...

I also think I learned how to better work with people and even when we did that journal cause it was taking all these people's things and putting them together… and in projects and stuff I like working on my own and doing them in my own way….so I liked that….
THEME: LEARNED HOW TO WORK MORE EFFECTIVELY WITH OTHERS

Group Dynamics

Iasha:
The group dynamic seems to have been the most important thing for you?
Yeah. Sometimes it felt like not everyone was inside the group…some were just observing so that… but at the same time I would say that… let's say that we had a discussion, I would feel like everyone wasn't locked in you know? So sometimes that was frustrating because I felt like there was a lack of comfort or honesty…yeah, I don't know….
Did that make it difficult for you to be honest?
Yes.
So, was it disappointing?
No, just uncomfortable sometimes.
THEME: LACK OF COMFORT
THEME: LACK OF HONESTY
THEME: FRUSTRATION EXPERIENCED DUE TO LACK OF COMMITMENT TO THE THERAPEUTIC PROCESS
And what do you equate that with?
What do you mean?
Well, the lack of comfort, the lack of openness and honesty, the lack of involvement…it could be people's readiness to go to those places…That's a normal part of any therapeutic group and certainly it can be frustrating… Did it make you feel like you couldn't be where you needed to be?
Yes, sort of. I feel like I found purpose in every little thing that we did but I don't think that everyone did… but in the end it was rewarding to see that they liked it in the end even if they didn't like every little thing that we did.
THEME: LACK OF TRUST
THEME: DESIRE FOR EVERYONE TO APPRECIATE THE GROUP
It was important to you that others appreciated the experience so as to validate the experience you were having together?
Yeah.
THEME: DESIRE FOR EVERYONE TO APPRECIATE THE GROUP

Was there anything you found unhelpful or unsatisfying? Can you describe what that was?
I'm not sure.
You spoke about some people not feeling comfortable sometimes… was there anything else…how do you feel that the experience might have been different or do you feel that this was…

I translated it into not trusting and not wanting to share and not liking the process...So, I think that if everyone felt like they liked it there would be more sharing and growth...if it was open and people shared what they were learning then the others could see that.

THEME: LACK OF TRUST

THEME: DESIRE FOR DEEPER COMMITMENT FOR INCREASED GROWTH

How might you have changed it then?

Maybe I should have addressed the problem...

Maybe it should have been me?

But I also know these people outside of class and why they would feel uncomfortable in certain situations.

THEME: AWARENESS OF UNEXPRESSED DISCOMFORT OF GROUP MEMBERS

But you didn't want to violate that relationship which existed outside of the class?

Yeah. That's why sometimes it felt like it was on the surface of everything... but at the same time it is not individual therapy...but maybe others felt like it was superficial, cause there was no honesty...

Cause you know what is honest outside of the class?

(Nods)

THEME: LACK OF HONESTY

THEME: INTER-MEMBER RELATIONSHIPS EXISTING INDEPENDENT OF THE GROUP NEGATIVELY AFFECT THE GROUP PROCESS

So the group dynamics going on outside of the group were affecting the group...making it feel superficial or contrived?

(Nods)

But to what extent did it affect the group process?

It made people feel less connected to the group.

THEME: INTER-MEMBER RELATIONSHIPS EXISTING INDEPENDENT OF THE GROUP NEGATIVELY AFFECT THE GROUP PROCESS

But in spite of this you still feel like the group evolved and that you personally benefited from the experience?

Yeah. But sometimes it was uncomfortable for me cause I was seeing this...but I didn't feel that it was personally a problem for me...but sometimes I felt that maybe I shouldn't feel as enthused (about the class) cause others weren't...

Out of respect for the other person? Like if for example, someone just found out that they were pregnant and then came into the class and I was all "Okay, let's play games!"

It wasn't a specific thing... just that they don't like this class or they don't want to be there.

THEME: FRUSTRATION EXPERIENCED DUE TO LACK OF COMMITMENT TO THE THERAPEUTIC PROCESS

Was it the actual dynamic within the group, because you knew each other outside of class?

(Nods)

I knew.

You did?

Yeah. Cause I've been through this before and it can be very heavy to go there in a group and maybe not appropriate given the environment. Cause it might be heavy to discuss the group dynamics within the group.
That's also why I wouldn't be like...cause we only have 1 hour and a ½ and cause bringing it up makes it uncomfortable...and all you can do is like make it sort of okay when it is actually like the foundation of the group...

Sarah:
Did you see this as more for grade 11's?
No but after a few classes I could see that I'm the only young one there and they talked about the hecticness of school life and so it seemed more for them. But this was probably just because of the people who were in the class.
THEME: SEEMED MORE FOR GRADE ELEVENS

How did you see that this would benefit your life?
Cause I got here and I didn't know too many people, so it seemed like a good opportunity, like a club or something.
THEME: FELT LIKE A CLUB

Tell me about your experience in this class? What was it like for you?
Near the second half I like it a lot. At the beginning I was a little unsure. I felt it was a little bit too spiritual and deep... and not right for me... but later it became... more for me...it was just this cool thing...it was a really cool experience having that sudden togetherness...
THEME: IMPORTANCE OF THE SHIFT WITHIN THE GROUP FROM AN EXPERIENCE OF BEING SEPARATE FROM THE GROUP TO THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE FEELING OF TOGETHERNESS
What do you think contributed to that togetherness?
The activities we did helped a lot. I'm not too sure. I think also they were just nice people and you were a really nice and laid back drama teacher – so you didn't make us feel like it was work... I don't know exactly what made it happen.
THEME: NICE PEOPLE
THEME: LAID BACK TEACHER
And now? Not having the group?
I feel a little different. I mean I don't talk to any of them – just "hi, how are you's?" in the hallway- but I wouldn't even have those if I hadn't been here and even in those simple reactions it seems kinds of groupish.
THEME: THE FEELING OF TOGETHERNESS OUTSIDE OF THE GROUP

Is there anything else you would like to add?
I don't know, but, um, I think maybe more classes where you start by talking to people to get to know how they are feeling cause that could lead to more discussions about emotions and what causes them and stuff like that.
You would have liked to see more direct work?
Yeah, cause most of our conversation classes... Where you connect to people directly...where you just start out by saying, "how are you today?" would be good.

More direct work with how people are feeling in the moment is what you are saying essentially?
Yeah......
And how might the group, or yourself, have benefited from this?
I don't know. I just know that I would have liked it personally – cause there would be a few times when I would speak up but there were times when there would be a grade eleven twist and I wouldn't be able to contribute that much...
I'm sorry about that.
No, no, that's okay.
THEME: SEEMED MORE FOR GRADE ELEVENS

Sachelle:
As an experiment?
Yeah, but that sounds sterile. More to see how it works kind of thing. At first when I first came I thought you were coming in and testing it out and I was a participant in this... but afterwards I felt that it was our group as opposed to being a separate thing...
THEME: IMPORTANCE OF THE SHIFT WITHIN THE GROUP FROM AN EXPERIENCE OF BEING SEPARATE FROM THE GROUP TO THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE FEELING OF TOGETHERNESS
What contributed to this change in your perception?
Just being in the group more than five or six times... not just signing the papers (the consent forms and group contract) but getting to know the people... like this is a fun place... we do what we need to do not what needs to be done...

The experiment feeling? Was this last year or was it this year?
Last year it felt very therapeutic but it also felt more distant... there were more people... there was still a bond but it wasn't as strong...
THEME: FEWER GROUP MEMBERS CONTRIBUTES TO A STRONGER BOND

Tell me about your experience in this class? What was it like for you?
It was really cool. I had fun, um, just cause I kind of already knew 3 out of 4 people... and I kind of had that sense of understanding... and this made the activities more fun... Cause I knew them... but they were just like school people and not necessarily friends... It added something... A little giggle we could share outside of class...
THEME: INTER-MEMBER RELATIONSHIPS EXISTING INDEPENDENT OF THE GROUP POSTIVELY AFFECT THE GROUP PROCESS
THEME: THE FEELING OF TOGETHERNESS OUTSIDE OF THE GROUP
And this room and I like the way we painted it... It's like a clubhouse or something and what goes on in here is our thing... and fuck everyone else cause when we do this it is our thing and nobody else knows about it....
THEME: FELT LIKE A CLUB
I really liked the fact that I didn't always like everyone all the time... This year I didn't feel like it was so important to put on a façade... When I felt like I was uncomfortable, I felt it was okay. Like it was kinda cool...like this is my own place to be...
THEME: APPRECIATION FOR AUTHENTICITY IN GROUP DYNAMICS

THEME: FELT LIKE IT WAS OKAY TO FEEL UNCOMFORTABLE

Can you elaborate on this idea that it was your own private place? What did this give you?
A feeling of home in a school... I feel like this is my comfort room... at first it had a really sterile hospital feeling (before the room was decorated) and I liked that part of it too... cause I would come in here and play the piano... and I just liked to be here and everything kind of fell into place when we painted the room...And I just felt really comfortable...
And when anyone else came in here I felt like they were going through my room... Cause we always come out of here having a good time...
It's a girl's clubhouse too... not like a boy's space but for girls...
It was safe and sacred and we all had that understanding that made it an okay place to be...
THEME: FELT LIKE A CLUB

If there was any impact on your school life, can you describe it?
Well, I think it would just be kind of repetitive. The whole just passing smiles in the hallway. And not having to think do I really know this person...will this person be my friend tomorrow... It's not like a social issue... We know what we are about and we know what we do... It's like a club – we both belong to something...
THEME: THE FEELING OF TOGETHERNESS OUTSIDE OF THE GROUP
THEME: FELT LIKE A CLUB

Charmelia:
Anything in particular that might have contributed to being able to achieve that goal?
Well everyone there was very friendly. I don't know, just by chance everyone was very friendly and cooperative....
Mmmhmm.... So, people's openness was what contributed...
Yeah and it was clear to me that people had very, very different impressions of what it would be like and very, very different goals and that sometimes got in the way except that everyone still wanted people to be happy in the class I think.
THEME: COOPERATIVE
THEME: DIFFERENT EXPECTATIONS; DIFFERENT GOALS NEGATIVELY AFFECT THE THERAPEUTIC PROCESS

How do you think that might have affected your experience?
I wasn't as ready to go into therapy as I would have been... if everyone, I guess, if everyone wanted to. Like, I sense that they didn't think it was stupid but I sensed that it was overwhelming at this time or they weren't ready and I know what that's like if you don't want to do therapeutic stuff – you just really don't want to do it.
Okay...
I mean sometimes I didn't want to either. Cause I do kind of like one on one better as with everything.
THEME: DESIRE FOR DEEPER COMMITMENT FOR INCREASED GROWTH

Um...Do you think that this was just a part of the experience or do you think that you would have liked to see it change?

Oh, I think that it was part of the experience and it did change, just very late. I think that everyone got a chance to... not everyone, but maybe the people who were more closed off got a chance to open up.... (Omitted) well just like when she reenacted...I thought that was really helpful to her. I thought that was a better way of getting things off her chest than directly talking about things.

THEME: IMPORTANCE OF THE SHIFT WITHIN THE GROUP FROM AN EXPERIENCE OF BEING SEPARATE FROM THE GROUP TO THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE FEELING OF TOGETHERNESS

Was there anything you found unhelpful or unsatisfying? Can you describe what that was?

I guess just the times that I've come in and other people have come in close-minded and they are angry or something and class would just be horrible... it's the last thing you want to do... and at the same time you are seeing people who are not at all in that sort of mood. So you end up half participating or not quite fully....

Angry with things that are happening in life or in the group?

No, separate from the group and maybe that's why in that moment it might be so annoying to come here cause maybe you want to deal with it now or it just happened now.

So, you didn't see the class as a place where you might bring these things to work through?

Um, not really, they weren't really... they were usually very in the moment and they were...

Was there anything that might have turned you off from wanting to work through things in the group?

A lot of times it was things with (omitted) so we are very good at working things through one on one. So if something happened we would bring that into class and then have to wait and work through it outside of class...

So, conflicts that existed between group members outside of the group come into the group and affect the experience?

Yeah. I mean sometimes it's helped and other people were doing something else and it sort of took away some anger and maybe almost made it a bit lighter... when you get out of the class and can laugh about it... I mean sometimes it would make it more back to what's important.

It gives you distance?

Yeah. Sometimes it helped you from going off in you head and like I don't know....

THEME: INTER-MEMBER RELATIONSHIPS EXISTING INDEPENDENT OF THE GROUP NEGATIVELY AFFECT THE GROUP PROCESS.

Anything you found particularly helpful?

Well, I think you are very intuitive.

Thank-you.

So I think that helped, um...I mean (you are intuitive) about people and about how to approach things... so I think that helped...what else? I also think that maybe not

everyone here was willing to do therapy for themselves all the time but everyone was willing to help other people, at least in this class... I mean I would never find anyone shrugging it off or anything or not listening to the person before they say something about what they think...

THEME: INTUITIVE TEACHER (PERCEIVED AS THERAPIST)

THEME: NICE PEOPLE

I would like to ask you one more question.

Okay.

I was just thinking that perhaps one way to avoid the feeling of being overwhelmed and of inter-member conflicts affecting the experience, might be to screen participants beforehand. To see what their goals are...what they are expecting, and also, to try to get together a group of people who are from different social circles. What is your opinion on this?

I think that the screening beforehand would be really good. Yeah, I guess that's what I was thinking could have helped. Yeah I think that's a really good idea especially cause you realize that everyone has different expectations...different goals....um...

Is there anything else you would like to add?

No.

THEME: SCREENING PARTICIPANTS BEFOREHAND MIGHT IMPROVE GROUP DYNAMICS

Effects of Program on School Life

Lisa:

If there was any impact on your school life, can you describe it?

There was not much of an impact on school life and if anything the school had an impact on my behavior in class. Since our classes were always at the end of the day (after an absolutely horrible math class) I often found myself very tired and slightly frustrated. In terms of outside work affecting my school work that was not a problem. Everything was able to be done on time and I enjoyed our at home projects very much.

THEME: PROGRAM ELICITS NO EFFECT ON SCHOOL LIFE

Iasha:

If there was any impact on your school life, can you describe it?

Well I guess the answer to that would be that this was my safe spot at the end of the day to relax and maybe like *ahhh* just the energy of the day... it made me feel like it was good endings of days.

Like a release at the end of a...

Yeah. A lot of times we had this class after math and instead of everyone going home and feeling *ahhh* ...we got to come here and be *ahhh* and so leave school and feel more relaxed.

THEME: HELPS TO RELEASE SCHOOL TENSION

Was there a difference then in leaving school on other days when you didn't have this class?

Well we always take time to decompress but it is always nice to have the diversity of sharing it with different people....

Any other impact on your life at school?
When (one of the other participants) felt like things were shitty for her at school, it made me realize I have a responsibility... and it made me more aware of issues in the school...
THEME: INCREASED AWARENESS OF ISSUES IN SCHOOL

Sarah:
What did you like about the togetherness?
Confidence. I'd know that know matter where I was I still wouldn't be completely alone cause I had my drama group...cause I had these people outside of my class or my friends. Even if it was only two days a week.
THEME: NOT FEELING ALONE

So you were able to change the situation?
Before I thought if I just didn't show that it mattered to me... but that wasn't working... but when they (the other participants) said keep doing it – keep being cool and it would eventually work and it did work...
So now those people leave you alone?
Pretty much.
And what does that feel like?
It feels pretty cool. They still do it sometimes and I don't know if it's kidding or mocking but I don't really care cause I don't look at it as bad it's just socializing with people in my class – it's cool.
So being able to stay with it enabled you to change your attitude about it?
Yeah (smiling).
THEME: IMPROVED SOCIAL LIFE
Was there any other impact on your school-life?
It might have impacted academic life in a sort of bad way. Cause all I would hear about is grade elevens not doing their school work, so it's made me really, really laid back – it's chill I don't have to do it...
So, you are more laid back in school?
Yeah.
But you see this as a bad thing?
Kind of. (Smiling).
THEME: NEGATIVE INFLUENCE ON PERCEPTION OF ACADEMICS VIA THE LAID-BACK ATTITUDE OF OTHERS

Sachelle:
You said earlier that it added something?
It's like a comfort that kind of takes you outside of this room and more into the school, a bigger place... you form a relationship in here and when you take it outside of here it kind of makes it like ....comfort .... it gives me a little bit of .....like when you rub someone the right way and you don't think about rubbing them the right way....it's like this comfort and security....like for (omitted) I felt like when maybe the grade 11's would walk by and start a conversation... and she was having troubles ... and so she feels more than just part of her grade nine class....a different kind of outlet and we could smile

and joke about something....it made comfort ....I would have never spoken to her if I hadn't known her in this class...

And even people I knew...I saw parts of them that I would have never known just hanging out in the park...

THEME: COMFORT

THEME: SECURITY

Charmelia:

If there was any impact on your school life, can you describe it?

Um, I don't think so. Just because it was at the end of the day, so I just went home... and well, there was someone in grade nine (in the group) and I would have never known her and I observed the grade nines more than I would have (had they not been in the group together)...

What do you mean?

Well, I mean I noticed them. I thought about them more than I would have and she talked about the grade nines too... but grade nine...I don't want to have anything to do with grade nine cause grade nine was not a very nice year for me...I don't' want to revisit grade nine...

Fair enough.

Yeah.

THEME: INCREASED AWARENESS OF OTHER STUDENTS

Effect of School Life on Program

Lisa:

If there was any impact on your school life, can you describe it?

There was not much of an impact on school life and if anything the school had an impact on my behavior in class. Since our classes were always at the end of the day (after an absolutely horrible math class) I often found myself very tired and slightly frustrated. In terms of outside work affecting my school work that was not a problem. Everything was able to be done on time and I enjoyed our at home projects very much.

THEME: SCHOOL LIFE NEGATIVELY EFFECTS PARTICIPATION

Charmelia:

What caused it, do you think?

When people are just left with their own thoughts... when others are talking or when people talk and things are brought up or when one person is focused on and everyone is just left there with the thoughts in their head ... I just saw a lot of people with overwhelmed looks on their faces and it's kind of the end of the day and I can see how people just want to play games or something at the end of the day...and some things could have happened that day where it either puts you in the mood or it doesn't...and that effects the experience for other people and for you...

How would you have changed it then, so that there wasn't this feeling?

I have no idea. Maybe it would have helped if it was in the morning. Yeah, I don't know what else....that's the only thing that I think would have definitely helped...I really don't have any idea....

THEME: SCHOOL LIFE EFFECTS PARTICIPATION

Effect of Grading

Lisa:
What was it like to receive a grade for this class?
It didn't really bother me if I got a grade or not or what the grade happened to be. I just enjoyed doing the class and I'm not one to care about grades anyway.
THEME: GRADING IRRELEVANT TO THE PROCESS

Iasha:
What was it like to receive a grade for this class?
I didn't really pay attention to the grade but I would've been disappointed had I got a 70 for some retarded reason. I liked the projects…having something to grade by…but it was a bit random, you know, okay so you did it here's your grade, but it was better than just assigning a grade on nothing. But I didn't feel like the grade actually reflected the work I was doing…I even forgot how you were grading…
75% attendance; 25% project completion
It reflects the work you put in but only like in things that can be made physical, like it's not social or whatever…
So this was okay for you?
Yeah. It was like separate…last year it did really impact me…my grade…
So it was separate from your experience in the class – not like in say, math, where the grade is a big part of the experience in the sense that you require the grade in order to advance to the next level…
Yeah.
THEME: GRADING IRRELEVANT TO THE PROCESS

Sarah:
What was it like to receive a grade for this class?
It was fine cause I understood it was a school course and needed a grade. It was just a number that was there for official purposes, so I didn't mind or take it personally.
So did the grade mean anything to you?
Not really. I just haven't been taking grades that seriously this year.
THEME: GRADING IRRELEVANT TO THE PROCESS
THEME: GRADING PERCEIVED AS NECESSARY FOR OFFICIAL PURPOSES

Sachelle:
What was it like to receive a grade for this class?
Kind of cool, er…
Mmmhmm.
It's kind of nice… it's like one of those grades that you don't have to work so hard to get… you don't have to do what the teacher wants …. And it really makes you feel like you don't always have to be jumping tricks to get a grade… and you just get a grade for saying what you actually think…

THEME: APPRECIATION FOR BEING GRADED ON WHAT YOU ACTUALLY THINK

What's that like?

It's pretty cool. And you don't have to be like I have a paper in drama therapy… and if you come… if you know that you are a person and as a person you have a class at this time and you have to come and that's part of your grade…

It's nice to have this grade that isn't filled with the same kind of stress and anxiety?

It wasn't so stressful… it's like make a box and this is beneficial to you… It's like go home and analyze yourself and think about shit that you would never want to think about or don't make time to think about… Go home and do something productive for yourself and not for you teacher so that your teacher can have a guideline for your grades….

THEME: APPRECIATION FOR THE BEING GRADED ON DOING SOMEHTING PRODUCTI VE FOR YOURSELF

Charmelia:

What was it like to receive a grade for this class?

I thought it was very well structured this year… it was a very good system….

Did it affect your experience at all?

Like hinder it, you mean?

Anything.

No. I don't think so.

Did you see it as an important part of the experience?

Not really. I thought it was something that you had to do because it was a high school class. But I think it worked out very well. I thought it was the best grading solution.

What made it a good solution?

Cause it was grading whether you're engaging in the class or not…if you do your project you are engaging in the class…and it wasn't about skills or anything it was about how well you participated in it…

THEME: APPRECIATION FOR BEING GRADED ON ATTENDANCE AS OPPOSED TO SKILL LEVEL

THEME: GRADING PERCEIVED AS NECESSARY FOR OFFICIAL PURPOSES

Themes

In order to determine existent patterns within the themes the data was set aside

and the themes themselves were analyzed; this might be referred to as the final analysis.

In the first category, Perceived Program Goals, there were initially 10 significant themes,

in the final analysis they were grouped into 5 major theme clusters; the second category,

Participant Goals, went from 13 themes to 3 in the final analysis; Desirable Participant

Experience from 22 to 9; Undesirable Participant Experience from 7 to 4; Effect of

Program on Participant: Changes in Participant from 15 to 6; Group Dynamics from 22 to

9; Effect of Program on School Life from 9 to 5; Effect of School Life on Program from

2 to 1 and, finally, the category, Effect of Grading went from 5 to 3. The categories and

their major theme clusters are highlighted here (script has been included as evidence

supporting the inclusion of each theme):

1. Perceived Program Goals

Themes:

a. Understanding self

In your opinion, what was the purpose of this class?
I thought it was probably to relax the students, to get them in touch with the innermost
part of themselves, to cool down a little... to be a little break in school life, to take them
away little?

b. Understanding self relative to others

In your opinion, what was the purpose of this class?
I believe that the purpose of this class was to try to better understand one's feelings and
opinions on common problems. Those common problems were brought up by ourselves
during discussion.

c. Personal growth and confidence

How did you see that benefiting your life?
It makes you more aware of yourself...less aware of how you appear outwardly and more
aware of who you are... so it gives you more confidence, a little, to know that part of
yourself better and the ability to realize that it doesn't matter how you appear to others.

d. Comfort and support

What would come from this? What benefit would there be?
Growth, comfort, security; to support each other and maybe gain introspection... by
putting yourself in a new circumstance you'll automatically learn something...

e. Testing viability of group drama therapy in high school

In your opinion, what was the purpose of this class? .
I thought it was more for your, um, kind of an experiment, not an experiment but a test
trial to see how a group of youth connected in a school environment... To clarify and to

help ease teen matters... to discuss it in a group where they might not otherwise have the opportunity.

2. Participant Goals

Themes:

a. Meet and learn from others: develop open-mindedness

How did you think that this would benefit you?
I can learn new things from different people. Not necessarily by them telling me something but by observing them and learning what they are about...
Learning about new people enhances your perspective?
Yeah.

b. Personal growth and confidence

Did you have any other personal goals?
To be a little less self-conscious; to break free of that a little, to be a little more open with people and I thought that maybe this class could help with that.

c. Break from school: relax and have fun

Why did you choose to register for this class? What goals did you have for yourself? Were you able to meet your goals?
A place where I could relax... a break from the regular school stuff... and I like doing talking more than like art or something like that kind of thing and I was there last year...A place where I could feel comfortable and just be and have fun...

d. Develop comfort with self-expression

Anything else?
To be comfortable in expressing myself or doing acting stuff cause it was supposed to be drama therapy...

e. Curiosity

Why did you choose to register for this class? What goals did you have for yourself? Were you able to meet your goals?
Um... I was interested in the group aspect and I knew that last year was sort of like the first time, so I wanted to see sort of how it would progress...I didn't know how it was going to change but I knew it was going to change somehow cause last year was the first year it was done....I was also interested to see what it would be like with other people...yeah... I was mostly interested to see what it would be like in a new group...

3. Desirable Participant Experience

Themes:

a. Comfort and support: a feeling of home in a school

Can you elaborate on this idea that it was your own private place? What did this give you?
A feeling of home in a school... I feel like this is my comfort room... at first it had a really sterile hospital feeling (before the room was decorated) and I liked that part of it too... cause I would come in here and play the piano... and I just liked to be here and everything kind of fell into place when we painted the room...And I just felt really comfortable...
And when anyone else came in here I felt like they were going through my room...
Cause we always come out of here having a good time...
It's a girl's clubhouse too... not like a boy's space but for girls...
It was safe and sacred and we all had that understanding that made it an okay place to be...

b. Meeting and learning from others

Well, what was interesting to you?
... doing all the different things and getting to know different people and learning and seeing the end product at the end... you know, just to see the (trails off)...
The way the group had evolved?
Yeah.
What did that feel like, why was it important to you?
It feels like we each had an impact on each other and that (trails off)...

c. Increased depth in relationships

Do you think then, that it enhanced your relationships with the people you already knew?
Yeah.
In what way?
More stuff in common... more stuff to talk bout....it's just kinds of like ....this isn't the kinds of stuff you'd be doing outside ....this is original to here....like how we feel.....like if we are talking in the park about this stuff the conversation will just drift off...here it's like organized, well, here it drifts off too, but it snowballs in this organized way and it always comes back... It adds something to people when you can talk about this stuff and not just superficialities... But there is still something there that wasn't there before...
Wasn't there before? What do you think that it is?
Just knowing each other... You get to like adjust to other people's personal ... not adjust... but you get a feeling for someone....you just get a taste of their energy ...their being....you just kind of get a sense of who they are...

d. Experience of getting something out of everything

Even when we are going to do an activity and you think it's going to suck... But in the end you get something out of it every time...

e. Feeling empowered

What was that like for you?
Good... cause it felt like we were helping her as she was speaking about it, so it was empowering...
It gave you hope?
Yeah. And like I really can make a difference.

f. Didn't feel like work: had fun

What do you think contributed to that togetherness?
The activities we did helped a lot. I'm not too sure. I think also they were just nice people and you were a really nice and laid back drama teacher – so you didn't make us feel like it was work... I don't know exactly what made it happen.

g. Appreciation for flexibility with class plan

I liked playing games and the fact that when I come here... it's like we need to get this done, but everyone else feels like playing games so let's play games...
Things aren't always so black and white and tedious...

h. Authenticity: an okay place to b*e*

I really liked the fact that I didn't always like everyone all the time... This year I didn't feel like it was so important to put on a façade... When I felt like I was uncomfortable, I felt it was okay. Like it was kinda cool...like this is my own place to be...

i. Drama therapy experienced as less threatening than verbal or talk therapy: helps

participants to be honest

Um.... Do you think that this was just a part of the experience or do you think that you would have liked to see it change?
Oh, I think that it was part of the experience and it did change, just very late. I think that everyone got a chance to... not everyone, but maybe the people who were more closed off got a chance to open up.... (Omitted) well just like when she reenacted...I thought that was really helpful to her. I thought that was a better way of getting things off her chest than directly talking about things.
So it would have been helpful to have made more use of drama then?

Yeah, cause it sort of allows them to play a different role until they feel comfortable coming back to what they originally talked about or wanted to explore and there's also no pressure to get somewhere....

4. Undesirable Participant Experience

Themes:

a. Nothing experienced as undesirable

Was there anything you found unhelpful or unsatisfying? Can you describe what that was?
Or anything you would have changed or anything like this?
Nope I can't think of anything.....
Are you sure?
Yeah. I'm thinking really hard actually... No, everything seems to have been pretty cool...pretty helpful...

b. Superficial

But you didn't want to violate that relationship which existed outside of the class?
Yeah. That's why sometimes it felt like it was on the surface of everything... but at the same time it is not individual therapy...but maybe others felt like it was superficial, cause there was no honesty...
Cause you know what is honest outside of the class?
(Nods)

c. Experience of being overwhelmed by the therapy

How did it get in the way?
Um...some people wanted more therapy and some people found that too overwhelming. And those are kind of two opposites that sort of clashed. Yeah and I think that some people found it overwhelming at times and its been overwhelming for me too and I think that some people took it more lightly.

d. Lack of containment

Was there anything you found unhelpful or unsatisfying? Can you describe what that was?
One thing and I mean it's in the most nicest way possible. Sometimes there would be these little silences in our group and I hate awkward silences and sometimes there would be a lot of them and I didn't like those.

5. Effect of Program on Participant: Changes in Participant

Themes:

a. Increased self-awareness

What I enjoyed most of all was the social atom. It gave me a good look at some of my relationships and made me think twice about things.

b. Personal growth through meeting others: open-mindedness

How did you think that this would benefit you?
I can learn new things from different people. Not necessarily by them telling me something but by observing them and learning what they are about...
Learning about new people enhances your perspective?
Yeah.
 And how do you see that benefiting you?
I don't know...
To learn from other people... to enhance your perspective... so, to like open your mind?
Yeah.
And do you think that you accomplished this goal?
Yeah.

c. Increased awareness of law of action-reaction: everything you do affects someone

And so does that give you this sense of security in life or...
Well it gives me a sense of worth, because my being is...everyone affects everyone else... and also a sense of trust and wanting to understand more of whom you are and how you impact people and how they impact you...

d. Learned to trust the process: increased trust

So, you learned to feel comfortable with these people...
I generally feel comfortable with most people... when it is a closed and intimate setting it is less comfortable but I learned to trust the process...

e. Increased confidence and comfort with self-expression

If there was any impact on your school life, can you describe it?
Socially I'm pretty sure it made me a bit more confident about myself and when I talked about those guys (people this participant was having problems with) in this class and they (the other participants) said it's horrible... it gave me a bit more confidence and courage... So having them there to say that really gave me the courage to keep hanging in there...

f. Realization that you can take what you want from an experience

So, you realized that it's about what you take from it as opposed to what you think you might get from it?
Mmmhmm. What you expect to get from it and what you get from it are totally different and I think that this year I learned not to expect things and just to take things....

6. Group Dynamics

Themes:

a. Lack of trust and honesty

The group dynamic seems to have been the most important thing for you?
Yeah. Sometimes it felt like not everyone was inside the group...some were just observing so that... but at the same time I would say that... let's say that we had a discussion, I would feel like everyone wasn't locked in you know? So sometimes that was frustrating because I felt like there was a lack of comfort or honesty...yeah, I don't know...
Did that make it difficult for you to be honest?
Yes.

b. Desire for deeper commitment to the therapeutic process for increased growth

You spoke about some people not feeling comfortable sometimes... was there anything else...how do you feel that the experience might have been different or do you feel that this was...
I translated it into not trusting and not wanting to share and not liking the process...So, I think that if everyone felt like they liked it there would be more sharing and growth...if it was open and people shared what they were learning then the others could see that.

c. Different expectations; different goals negatively affects the therapeutic process

Anything in particular that might have contributed to being able to achieve that goal?
Well everyone there was very friendly. I don't know, just by chance everyone was very friendly and cooperative....
Mmmhmm.... So, people's openness was what contributed...
Yeah and it was clear to me that people had very, very different impressions of what it would be like and very, very different goals and that sometimes got in the way except that everyone still wanted people to be happy in the class I think.

d. Inter-member relationships existing independent of the group negatively affects the

group process

So the group dynamics going on outside of the group were affecting the group...making it feel superficial or contrived?
(Nods)
But to what extent did it affect the group process?
It made people feel less connected to the group.

e. Nice people

What do you think contributed to that togetherness?
The activities we did helped a lot. I'm not too sure. I think also they were just nice people and you were a really nice and laid back drama teacher – so you didn't make us feel like it was work... I don't know exactly what made it happen.

f. Importance of the shift within the group from an experience of being separate from the

group to the establishment of the feeling of togetherness

Tell me about your experience in this class? What was it like for you?
Near the second half I like it a lot. At the beginning I was a little unsure. I felt it was a little bit too spiritual and deep... and not right for me... but later it became... more for me...it was just this cool thing...it was a really cool experience having that sudden togetherness...

g. Felt like a club

And this room and I like the way we painted it... It's like a clubhouse or something and what goes on in here is our thing... and fuck everyone else cause when we do this it is our thing and nobody else knows about it....

h. The feeling of togetherness outside of the group: inter-member relationships existing

independent of the group positively affects the group process

And now? Not having the group?
I feel a little different. I mean I don't talk to any of them – just "hi, how are you's?" in the hallway- but I wouldn't even have those if I hadn't been here and even in those simple reactions it seems kinds of groupish.

i. Appreciation for authenticity: felt like it was okay to feel uncomfortable

I really liked the fact that I didn't always like everyone all the time... This year I didn't feel like it was so important to put on a façade... When I felt like I was uncomfortable, I felt it was okay. Like it was kinda cool...like this is my own place to be...

7. I. Effect of Program on School Life

Themes:

a. Program elicits no effect on school-life

If there was any impact on your school life, can you describe it?
There was not much of an impact on school life and if anything the school had an impact on my behavior in class. Since our classes were always at the end of the day (after an absolutely horrible math class) I often found myself very tired and slightly frustrated. In terms of outside work affecting my school work that was not a problem. Everything was able to be done on time and I enjoyed our at home projects very much.

b. Negative influence on perception of academics via the laid-back attitude of others

Was there any other impact on your school-life?
It might have impacted academic life in a sort of bad way. Cause all I would hear about is grade elevens not doing their school work, so it's made me really, really laid back – it's chill I don't have to do it...
So, you are more laid back in school?
Yeah.
But you see this as a bad thing?
Kind of. (Smiling).

c. Helps to release school tension

If there was any impact on your school life, can you describe it?
Well I guess the answer to that would be that this was my safe spot at the end of the day to relax and maybe like *ahhh* just the energy of the day... it made me feel like it was good endings of days.
Like a release at the end of a...
Yeah. A lot of times we had this class after math and instead of everyone going home and feeling *ahhh* ...we got to come here and be *ahhh* and so leave school and feel more relaxed.

d. Increased awareness of issues in school

Any other impact on your life at school?
When (one of the other participants) felt like things were shitty for her at school, it made me realize I have a responsibility... and it made me more aware of issues in the school...

e. Comfort and support: not feeling alone

What did you like about the togetherness?

Confidence. I'd know that know matter where I was I still wouldn't be completely alone cause I had my drama group…cause I had these people outside of my class or my friends. Even if it was only two days a week.

7. II. Effect of School Life on Program

Themes:

a. School life effects participation: what happens during the day is brought into the room

If there was any impact on your school life, can you describe it?
There was not much of an impact on school life and if anything the school had an impact on my behavior in class. Since our classes were always at the end of the day (after an absolutely horrible math class) I often found myself very tired and slightly frustrated. In terms of outside work affecting my school work that was not a problem. Everything was able to be done on time and I enjoyed our at home projects very much.

8. Effect of Grading

Themes:

a. Grading irrelevant to the process (necessary for official purposes)

What was it like to receive a grade for this class?
It didn't really bother me if I got a grade or not or what the grade happened to be. I just enjoyed doing the class and I'm not one to care about grades anyway.

b. Appreciation for being graded on what you actually think

It's kind of nice… it's like one of those grades that you don't have to work so hard to get… you don't have to do what the teacher wants …. And it really makes you feel like you don't always have to be jumping tricks to get a grade… and you just get a grade for saying what you actually think…

c. Appreciation for being graded on doing something productive for yourself

It's nice to have this grade that isn't filled with the same kind of stress and anxiety?
It wasn't so stressful… it's like make a box and this is beneficial to you… It's like go home and analyze yourself and think about shit that you would never want to think about or don't make time to think about… Go home and do something productive for yourself and not for you teacher so that your teacher can have a guideline for your grades….

Discussion

Facilitator's Experience

The facilitator's experience within the drama therapy program will be discussed by utilizing the major theme clusters to evaluate her overall impression of the program. Note that this discussion will leave out certain aspects of the facilitator's experience but that those aspects which are left out will be addressed later. Thus, the following paragraphs will demonstrate, from the perspective of the facilitator, the therapeutic viability of a program of this nature.

The drama therapy program was largely a product of the facilitator's traumatic experience as an adolescent (indeed the facilitator committed to her own therapy both before the onset of this program and throughout its duration); however, her research corroborated her suspicions that something might be missing from the high school experience and it seems, that that *something*, is support. Indeed, the facilitator's notion of preventing crisis or trauma in the lives of her participants is somewhat idealistic; moreover, it is extraordinarily difficult to evaluate the efficacy of a goal of this nature. However, it seems that the premise for her argument is that additional support will help adolescents negotiate this life-phase with more clarity and with increased health, and indeed it seems that the drama therapy program has effectively accomplished this. In fact, participants were able to discuss relevant issues within a therapeutic context and moreover noted that in doing so, they felt increased levels of support and comfort, which, as they expressed, held great import for them. Furthermore, the facilitator noted that it seemed as if participants developed increased levels of confidence throughout the program.

Of particular interest is the fact that the facilitator noted that the application of drama activities worked to increase the level of containment, therapeutically speaking, within the group. This might be seen as a fundamental benefit of including drama therapy programs within the environment of the public high school, as opposed to verbal or talk therapy programs. The facilitator further notes the importance of discussing candidly with the students the academic requirements (i.e. grades) versus the therapeutic requirements. This should be done to establish clarity for the participants between that which is therapeutic and that which is academic, thereby, helping participants to sort out and safely navigate such an experience.

Head Teacher's Experience

The head teacher's experience with the drama therapy program will be discussed largely by category; the major theme clusters will be used to discern his overall impression of the program. Thus, the following paragraphs will demonstrate, from the perspective of the head teacher, the therapeutic viability of a program of this nature.

The reasons for which the head teacher desired to include the drama therapy program within his school support the notion that therapeutic programs have a place within the high school environment. In fact, he feels that students desperately need an opportunity to learn important life-skills, noting that parents are typically too busy to teach these skills to their children and moreover, as a result, students learn, within the context of school, ineffective life-skills, such as, how to *survive* in the face of bullying as opposed to learning how to confront and put and end to bullying. Furthermore, the teacher noted that at least 20% of students are now on anti-depressants but are not ready to enter into traditional therapeutic settings, however, remarking that drama therapy

normalizes, for students, the concept of therapy. It seems that the very fact that it is

drama therapy makes it safe for participants because they can hide within the drama, so

to speak, as opposed to being held under the microscope of more traditional therapeutic

formats. For example, family problems might be revealed candidly, but hidden within a

poem; thus, affording the opportunity to share one's personal story at his/her own pace, in

his/her own way, thereby giving the participant control over his/her therapeutic

experience. Thus, drama therapy offers a non-threatening therapeutic modality in which

therapeutic gain might still be experienced, which in turn, works to set the precedent that

it is okay to participate in therapy, at least when administered as *drama* therapy, and so,

normalizing the concept of therapy and, in turn, enabling the head teacher to support the

inclusion of such a program within the high school.

At the program's completion the head teacher seemed to be rather satisfied with

the therapeutic outcome. In fact, he made reference to several changes he himself

witnessed within the program's participants and, specifically, to that of participants

learning to effectively manage their problems (equated as a direct result of the drama

therapy). Moreover, he noted that several students have observed changes in the

program's participants, the result of which has been an increased desire for the inclusion

of drama therapy within the high school.

Participant Experience

Participant experience within the drama therapy program will be discussed by

category; the major theme clusters will be used to discern the collective impression

participants held in regard for each categorical aspect of the program. Thus, the following

paragraphs will outline participant experience within the for-credit drama therapy

program conducted within a quasi-alternative, community-oriented public high school; where applicable, conclusions and/or suggestions will be made concerning the therapeutic viability of a program of this nature.

Participants seemed to have had a sound understanding of the program's goals; indeed their own goals seemed to correspond well with their expectations of the program, particularly on the level of meeting and learning about others. However, there was one notable difference; the desire to have fun or to have a break from school did not occur within Perceived Program Goals, although it did occur within the category of Participant Goals. Interestingly, some participants expressed satisfaction with the program, while others had more criticism to offer. Those who expressed more criticism were the same who expressed, as a personal goal, wanting to have fun (or that they had taken the program out of curiosity); while, on the other hand, those who expressed either satisfaction or who did not express the same degree of personal discomfort within the program, were those who had concrete therapeutic goals prior to the onset of the program. Thus, it seems that, as one participant alluded to, the participants in the drama therapy program had different expectations and different goals, which seems to have, in turn, negatively effected the development or evolution of the group itself. In the future then, it is suggested that similar programs might screen participants beforehand in an attempt to determine participant goals and expectations – those participants with similar goals might be then grouped together, thereby focusing the therapeutic work and intent. In spite of this, the category, Effect of the Program on Participants: Changes in Participants, highlights several profound therapeutic accomplishments, including, personal growth in the area of identity development (increased understanding of self),

increased levels of confidence and courage, increased levels of trust, and an increased level of awareness regarding the importance of taking personal responsibility for one's actions and of how these actions impact others. On this level, it might be said that the program had therapeutic viability as it was effective in its elicitation of participant growth and development.

The category, Group Dynamics, tells an interesting story in regards to the evolution of the group. Participants had very different things to say concerning group dynamics; some spoke of the discomfort within the group, attributed to either the negative impact of inter-member relationships existing outside of the group or to the negative impact of diverse participant goals and program expectations. On the other hand, there was a participant who spoke of the fact that inter-member relationships existing outside of the group positively affected the group process by providing an increased level of comfort and security that there may not have otherwise been. Still others spoke of the fact that the group members seemed to relate to one another on a superficial level while others spoke of the fact that the relationships and the dialogue seemed to them to be authentic. Truly, it seems as if participants had very different experiences within the program; however, it also seems plausible that most of the *uncomfortable* aspects of the program, for instance, the feeling of superficiality, occurred before the establishment of group cohesion, while on the other hand, the *comfortable* aspects, for example, the feeling of authenticity, may have occurred largely after the establishment of group cohesion. Moreover, nearly every participant mentioned the group's evolution, explaining the importance of the fact that it had evolved from a state of discomfort (or of feeling personally detached from the group), to a state of togetherness. Thus, one might conclude

that the group simply transformed in a rather typical manner. Therapeutic groups usually move through several phases, changing form and so, moving from simply a group of people, to an official group, where inter-member commonalities replace individualities in importance or significance.

However, it seems important to note that there was a participant who alluded to the fact that the establishment of the feeling of togetherness within the group seemed to happen rather late and that yet another felt that the feeling of superficiality actually prevented the group from attaining what she referred to as a profound level of cohesion. This they collectively attributed to the fact that participants seemed to have very different goals and expectations as well as to the fact that inter-member relationships existing outside of the group negatively affected the group. Therefore, it is reiterated that participants might be screened before commencing similar groups in an attempt to include participants with similar goals/expectations. (On the other hand, there was a participant who mentioned that relationships which existed independent of the group actually contributed to a feeling of comfort within the group, leading one to believe that people simply experience this factor in different ways; screening for personal preferences on this level is, therefore, advised).

Within the category, Effect of Program on School Life, participant feedback was generally positive. Releasing school tension seemed important, as did the feelings of comfort and support experienced within the halls of the school; an increased awareness of issues existing within the school was also significant (the fact that one of the group's members was in a different grade level seemed to contribute to this increased awareness, which points to the potential benefit of including participants from different social

circles). Two participants noted the impact of school life on the program; it seems that for them the inclusion of the program at the end of the school day resulted in a lower level of participation than there might have otherwise been. Thus, it seems that for some participants the inclusion of the program at the end of the day was beneficial, in the sense that it helped them to relieve themselves of school-related stress, while for others it made it more difficult to be present in the group. It might be of interest to research this phenomenon further but may also be nothing more than personal preference.

Questioning participants on the impact/effect of grading revealed that the majority felt that grading was irrelevant to their therapeutic process. Interestingly, however, there was one participant whom found the grading process to have had significance, noting that it was a refreshing experience to be assigned a grade for the act of having done something productive for herself.

Of most significance to this study, in particular, on the level of participant experience, is the fact that it was noted that the therapist's use of drama contributed to feelings of safety and of comfort with the therapeutic process. Moreover, it was explicated that the therapy was, at times, experienced as overwhelming and that this feeling of being overwhelmed was minimized when drama therapy was employed in favor of talk therapy.

Conclusion: Therapeutic Viability

This drama therapy program has been a worthwhile and therapeutic endeavor; it has demonstrated its therapeutic viability. Viability means that something is feasible or doable, thus, to say that this program has proven its therapeutic viability means that it has been possible, through the facilitation of this program, to elicit therapeutic

accomplishments: to accomplish the therapeutic goals set by those involved or to achieve personal growth/development through participation in the program. Indeed, the interview data, as previously discussed, reveals, without a doubt, that the program effectively elicited therapeutic gain and personal growth for those participants involved; thus, this pilot project indicates that there is therapeutic viability in the facilitation of for-credit group drama therapy.

The presence of this drama therapy program generated, within other students, a desire to participate in future drama therapy programs. The participants involved in the program made positive changes, they learned how to manage problems more effectively, they grew as people, and this was observed by other students. These observations generated desire and this desire is indicative of the generalizability of this work. The actual group was virtually homogenous in its make-up, composed of four grade eleven students, all of whom are friends outside the group, and one grade nine student; all of them girls. Yet, it was not only grade eleven girls who expressed desire to participate in a future program. In fact, the desire was without homogeneity, coming from students from various grades, of both genders. Certainly, the school system is in need of *something* and its not only female adolescents who might benefit from this work. Problems within the school system are vast and profound in nature; violence, bullying, drug-use, stress, eating disorders, depression, etc. affect females and males alike.

That is not say that adolescents in general desire to be in therapy or that they might actually be keen on participating in therapy. In fact, the head teacher of this school noted that although the drama therapy program elicited desire for future programs, he questions the ability of most students to commit to such programs. In spite of this

however, he mentions that approximately 20% of his student population is on anti-depressants, but that these same students are not ready to enter into traditional therapeutic settings. Certainly, pharmacotherapy has its place in treating psychological disorders and mental illness; however, it has been proven that pharmaceuticals, like Prozac and Paxil, elicit better results when paired with psychotherapeutic treatment; pharmaceuticals seem to help people recover from depression while, on the other hand, psychotherapy seems to help maintain said recovery when the medication is stopped – it is important to note that at this point in time, effective treatment for depression is still under great scrutiny (Sarason & Sarason, 1999). However, it still seems pertinent to ask the following question: if 20% of the student body is on anti-depressants but is not attending psychotherapy what might be the probability that this percentage will, in fact, go down over time (is it more probable that these same students will, instead, have to remain *dependant* upon anti-depressants)? Indeed, it is probable that it might actually increase, much the same as school violence has over the past couple of decades, that is to say, unless something is done there is really no hope of eliciting change within the school system. Thus, it seems that if students refuse to go to therapy, or are not ready to go to therapy, but are in need of therapy, and are asking for therapy, we might bring it to them.

Moreover, it seems that drama therapy works to normalize therapy, which is to say, that it is less threatening for students to participate in drama therapy than it is for them to participate in traditional talk therapies. In fact, the participants themselves commented that the therapy became overwhelming when it was delivered in the form of talk therapy, and further, that employing drama worked to contain the therapeutic process allowing them to be more open and honest with themselves, which in turn, elicited deeper

therapeutic gain and accomplishment. Thus, it seems that the use of drama therapy, in particular, enhances the therapeutic viability of therapeutic groups conducted within the high school environment.

Interestingly, the fact that this was group therapy, rather than individual therapy, may have also worked to normalize the therapeutic experience. I suspect that a large part of the reason why other students became interested in drama therapy was because they saw a group of their peers participating in the program, which in turn, likely made therapy seem more acceptable or normal (had it been individual therapy, those attending may have been singled out or ridiculed for going to therapy). Moreover, peer interaction is crucial to healthy adolescent development and is one of the most important aspects of this life-phase, thus likely making group therapy more appealing. Of course, it must be said that the program's weak spots revolved around the fact that this was a group experience; however, almost any innovative program will have some weak spots. Moreover, future recommendations require only minor tweaking: screening participants beforehand for similar goals and program expectations as well as for diversity in social circles seem to be the most profound changes to be made.

Limitations and Recommendations

This study is limited by the fact that the group was composed of only five adolescent females attending a quasi-alternative, community oriented public high school; thus, the findings cannot be truly generalized outside of these specifications. Moreover, the fact that the therapist and the researcher were one in the same likely skewed the data. In fact, it is possible that participants answered interview questions more favorably than they may otherwise have due to their therapeutic alliance with the researcher. Additionally, it is possible that the researcher interpreted interview data more favorably due to her personal biases regarding the work. However, member-checking was employed in order to reduce these possibilities.

In spite of any limitations of this study, however, it does serve as a verifiable pilot project, permitting postulation of the research question: is group drama therapy, conducted within the public high school, therapeutically viable? Indeed the results of this study indicate that the program's participants experienced therapeutic benefit and, thus, that this work holds therapeutic viability. However, it will only be through scientific authentication of drama therapy's therapeutic viability within the high school system that this work will be more wholly understand and recognized. Thus, it is recommended that quantitative research is conducted; pre-and post-testing is advised and might include, amongst others, the Rasmussen Scale of Ego-Identity which measures adolescent psycho-social growth and development.

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Appendix A

Questions for Facilitator

1. What was the purpose of this class?

2. Why did you choose to facilitate this class?

3. What goals did you have for the program? Were you able to meet those goals?

4. Tell me about your experience in this class? What was it like for you as a facilitator?

5. Was there anything you found helpful or satisfying? Can you describe what that was?

6. Was there anything you found unhelpful or unsatisfying? Can you describe what that was?

7. Have you noticed any changes in the students whom participated in the program? Can you describe some of those changes?

8. Did you witness any impact the program may have had on school life at large?

9. What was it like to grade students for their work in this class?

Appendix B

Questions for Head Teacher

1. Your pseudonym:

2. In your opinion, what was the purpose of this class?

3. Why did you choose to include this program as a course at your school?

4. Tell me, what was it like having this program at your school? What sort of impact did the program have?

5. Have you noticed any changes in the students whom participated in the program? Can you describe some of those changes?

6. What is your opinion concerning the fact that the students received a grade for this particular course?

7. What did you find useful/helpful/satisfying?

8. What did you find unhelpful/unsatisfying?

Appendix C

Questions for Participants

1. Your pseudonym:

2. In your opinion, what was the purpose of this class?

3. Why did you choose to register for this class? What goals did you have for
   yourself? Were you able to meet your goals?

4. Tell me about your experience in this class? What was it like for you?

5. If there was any impact on your school life, can you describe it?

6. What was it like to receive a grade for this class?

7. Was there anything you found unhelpful or unsatisfying? Can you describe what
   that was?

Appendix D

Interview Script

As you know, we have completed the therapeutic component of our program; today, we will commence the research component and, as such, I want you to know that if I seem different, it is because the work we will be doing together is my homework for my school. We will begin by reading over and discussing the questions I have for you. When you are ready you will choose a pseudonym for yourself, following which, you will type-out the answers to your questions. This will permit you to organize your thoughts and hopefully, to be as honest as you feel that you can. I will remain in the room while you are answering the questions and, if you need any clarification, feel free to ask. When you finish we will review the questions and, if necessary, time will be provided for you to add to your answers; this will conclude the interview. The next time we meet will be with the entire group on June 1, 2005. On that day we will debrief the research process. The last time we will meet as a group will be the following week, on June 7, 2005, at which time I will share with the group what I have been able to garner from the interview process relative to the experience you have collectively had within the drama therapy program; my findings will be discussed in order to determine their accuracy. If an additional meeting is required, it will be determined only at that point.

Appendix E

Participant Preliminary Consent Form

I, the undersigned participant _____,
authorize drama therapist, _____ Tricia Amundson _____

To take:

	YES	NO
Photographs	_____	_____
Videos	_____	_____
Tape-recordings	_____	_____

Of my artistic work and/or performance(s) for the benefit of my own therapeutic process with the understanding that the aforementioned documentation will be destroyed or given to me, at my request, at the completion of the current academic year ('04-'05).

I also authorize the drama therapist to have access to my   YES _____
medical and social service files for the purpose of guiding my   NO _____
therapeutic process appropriately.

I would be interested in participating in a drama therapy Master's degree research project which may include art products, verbatim quotes, case notes, and assessment results from these drama therapy sessions. I acknowledge that the information from these sessions will remain confidential.

YES _____

NO _____

If yes, I understand that both I and my parent/guardian will receive information explaining the project in detail and an Informed Consent Form upon favorable review by the Ethics Review Committee in the Department of Creative Arts Therapies at Concordia University.

I understand and give consent to participate in the drama therapy class in which I am enrolled for the 2004-2005 academic year. I am fully aware of the limitations, expectations, and responsibilities of both me and of the drama therapist (discussed verbally prior to commencing therapy).

YES _____

NO _____

Signature of Participant _____ Date _____

Signature of Parent/Guardian_____ Date _____

Signature of Head Teacher_____ Date _____

Appendix F

Participant Informed Consent

NB: This form, albeit slightly altered, was also utilized in obtaining the head teacher's

informed consent.

Drama Therapy Student: Tricia Amundson
Concordia University
Department of Creative Art Therapies
1455 de Maisonneuve Blvd. W., S – VA 264
Montreal, Quebec H3G 1M8
Canada

Supervisor: Stephen Snow, Ph.D., RDT – BCT

Background information:
One of the ways drama therapy students learn how to be drama therapists is to write a research paper, the purpose of which, is to help them, as well as other students and drama therapists who read the paper, to increase their knowledge and skill in giving drama therapy services. The long-term goal is to be better able to help individuals who enter into therapy with drama therapists in the future.
The purpose of this research paper specifically is to assess the therapeutic viability of group drama therapy conducted within the high school setting.

Permission:
As a student in the Master's in Creative Arts Therapies Program at Concordia University, I am asking you for permission to write about your drama therapy sessions. I am also asking for your permission to participate in a tape recorded interview, to be conducted by myself, for inclusion in my research paper – note that reference will be made to verbatim quotes. A copy of this research paper will be bound and kept in the Concordia University Library, and another in the Program's Resource Room. This paper may also be presented in educational settings or published for educational purposes in the future.

Confidentiality:
Your confidentiality will be respected in every way possible; neither your name, the name of the setting where your therapy took place nor any other identifying information will appear in the research paper.

Advantages and Disadvantages to Your Consent:
To my knowledge, this permission will not cause you any personal inconveniences or advantages. Whether or not you give your consent will have no effect on your involvement in drama therapy or any other aspect of your treatment (including your grade for the class). You may withdraw your consent at any time before the research is completed with no consequences, and without giving any explanation. To do this, or if you have any questions, you may contact my supervisor: Stephen Snow @ 514-848-2424 ext. 4641

If at any time you have questions regarding your rights as a research participant, you may call Adela Reid, Compliance Officer, in the Office of Research, GM-1000, Concordia University, Montreal, Quebec H3G 1M8
Phone: 514-848-2424 ext. 7481
Email: adela.reid@concordia.ca

Drama Therapy Research Paper
Tricia Amundson
Masters in the Creative Arts Therapies Program
Concordia University

I, _____, the undersigned, give permission to
Tricia Amundson to write about the themes discussed within my drama therapy group (2004-
2005), as well as to conduct and tape record an interview with me, for inclusion (note that
verbatim quotes will be included) in her master's research paper in the Creative Arts Therapies
Program at Concordia University. I understand that copies of the research paper will be kept in
the Concordia University Library and in the Resource Room of the Creative Arts Therapies
Program.

I understand that both my name and the setting where my drama therapy group took place will be
kept confidential, and that no identifying information will be given in the research paper. I also
understand that I may withdraw my consent at any time before the research paper is completed,
without explanation, simply by contacting Tricia Amundson or her supervisor, Dr. Stephen Snow.
This decision will have no effect whatsoever on my drama therapy or any other aspect my
treatment.

I have had the opportunity to ask questions about the implications of this consent and I am
satisfied with the answers I have received.

I have read and understood the contents of this form and I give consent as described above.

Signature: _____   *Date:* _____

Head Teacher: _____   *Date:* _____

Parent/guardian: _____   *Date:* _____

If at any time you have questions regarding this research study, please contact:

Tricia Amundson at 514-276-8648
Dr. Stephen Snow at 514-848-2424 ext.4641

If at any time you have questions regarding your rights as a research participant, you may call
Adela Reid, Compliance Officer, in the Office of Research. GM-1000, Concordia University,
Montreal, Quebec H3G 1M8
Phone: 514-848-2424 ext.7481
Email: adela.reid@concordia.ca

Appendix G

Facilitator's Interview Transcript

1. What was the purpose of this class?
This class was designed to support adolescent girls through this life-phase; to help them navigate personal crises and as a place to discuss feelings and identity. The over-arching goal was that it might help participants to define more clearly who they are and in so doing, to strengthen the sense of self thereby helping them to negotiate their lives with greater clarity and ideally then, to help them make healthy life decisions.
Of course my own high school experience served as a sort of template for my understanding of the experience of being an adolescent girl and thus, of what might be missing during adolescence – what might help them to move through this phase of life with increased self-awareness and health. I know that from my experience as an adolescent their were many serious issues with which we struggled and I see that today as well ...there has been a definite increase in both the level and degree of school violence. Things just don't seem to be getting any better...
I really wanted to do something that might make a difference in a young person's life – help to instill them with hope... But I must reiterate the notion that I wanted this to be a program that would help adolescent females in a preemptive manner; it wasn't intended to help girls through crises, it was supposed to help prevent crises.
2. Why did you choose to facilitate this class?
My own adolescence was rather difficult and in retrospect I saw that had there been more support or an opportunity to discuss and share issues and concerns it may have actually been possible for me to have worked through some of what was going on inside of me thereby helping me to perhaps avoid some of the more difficult experiences that I had. I realize now of course that the past can't be undone nor do I regret the past, I only feel that there was a lack of support to help us cope with issues, which it seemed actually led to experiencing trauma. My friends and I were confronted with very serious issues like eating disorders and rape and pregnancy and abortion... perhaps had we had an opportunity like the one I created at this high school we would have felt more supported thereby enabling us to make better decisions... and it seems important to mention that although we may have had supportive families, there were not very many of us who were actually comfortable talking to our parents about what was really going on in our lives.
3. What goals did you have for the program? Were you able to meet those goals?
I wanted, ideally, to help these girls to avoid trauma and of course this is an extraordinary undertaking, if not altogether impossible, but this was my over-arching goal and I wanted to accomplish this by helping them to negotiate the process of identity development – to help them find clarity regarding who they are in this world and who they want to be. I also wanted to simply create an environment in which they might feel supported and comfortable to discuss their lives in a group context, so that they might learn from one another.
I don't know if this program actually helped anyone to avoid trauma but I am aware that it provided the participants with a supportive environment. During termination of the therapeutic process it was revealed that this had been an important place for them, were they felt comfortable and supported, even if they weren't always able to openly share

what was going on inside of them. In fact, there were many participants who revealed that they had developed a deeper sense of trust… so it seems that this was an important place for them. During the group they were able to discuss issues such as drug use, body image, familial stress, school stress, etc. So I have no doubt that the program helped them to feel supported and helped them to explore who they are within a larger context.

4. Tell me about your experience in this class? What was it like for you as a facilitator?

Certainly, it was both an enjoyable and a difficult experience. Enjoyable because I was able to effectively design a program which seemed to helping and I love what I do – I love being able to help people and I think that this program was able to do that.

There were times however when I didn't know what was happening for my participants – there would be a feeling of discomfort and when I questioned why there wasn't always a response and so, this feeling would just linger and I wouldn't know what it was about.

It seemed that there was something going on within the group that the girls weren't comfortable talking about. I often felt that perhaps I was pushing them too far but when I questioned this they would say no. I realized however that I had to work harder to contain the group, which seems to me something which an inexperienced therapist, such as me, needs to do to maintain safety within the therapeutic context.

After this, these awkward moments were fewer and further between but they still existed; however, I knew at this point that I was doing what I could; still I worked harder to improve my own role as therapist.

But I began to wonder if perhaps this awkwardness within the group was at all related to the fact that the participants knew one another outside of the group and perhaps that there was interpersonal conflict of which I was unaware…

To this end I am still not sure what it was about but I can say that I was always careful to explain to the girls that they should only reveal what they are comfortable revealing and that if I ask something which they are not comfortable answering that they must tell me. So I tried to help them share and be open and also to maintain their own boundaries. I would however recommend that in the future I might screen participants beforehand in an attempt to have a diverse group – people from different social circles.

To this end I am still not sure what it was about but I can say that I was always careful to explain to the girls that they should only reveal what they are comfortable revealing and that if I ask something which they are not comfortable answering that they must tell me. So I tried to help them share and be open and also to maintain their own boundaries. I would however recommend that in the future I might screen participants beforehand in an attempt to have a diverse group – people from different social circles.

5. Was there anything you found unhelpful or unsatisfying? Can you describe what that was?

I didn't find anything unhelpful but in the future I would like to make greater efforts to involve myself with the school and with the guidance counselor. It felt somewhat separate from the school and I think that this type of service, with more communication between me and the teachers and even parents might benefit the students more. But then, on the other hand, perhaps what made it feel safe for these girls was that it was their own thing. It would be interesting to research this idea further.

6. Have you noticed any changes in the students whom participated in the program? Can you describe some of those changes?

The group itself definitely evolved; there was a definite sense of togetherness throughout the last phase of the group, which led me to believe that the process was working and unfolding in a timely manner. They were eventually able to share and discuss relevant issues, which, they themselves brought to the therapy. I think as well that each of the participants were able to feel comfortable within the group and so were able to share more of themselves and of what was going on for them. Thus, I believe that they were all able to feel secure within the group and so were able to develop deeper levels of trust. Through which I was able to witness more of who they are and thus, was able to develop what felt like authentic relationships with them. Within the group then I saw each participant changing, becoming more confident and open with themselves.

7. Did you witness any impact the program may have had on school life at large?
No, I did not. But I was only at the school when I had groups so there was really no way for me to observe this. So, I can't honestly answer this question. On the other hand, I did not witness any negative effects and my participants did not bring to group any negative experiences.

8. What was it like to grade students for their work in this class?
Initially I was very troubled by the idea of grading a therapeutic experience; however, I was able to develop a scheme with which I was very comfortable. I wanted to grade entirely on attendance, as that to me seems the most important aspect of therapy – just being there. So, participants only had to show up to get 75%. Projects which coordinated with the major program themes made up the rest of the grade; these projects were not graded on aesthetics but on completion – penalties were given for late assignments. Moreover, the grading scheme was discussed with participants beforehand and they were invited to make suggestions – I was very candid about the difficulty of grading a therapeutic experience and wanted to ensure that they knew that their experience within this program was about what they learned, and not about the grade.

Appendix H

Head Teacher's Interview Transcript

1. Your pseudonym?
Bid Bad Pat
2. In your opinion, what was the purpose of this class?
Discovery... self discovery through drama with someone who could guide them.
Identity development?
Yes and to discover how you relate to others, in a group, in the school, outside the
school...
What do you mean when you say: how you relate to others?
Where do I stand with what this person is telling me? Does it touch me? Why am I angry
when this person...? Why do I react...?
Helping them understand their feelings?
Yeah and to be able to... distance... how could I say this...?
Improve...?
I wouldn't say improving... normalize?
Accepting/experiencing the range of possible feelings?
Yes and at the same time the ability to uh... I want to use that word and it's just
there...To understand the reaction that you have to the outside world – you first
understand the jumble inside and then how you relate to the outside world and why and
how it affects you...
Self-reflection; the time in between the feeling and the response?
Yes.
What did you see as the benefit of this skill?
When (one of the participants the program)... when I told her she would be out of the
prom organization... I should have said we are rearranging...but I burst at her... but her
typical reaction would be "fuck you too!" But she said I 'm feeling angry I have to go and
the next day she came to speak with me... and because of drama she was able to remove
herself from a situation that would have been potentially explosive as well she was able
to talk the next day rather than ignoring the situation...
And you equate that with the drama?
Definitely. A real sense of self-reflection... I'm still looking for the word...but you know
just the ability to say this is too much and I am going to remove myself from the situation
– not to avoid it but to come back with a clearer mind.
3. Why did you choose to include this program as a course at your school?
Because the kids wanted it – they were enthusiastic and they had it last year and they
were really keen on having it and I thought if it is going to help them... they can really
use this... (Omitted in order to maintain confidentiality) really need it. They would do
shit to feel cool but now do this less...I definitely relate their new skills and their ability
to manage problems effectively to the drama. There were big changes in (omitted) – this
helped them to be able to confront what was bothering them. (Omitted) with guys
bugging her...talking about it in group and then discussing it gave her the strength to say
something. (Omitted) loved the fact that she could talk to the grade elevens.
Do you think she has developed a better sense of self?

I think so. It was really important for her.

4. Tell me, what was it like having this program at your school? What sort of impact did the program have?

What's interesting was that only those 5 girls were interested, now a lot of people are. What they hear and what they have seen...now everyone wants to have drama next year...and they are asking me, "Can we pay for it? Can we fundraise?" – Cause they don't give a shit about therapy anymore. They see that it is not therapy in the sense that you are sitting in front of a shrink and analyzed... They like the fact that this school allows for special places... most of them have problems interacting and they see the results in the kids and how they are better able to cope... Would they be able to withstand the content? I don't know... They like the secretive place (in reference to the location of the drama therapy space) and it seems glamorous... but are they aware of all the effort... the vulnerability they have to put themselves through to make this worthwhile...

Well, this is my job, to help them...

But I don't think they understand the effort. I think it would be good for the kids (who participated) to talk with the other kids to see how it was for them... to see that it was a lot of work but that you learn life skills... and the idea that I shouldn't react like this and why am I reacting like this...

Therapy is not scary anymore to the other kids then?

Definitely.

THERE WAS AN INTERRUPTION HERE.

I'm really, really happy...I'm really sad if we aren't able to keep it and this is a very little price to pay to give them life-skills... We (you and I) built a relationship where we understand each other (in reference my understanding of academic protocol and his understanding of drama therapy and its place within the school).

Do you think they get these skills otherwise?

No. I think they are told how to behave and are expected to behave... but this was never important (learning life-skills)... this education is more of an English thing... When I talk about this in the French sector they are looking at me (as if) we are here to *educate* them. They (the kids) don't have family activities... They learn certain skills...small talks, how not to behave – but an awful lot of this is not at home anymore. People are too busy; people want to be friends to their kids. And in school, because of the violence, they learn what they need to learn to survive – I need to be a bitch or a victim, because of the violence... learn how to survive and just hope the bully won't deal with you. Drama helps people to deal with the bully in a way to set you free – (bullying can also happen) in a relationship or with parents, you know, "Please, it would break my heart if you don't go to college..." They can learn how to confront this.

5. Have you noticed any changes in the students whom participated in the program? Can you describe some of those changes?

(Omitted) was able to redirect herself in a potentially explosive situation with me... and she was right. But when I snapped I just thought, "Ah fuck." I didn't talk to her but I know she is an extrovert... we talked then and (omitted) talked to her and then we talked again and then we discussed it in class and they were like, "Whoa! You admitted it (that I had snapped)!" And I was, "Of course. What? Am I going to give you a wrong skill in life?" And (omitted) was able to joke and laugh about this... she was still feeling hurt but was able to let it go... before she would be bringing up the last time and the last time and

the time before... She will not admit that what she did was not okay but she was able to withdraw and I was able to speak with her and the school nurse talked to her and two days later we talked and we were able to... This was a big accomplishment for her and she commented on this for herself too... and she was so proud of herself. And so that's a major... I know that with her it is the most visible one.

With (omitted)?

They had a drawback the other day but they left (the school) and were able to talk... something happened between them but they were able to skip a class, know what the consequences would be, but what was more important was that this (their drawback) would not get worse... this needed to be resolved.

And before?

Typical female emotional narrative...

Passive aggressive...

Passive aggressive manipulation... What we consider is the typical male emotional narrative is the punch... So instead of manipulation they were able to leave and skip and know the consequences and know that what was more important for them in the moment was to talk about this.

And for anyone else?

For (omitted) confronting her bullies. But already that with (omitted) is a major benefit – the group gave her tools and she was able to take a course of action... major conflict resolution... but at the same time the therapy comes in and she has to look at herself and say, "This has happened before, but I wasn't able to say anything..." So she had to look at, "Why do I put myself in these situations?" Before she would have avoided the situation... I told her that there are other ways (to deal with this kind situation) – but she was not ready yet for that... if she starts looking too much at her self... this is too much. She said, "I'm totally comfortable with who I am." I told her that passive aggressivity is a choice but not maybe the best choice. I suggested she bring it back in the drama and talk about it...

But she is not ready for this deeper self-reflection?

Even adults can't do this... (Omitted) was able to say, "I'm totally comfortable with myself." But not, "Why is this bullying happening?" But she is slowly establishing this kind of self- analysis... (Asking) why is this happening to me and what am I doing to bring it on?

6. What is your opinion concerning the fact that the students received a grade for this particular course?

I think in many ways we have no choice... we couldn't have this... it would be so complicated with the board. At the same time... attendance (in reference to the grading schema)... if they are always there all the time... But in drama therapy I understand now that if they are here and they participate (they get a grade)... What if they don't participate?

If they are here and they are not participating, well, for some people it can be counter-therapeutic to force them to participate or to kick them out and sometimes what they need is just to be accepted for wherever they are at and sometimes that is to sit and not participate, but eventually they will come around and join in the group and at that point, it will be on their own terms and so, they won't feel forced.

Yes and sometimes someone can be participating but taking up too much space.

You are okay then with the grading?
I had to be… and I know you enough and how you work and I see the progress… At first, not knowing…it seemed sort of Lucy Goosey… What's this? Everyone gets a grade just for showing up? And now I know it is just a different way to evaluate.

7. What did you find useful/helpful/satisfying?
I think I've said… the fact that they were able to discuss (things) and then come to me… like I've already said.

8. What did you find unhelpful/unsatisfying?
No, no, no – not at all.

9. Anything you'd like to add?
Pity we don't know if we have the money to do it again, especially at (this school). Because we get kids who really, really need attention and a therapeutic setting but are not ready (for a therapeutic setting). 20% are on anti-depressants – it's enormous (the need) – they've had these other therapies throughout their lives but the drama therapy is less threatening. Right now drama therapy is experimental and the beauty of being experimental is that you don't judge yet. Everything is okay and I think that is the beauty of it now.

Before it gets corrupted?
I don't want to be cynical but it seems that when it's normalized it gets corrupted. You're building it now and so everything is up to you.
(Data missing)

So you try to teach them the same things on a regular basis?
Yeah. So that's why I believe in this… and the kids were really enthusiastic. But we would need at least 5000 for you two and another 4500 for art – the whole school has art… But we have to look at how many kids are benefiting… (We discussed the fact that, in order to justify the expense of such a program, more students would need to be served.)

Appendix I

Participant Interview Transcript: Lisa

1. Your pseudonym:
Lisa

2. In your opinion, what was the purpose of this class?
I believe that the purpose of this class was to try to better understand one's feelings and opinions on common problems. Those common problems were brought up by ourselves during discussion.

3. Why did you choose to register for this class? What goals did you have for yourself? Were you able to meet your goals?
I chose to register in this class because I had heard good things from other people. I have been in many one on one therapy sessions but every one has failed. I was curious to see what group therapy might be like. The goals that I placed on myself when entering the class were that I should be open minded to new things and that I should be patient with others. I believe I did quite a good job with my goals but at times did find myself growing impatient with the others (of course I gave them no less respect than I would other wise).

4. Tell me about your experience in this class? What was it like for you?
I found it very interesting. For the most part I found it very enjoyable and different to what I had been accustomed to. I liked our discussions and games we played. It felt very comfortable and relaxed. I didn't feel judged in anyway and I even enjoyed hearing others talk about their problems and opinions on things. What I enjoyed most of all was the social atom. It gave me a good look at some of my relationships and made me think twice about things. Although I had a great time most of the time there were classes that I didn't feel like being there. Almost all of those were for personal reasons such as being tired, stressed or physically ill.

5. If there was any impact on your school life, can you describe it?
There was not much of an impact on school life and if anything the school had an impact on my behavior in class. Since our classes were always at the end of the day (after an absolutely horrible math class) I often found myself very tired and slightly frustrated. In terms of outside work affecting my school work that was not a problem. Everything was able to be done on time and I enjoyed our at home projects very much.

6. What was it like to receive a grade for this class?
It didn't really bother me if I got a grade or not or what the grade happened to be. I just enjoyed doing the class and I'm not one to care about grades anyway.

7. Was there anything you found unhelpful or unsatisfying? Can you describe what that was?
I can't think of anything but I know the only time I got really upset was when we started discussing things (such as body image) that made me upset on a personal level. Those are things one can't avoid.

Participant Interview Transcript: Iasha

1. Your pseudonym:

Iasha

2. In your opinion, what was the purpose of this class?

For more than one person to come together and share experiences.

What would come from this? What benefit would there be?

Growth, comfort, security; to support each other and maybe gain introspection... by putting yourself in a new circumstance you'll automatically learn something...

And the benefit would...

Growth, comfort, security...

Do you feel then that you would get this from any new situation?

It's something you're not really looking for but through this kind of guided experience these kinds of things come up...

So, the structured and guided element of the program helped to elicit this (growth, comfort, security) for you?

Yes.

Anything else you might have seen as the purpose for this class?

To have fun.

3. Why did you choose to register for this class? What goals did you have for yourself? Were you able to meet your goals?

A place where I could relax... a break from the regular school stuff... and I like doing talking more than like art or something like that kind of thing and I was there last year...A place where I could feel comfortable and just be and have fun...

To have fun (smiling)?

... not necessarily have fun... but to learn from people...

There's nothing wrong with having fun.

(smiling and nodding)... and get to know people I would not necessarily know...

Why might that be important to you?

I like getting to know people... I learn from people...

For growth?

Yeah.

No goals for yourself?

Not this year... last year I had more concrete goals... I don't feel like I'm lacking in something... I feel like I 'm very (trails off)...

Did you have this goal of experiencing growth from other people?

... like I had like wants and stuff but I feel like a goal is something like... ah... very personal... it was a personal goal to meet people and grow but it just kind of happened...

So you didn't say to yourself before you began this program that this is what I want?

No.

Maybe it was more the outcome then, than it was your intention?

Yeah.

Anything else?

To be comfortable in expressing myself or doing acting stuff cause it was supposed to be drama therapy...

It wasn't drama therapy?

More therapy, less drama, you understand...

(Nod).

...maybe it was drama but I just unconsciously got comfortable with it and it was just like roles I play and so I didn't look it as drama...

Would you say you met your goals then?

Yeah.

You feel you are able to express yourself more?

Yeah cause I felt more comfortable with the people in this group.

Has that transferred to outside of this group?

I feel more comfortable so I can act or do drama cause I feel comfortable in this group...but I felt comfortable this way coming in...

So, you learned to feel comfortable with these people...

I generally feel comfortable with most people... when it is a closed and intimate setting it is less comfortable but I learned to trust the process...

This was able to happen for you in a small intimate setting... where you were able to feel comfortable to express yourself...

Yeah cause it's not very natural coming in with these specific people and doing these specific things...outside there is no plan for it and so it feels less uncomfortable to begin with...

Being comfortable with strangers in a contrived situation was important to you then?

It just happened that I was able to feel comfortable and I knew it would eventually...

4. Tell me about your experience in this class? What was it like for you?

What do you mean?

Well, you said that were able to come into a contrived situation and feel comfortable and that that was important to you?

Yeah.

Well, is there anything else about your experience that may have been important to you?

What do you mean?

Well, what was interesting to you?

... doing all the different things and getting to know different people and learning and seeing the end product at the end... you know, just to see the (trails off)...

The way the group had evolved?

Yeah.

What did that feel like, why was it important to you?

It feels like we each had an impact on each other and that (trails off)...

So what does that give you?

A sense of certainty and knowing that every little thing I'm doing affects someone else and that what they do affects me.

So would you say that this is something that you learned?

It was clarified.

So, like a deeper understanding of this?

Yeah.

And so does that give you this sense of security in life or...

Well it gives me a sense of worth, because my being is...everyone affects everyone else... and also a sense of trust and wanting to understand more of whom you are and how you impact people and how they impact you...

The group dynamic seems to have been the most important thing for you?

Yeah. Sometimes it felt like not everyone was inside the group...some were just observing so that... but at the same time I would say that... let's say that we had a discussion, I would feel like everyone wasn't locked in you know? So sometimes that was frustrating because I felt like there was a lack of comfort or honesty...yeah, I don't know...

Did that make it difficult for you to be honest?

Yes.

So, was it disappointing?

No, just uncomfortable sometimes.

And what do you equate that with?

What do you mean?

Well, the lack of comfort, the lack of openness and honesty, the lack of involvement...it could be people's readiness to go to those places...That's a normal part of any therapeutic group and certainly it can be frustrating... Did it make you feel like you couldn't be where you needed to be?

Yes, sort of. I feel like I found purpose in every little thing that we did but I don't think that everyone did... but in the end it was rewarding to see that they liked it in the end even if they didn't like every little thing that we did.

It was important to you that others appreciated the experience so as to validate the experience you were having together?

Yeah.

5. If there was any impact on your school life, can you describe it?

Well I guess the answer to that would be that this was my safe spot at the end of the day to relax and maybe like *ahhh* just the energy of the day... it made me feel like it was good endings of days.

Like a release at the end of a...

Yeah. A lot of times we had this class after math and instead of everyone going home and feeling *ahhh* ...we got to come here and be *ahhh* and so leave school and feel more relaxed.

Was there a difference then in leaving school on other days when you didn't have this class?

Well we always take time to decompress but it is always nice to have the diversity of sharing it with different people....

Any other impact on your life at school?

When (one of the other participants) felt like things were shitty for her at school, it made me realize I have a responsibility... and it made me more aware of issues in the school...

What was that like for you?

Good... cause it felt like we were helping her as she was speaking about it, so it was empowering...

It gave you hope?

Yeah. And like I really can make a difference.

6. What was it like to receive a grade for this class?

I didn't really pay attention to the grade but I would've been disappointed had I got a 70 for some retarded reason. I liked the projects…having something to grade by…but it was a bit random, you know, okay so you did it here's your grade, but it was better than just assigning a grade on nothing. But I didn't feel like the grade actually reflected the work I was doing…I even forgot how you were grading…

75% attendance; 25% project completion

It reflects the work you put in but only like in things that can be made physical, like it's not social or whatever…

So this was okay for you?

Yeah. It was like separate…last year it did really impact me…my grade…

So it was separate from your experience in the class – not like in say, math, where the grade is a big part of the experience in the sense that you require the grade in order to advance to the next level…

Yeah.

7. Was there anything you found unhelpful or unsatisfying? Can you describe what that was?

I'm not sure.

You spoke about some people not feeling comfortable sometimes… was there anything else…how do you feel that the experience might have been different or do you feel that this was…

I translated it into not trusting and not wanting to share and not liking the process…So, I think that if everyone felt like they liked it there would be more sharing and growth…if it was open and people shared what they were learning then the others could see that.

How might you have changed it then?

Maybe I should have addressed the problem…

Maybe it should have been me?

But I also know these people outside of class and why they would feel uncomfortable in certain situations.

But you didn't want to violate that relationship which existed outside of the class?

Yeah. That's why sometimes it felt like it was on the surface of everything… but at the same time it is not individual therapy…but maybe others felt like it was superficial, cause there was no honesty…

Cause you know what is honest outside of the class?

(Nods)

So the group dynamics going on outside of the group were affecting the group…making it feel superficial or contrived?

(Nods)

But to what extent did it affect the group process?

It made people feel less connected to the group.

But in spite of this you still feel like the group evolved and that you personally benefited from the experience?

Yeah. But sometimes it was uncomfortable for me cause I was seeing this…but I didn't feel that it was personally a problem for me…but sometimes I felt that maybe I shouldn't feel as enthused (about the class) cause others weren't…

Out of respect for the other person? Like if for example, someone just found out that they were pregnant and then came into the class and I was all "Okay, let's play games!"

It wasn't a specific thing... just that they don't like this class or they don't want to be there.

Was it the actual dynamic within the group, because you knew each other outside of class?

(Nods)

I knew.

You did?

Yeah. Cause I've been through this before and it can be very heavy to go there in a group and maybe not appropriate given the environment. Cause it might be heavy to discuss the group dynamics within the group.

That's also why I wouldn't be like...cause we only have 1 hour and a ½ and cause bringing it up makes it uncomfortable...and all you can do is like make it sort of okay when it is actually like the foundation of the group...

Participant Interview Transcript: Sarah

1. Your pseudonym: Sarah

2. In your opinion, what was the purpose of this class?

I thought it was probably to relax the students, to get them in touch with the innermost part of themselves, to cool down a little... to be a little break in school life, to take them away little?

Did you see this as more for grade 11's?

No but after a few classes I could see that I'm the only young one there and they talked about the hecticness of school life and so it seemed more for them. But this was probably just because of the people who were in the class.

And you said that you also saw this to be for the inner most self?

This is the part you usually don't think about. You know? The spiritual part of you. You know? That sounds really cliché but you know it's there.....

What did you see as the benefit of that?

What do you mean?

How did you see that benefiting your life?

It makes you more aware of yourself...less aware of how you appear outwardly and more aware of who you are... so it gives you more confidence, a little, to know that part of yourself better and the ability to realize that it doesn't matter how you appear to others.

3. Why did you choose to register for this class? What goals did you have for yourself? Were you able to meet your goals?

I'm not going to lie... to get know people... I wanted to get to know people here and I thought what better place than drama therapy where everyone is talking deep and all unguarded.

How did you see that this would benefit your life?

Cause I got here and I didn't know too many people, so it seemed like a good opportunity, like a club or something.

Did you have any other personal goals?

To be a little less self-conscious; to break free of that a little, to be a little more open with people and I thought that maybe this class could help with that.

Were these two goals linked for you?

Yeah.

4. Tell me about your experience in this class? What was it like for you?

Near the second half I like it a lot. At the beginning I was a little unsure. I felt it was a little bit too spiritual and deep… and not right for me… but later it became… more for me…it was just this cool thing…it was a really cool experience having that sudden togetherness…

What do you think contributed to that togetherness?

The activities we did helped a lot. I'm not too sure. I think also they were just nice people and you were a really nice and laid back drama teacher – so you didn't make us feel like it was work… I don't know exactly what made it happen.

What did you like about the togetherness?

Confidence. I'd know that know matter where I was I still wouldn't be completely alone cause I had my drama group…cause I had these people outside of my class or my friends. Even if it was only two days a week.

And now? Not having the group?

I feel a little different. I mean I don't talk to any of them – just "hi, how are you's?" in the hallway- but I wouldn't even have those if I hadn't been here and even in those simple reactions it seems kinds of groupish.

You said that this feeling of togetherness was something you could look back for this sense of confidence… So do you still get that sense of..?

Yeah.

Is there anything else you remember about your experience?

I don't know…I mean looking back it blurs together and I mean that doesn't mean it was bad…the biggest thing I can remember was the last day…cause I mean I'm trying to remember specific things like when I went home and was like that was really cool or made me feel good …

So there were these times when you were able to feel like it was really cool or made you feel really good?

Yeah.

You just don't remember specifically?

No.

How did these times then, when it felt really good or cool personally affect you?

I felt really enlightened…cause I would think that none of my other friends would be doing this or thinking this… cause they think it's lame or they don't have time for stuff like this…

Did friends of yours think it was lame?

They thought it was weird that I was staying so late to do this. There were some people in art who wanted to change to drama cause they hated art…some said that drama therapy is for chicks…they're just idiots, the ones that say that…

Were there any other reasons, aside from hating art that people wanted to change to drama?

No. There is (my friend)...she likes acting and might want to change to regular drama and I might want to do that too cause I saw (a play that was produced by the regular drama stream) and it was amazing... but the others no...

5. If there was any impact on your school life, can you describe it?

Socially I'm pretty sure it made me a bit more confident about myself and when I talked about those guys (people this participant was having problems with) in this class and they (the other participants) said it's horrible... it gave me a bit more confidence and courage... So having them there to say that really gave me the courage to keep hanging in there...

So you were able to change the situation?

Before I thought if I just didn't show that it mattered to me... but that wasn't working... but when they (the other participants) said keep doing it – keep being cool and it would eventually work and it did work...

So now those people leave you alone?

Pretty much.

And what does that feel like?

It feels pretty cool. They still do it sometimes and I don't know if it's kidding or mocking but I don't really care cause I don't look at it as bad it's just socializing with people in my class – it's cool.

So being able to stay with it enabled you to change your attitude about it?

Yeah (smiling).

Was there any other impact on your school-life?

It might have impacted academic life in a sort of bad way. Cause all I would hear about is grade elevens not doing their school work, so it's made me really, really laid back – it's chill I don't have to do it...

So, you are more laid back in school?

Yeah.

But you see this as a bad thing?

Kind of. (Smiling).

6. What was it like to receive a grade for this class?

It was fine cause I understood it was a school course and needed a grade. It was just a number that was there for official purposes, so I didn't mind or take it personally.

So did the grade mean anything to you?

Not really. I just haven't been taking grades that seriously this year.

7. Was there anything you found unhelpful or unsatisfying? Can you describe what that was?

One thing and I mean it's in the most nicest way possible. Sometimes there would be these little silences in our group and I hate awkward silences and sometimes there would be a lot of them and I didn't like those.

Was there anything that you might attribute to this?

I'm not sure. They would come up ... and you wouldn't say anything and we would be just looking around...

Looking around?

Just seeing if anyone was going to do something.

And what might you have thought could have been done?

I don't know. Maybe if you see them coming up you could say something.

Like what?

I have no idea. Just like start another topic or tell us what to do if we are going to do another activity.

So, you have no idea what those silences might have been about?

No. It's hard to say now that the class is over and all packed up.

You said that they came up often?

Kind of I think.

What is often to you?

Like once per week, on average.

And do you think it affected your experience?

No, not at all. It's just something I remembered.

So, how do you think that your experience would have been different if those silences hadn't existed?

I don't' think it would have been much different.

8. Is there anything else you would like to add?

I don't know, but, um, I think maybe more classes where you start by talking to people to get to know how they are feeling cause that could lead to more discussions about emotions and what causes them and stuff like that.

You would have liked to see more direct work?

Yeah, cause most of our conversation classes... Where you connect to people directly...where you just start out by saying, "how are you today?" would be good.

More direct work with how people are feeling in the moment is what you are saying essentially?

Yeah......

And how might the group, or yourself, have benefited from this?

I don't know. I just know that I would have liked it personally – cause there would be a few times when I would speak up but there were times when there would be a grade eleven twist and I wouldn't be able to contribute that much...

I'm sorry about that.

No, no, that's okay.

Participant Interview Transcript: Sachelle

1. Your pseudonym: Sachelle

2. In your opinion, what was the purpose of this class?

I thought it was more for your, um, kind of an experiment, not an experiment but a test trial to see how a group of youth connected in a school environment... To clarify and to help ease teen matters... to discuss it in a group where they might not otherwise have the opportunity.

As an experiment?

Yeah, but that sounds sterile. More to see how it works kind of thing. At first when I first came I thought you were coming in and testing it out and I was a participant in this... but afterwards I felt that it was our group as opposed to being a separate thing...

What contributed to this change in your perception?

Just being in the group more than five or six times... not just singing the papers (the consent forms and group contract) but getting to know the people... like this is a fun place... we do what we need to do not what needs to be done...

The experiment feeling? Was this last year or was it this year?

Last year it felt very therapeutic but it also felt more distant... there were more people... there was still a bond but it wasn't as strong...

But in the sense of that experiment or trial feeling?

For both... for the first few classes... but more last year... but this year... this is a kind of a whim class...I don't know how to say it... it was way more apparent last year...

So this feeling changed over time?

Oh yeah it just changes...

Anything else you might have thought was the purpose for this class?

I don't think so...I don't want to make it too complicated...

3. Why did you choose to register for this class? What goals did you have for yourself? Were you able to meet your goals?

I didn't want to take drama therapy at first but I suck at art and that was the only other option... although I am an "arteest"... and I've taken it all my life...My mom was like go take it (drama therapy)... and I remembered kids in drama who seemed needy... and wore bright colors and... But I came here and it was totally different and the only drama was incorporated into the therapy, it was incorporated into what we wanted...we didn't just do like skits or something... I think I took it out of curiosity too, and that art is always there as a fallback...

Was that this year or last year?

This year I was all fort it. I knew what to expect. At the end of last year I wanted there to be drama therapy again this year.

And this year did you have any personal goals?

Maybe. I think I saw the opportunity to gain stuff that I might not have had last year last year... there were a lot of strong characters and I had more issues and I held back... and this year a lot of those people were gone... there are not as many kids this year... but it was more that I could take stuff that I might have wanted last year... and not necessarily outwardly to express within the group but my own way of taking things that I wouldn't have bothered with last year....

What might have contributed to that change?

I think, uh, recognizing that the class was significant when it finished last year...before then the class was just a class for me... but when it finished something really changed for me... and I realized that that really was an important place whether or not I was contributing... but that I was still there... and that was a really cool opportunity that no one else has at any other school... and that I won't be able to have it if I don't take it.....

Were you able to meet your goals then?

I think so. I felt more comfortable as a participant in the group...last year I wasn't afraid of being judged but it was still fresh and new and I didn't know what to expect... but I realized this year that it wasn't about what it was expected to be but more about just doing the activity...

How did your perception change?

With people's social atoms, when I saw that everyone had a different one...and some would cry and some would laugh... and it wasn't about who's was funniest or most

dramatic... and even watching it was different than doing it... and that drawing it and just seeing it on paper and knowing what it was supposed to be like was different than actually being in it... That you can take what you want from it...

So, you realized that it's about what you take from it as opposed to what you think you might get from it?

Mmmhmm. What you expect to get from it and what you get from it are totally different and I think that this year I learned not to expect things and just to take things....

4. Tell me about your experience in this class? What was it like for you?

It was really cool. I had fun, um, just cause I kind of already knew 3 out of 4 people... and I kind of had that sense of understanding... and this made the activities more fun... Cause I knew them... but they were just like school people and not necessarily friends... It added something... A little giggle we could share outside of class...

And this room and I like the way we painted it... It's like a clubhouse or something and what goes on in here is our thing... and fuck everyone else cause when we do this it is our thing and nobody else knows about it....

I really liked the fact that I didn't always like everyone all the time... This year I didn't feel like it was so important to put on a façade... When I felt like I was uncomfortable, I felt it was okay. Like it was kinda cool...like this is my own place to be...

And I really liked it better (than last year) cause there were so many stories we are not supposed to talk about...

I liked playing games and the fact that when I come here... it's like we need to get this done, but everyone else feels like playing games so let's play games...

Things aren't always so black and white and tedious...

Even when we are going to do an activity and you think it's going to suck... But in the end you get something out of it every time...

Can you elaborate on this idea that it was your own private place? What did this give you?

A feeling of home in a school... I feel like this is my comfort room... at first it had a really sterile hospital feeling (before the room was decorated) and I liked that part of it too... cause I would come in here and play the piano... and I just liked to be here and everything kind of fell into place when we painted the room...And I just felt really comfortable...

And when anyone else came in here I felt like they were going through my room...

Cause we always come out of here having a good time...

It's a girl's clubhouse too... not like a boy's space but for girls...

It was safe and sacred and we all had that understanding that made it an okay place to be...

You said earlier that it added something?

It's like a comfort that kind of takes you outside of this room and more into the school, a bigger place... you form a relationship in here and when you take it outside of here it kind of makes it like ....comfort .... it gives me a little bit of .....like when you rub someone the right way and you don't think about rubbing them the right way....it's like this comfort and security....like for (omitted) I felt like when maybe the grade 11's would walk by and start a conversation... and she was having troubles ... and so she feels more than just part of her grade nine class....a different kind of outlet and we could smile

and joke about something....it made comfort ....I would have never spoken to her if I hadn't known her in this class...

And even people I knew...I saw parts of them that I would have never known just hanging out in the park...

Do you think then, that it enhanced your relationships with the people you already knew?

Yeah.

In what way?

More stuff in common... more stuff to talk bout....it's just kinds of like ....this isn't the kinds of stuff you'd be doing outside ....this is original to here....like how we feel.....like if we are talking in the park about this stuff the conversation will just drift off...here it's like organized, well, here it drifts off too, but it snowballs in this organized way and it always comes back... It adds something to people when you can talk about this stuff and not just superficialities... But there is still something there that wasn't there before...

Wasn't there before? What do you think that it is?

Just knowing each other... You get to like adjust to other people's personal ... not adjust... but you get a feeling for someone....you just get a taste of their energy ...their being....you just kind of get a sense of who they are...

5. If there was any impact on your school life, can you describe it?

Well, I think it would just be kind of repetitive. The whole just passing smiles in the hallway. And not having to think do I really know this person...will this person be my friend tomorrow... It's not like a social issue... We know what we are about and we know what we do... It's like a club – we both belong to something...

So again, what you take from that is the sense of comfort?

Mmmhmm. You also learn form other people... to see how someone else would do their self-box... other ways of seeing things or doing things... that you just would have thought are ridiculous...or serious... but you realize it's not because someone else thought of it...

So, it expanded your perception?

Mmmhmm. It's almost like self-awareness... realizing that I've never done it that way and so thinking well how come I didn't think of it that way... so it's like therapy...

So it helps you get to know yourself to see...

Mmmhmm... the different things around you...

6. What was it like to receive a grade for this class?

Kind of cool, er...

Mmmhmm.

It's kind of nice... it's like one of those grades that you don't have to work so hard to get... you don't have to do what the teacher wants .... And it really makes you feel like you don't always have to be jumping tricks to get a grade... and you just get a grade for saying what you actually think...

What's that like?

It's pretty cool. And you don't have to be like I have a paper in drama therapy... and if you come... if you know that you are a person and as a person you have a class at this time and you have to come and that's part of your grade...

It's nice to have this grade that isn't filled with the same kind of stress and anxiety?

It wasn't so stressful… it's like make a box and this is beneficial to you… It's like go home and analyze yourself and think about shit that you would never want to think about or don't make time to think about… Go home and do something productive for yourself and not for you teacher so that your teacher can have a guideline for your grades….

7. Was there anything you found unhelpful or unsatisfying? Can you describe what that was?

Or anything you would have changed or anything like this?

Nope I can't think of anything…..

Are you sure?

Yeah. I'm thinking really hard actually… No, everything seems to have been pretty cool…pretty helpful…

8. Okay. Is there anything else you might like to add? Anything we haven't already touched upon?

My favorite activities?

Sure.

The social atom and I liked the random social atom cause it's not planned out and I like when you leave and you come back and everyone has to make assumptions…

I like that one too.

I'm totally like a little kid, "Let's play games!"

Well it's fun.

Yeah. It's fun!

Participant Interview Transcript: Charmelia

1. Your pseudonym: Charmelia

2. In your opinion, what was the purpose of this class?

I thought it was mostly to do therapy and using drama as a way to reenact emotions and to put yourself in the moment of what you are thinking or feeling….

So, to understand more, your feelings?

Yeah, understand them sort of through action instead of just talking.

And what benefit would this serve?

It allows you to be more honest about what you are actually feeling because in a controlled environment where … you're supposed to really act them out and I don't know… Because it's a controlled environment you are not necessarily as vulnerable because you start small and act it out and it progresses to something else and it's not as threatening as if you have to talk about something specific….

Okay, anything else?

To understand each other…like different people still find similarities…Well, the group aspect is sort of giving and taking…

So, to learn about yourself through meeting others?

Yeah. To learn from other people learn… to listen to other people… and learn to get feedback from a few different people instead of just one person.

3. Why did you choose to register for this class? What goals did you have for yourself? Were you able to meet your goals?

Um… I was interested in the group aspect and I knew that last year was sort of like the first time, so I wanted to see sort of how it would progress…I didn't know how it was

going to change but I knew it was going to change somehow cause last year was the first year it was done....I was also interested to see what it would be like with other people...yeah... I was mostly interested to see what it would be like in a new group...

How did you think that this would benefit you?

I can learn new things from different people. Not necessarily by them telling me something but by observing them and learning what they are about...

Learning about new people enhances your perspective?

Yeah.

And how do you see that benefiting you?

I don't know...

To learn from other people... to enhance your perspective... so, to like open your mind?

Yeah.

And do you think that you accomplished this goal?

Yeah.

Anything in particular that might have contributed to being able to achieve that goal?

Well everyone there was very friendly. I don't know, just by chance everyone was very friendly and cooperative....

Mmmhmm.... So, people's openness was what contributed...

Yeah and it was clear to me that people had very, very different impressions of what it would be like and very, very different goals and that sometimes got in the way except that everyone still wanted people to be happy in the class I think.

How did it get in the way?

Um...some people wanted more therapy and some people found that too overwhelming. And those are kind of two opposites that sort of clashed. Yeah and I think that some people found it overwhelming at times and its been overwhelming for me too and I think that some people took it more lightly.

What made it overwhelming exactly?

Um...it was overwhelming to see other people overwhelmed and it was overwhelming to see people share things they weren't comfortable with sharing...sometimes I think people got angry.

Why?

Because they wanted different things...

How do you think that might have affected your experience?

I wasn't as ready to go into therapy as I would have been... if everyone, I guess, if everyone wanted to. Like, I sense that they didn't think it was stupid but I sensed that it was overwhelming at this time or they weren't ready and I know what that's like if you don't want to do therapeutic stuff – you just really don't want to do it.

Okay...

I mean sometimes I didn't want to either. Cause I do kind of like one on one better as with everything.

Um.... Do you think that this was just a part of the experience or do you think that you would have liked to see it change?

Oh, I think that it was part of the experience and it did change, just very late. I think that everyone got a chance to... not everyone, but maybe the people who were more closed

off got a chance to open up.... (Omitted) well just like when she reenacted...I thought that was really helpful to her. I thought that was a better way of getting things off her chest than directly talking about things.

So it would have been helpful to have made more use of drama then?

Yeah, cause it sort of allows them to play a different role until they feel comfortable coming back to what they originally talked about or wanted to explore and there's also no pressure to get somewhere....

4. Tell me about your experience in this class? What was it like for you?

Um, uh, well I'm going to start with the negative...

Okay.

Sometimes I didn't want to come in just cause...

Mmmhmm...

Just because I wouldn't always want to hang out in a big group with people... I mean I liked everyone here but um...

So, why was that?

Sometimes I felt like there was just all these different things... all these different ideas flying out everywhere... not everyone gets attention... sometimes its focused on one person and everyone is looking around... and when you are focused on, it just sort of feels like everyone is just there...

I also think I learned how to better work with people and even when we did that journal cause it was taking all these people's things and putting them together... and in projects and stuff I like working on my own and doing them in my own way....so I liked that....

Okay, I want to go back to what you said initially... How do you think that affected your experience...can you talk more about that?

I just find things can get overwhelming when it's a therapeutic process and we are actually doing therapy and... Some people are comfortable with that and some people aren't...and sometimes I found that overwhelming....there are times when it was more cooperative....

What caused it, do you think?

When people are just left with their own thoughts... when others are talking or when people talk and things are brought up or when one person is focused on and everyone is just left there with the thoughts in their head ... I just saw a lot of people with overwhelmed looks on their faces and it's kind of the end of the day and I can see how people just want to play games or something at the end of the day...and some things could have happened that day where it either puts you in the mood or it doesn't...and that effects the experience for other people and for you...

How would you have changed it then, so that there wasn't this feeling?

I have no idea. Maybe it would have helped if it was in the morning. Yeah, I don't know what else....that's the only thing that I think would have definitely helped...I really don't have any idea....

This idea of one person being focused on ...can you talk a little bit more about that?

I don't know sometimes it would just seem like it was one on one therapy, yet the group remained...I think it was... obviously you can't focus on everyone at the same time in that kind of way and the group is just a different kind of experience....

The use of the drama then, as you said earlier, might have helped?

Yeah I think that would have really helped and I think that I got more involved too (when drama was used) and then when it was one on one we were all involved and then it usually felt okay... It was more the times when we would just talk and the rest of us would just be talking or just listening...

5. If there was any impact on your school life, can you describe it?

Um, I don't think so. Just because it was at the end of the day, so I just went home... and well, there was someone in grade nine (in the group) and I would have never known her and I observed the grade nines more than I would have (had they not been in the group together)...

What do you mean?

Well, I mean I noticed them. I thought about them more than I would have and she talked about the grade nines too... but grade nine...I don't want to have anything to do with grade nine cause grade nine was not a very nice year for me...I don't' want to revisit grade nine...

Fair enough.

Yeah.

6. What was it like to receive a grade for this class?

I thought it was very well structured this year... it was a very good system....

Did it affect your experience at all?

Like hinder it, you mean?

Anything.

No. I don't think so.

Did you see it as an important part of the experience?

Not really. I thought it was something that you had to do because it was a high school class. But I think it worked out very well. I thought it was the best grading solution.

What made it a good solution?

Cause it was grading whether you're engaging in the class or not...if you do your project you are engaging in the class...and it wasn't about skills or anything it was about how well you participated in it....

7. Was there anything you found unhelpful or unsatisfying? Can you describe what that was?

I guess just the times that I've come in and other people have come in close-minded and they are angry or something and class would just be horrible... it's the last thing you want to do... and at the same time you are seeing people who are not at all in that sort of mood. So you end up half participating or not quite fully....

Angry with things that are happening in life or in the group?

No, separate from the group and maybe that's why in that moment it might be so annoying to come here cause maybe you want to deal with it now or it just happened now.

So, you didn't see the class as a place where you might bring these things to work through?

Um, not really, they weren't really... they were usually very in the moment and they were...

Was there anything that might have turned you off from wanting to work through things in the group?

A lot of times it was things with (omitted) so we are very good at working things through one on one. So if something happened we would bring that into class and then have to wait and work through it outside of class...

So, conflicts that existed between group members outside of the group, come into the group and affect the experience?

Yeah. I mean sometimes its helped and other people were doing something else and it sort of took away some anger and maybe almost made it a bit lighter... when you get out of the class and can laugh about it... I mean sometimes it would make it more back to what's important.

It gives you distance?

Yeah. Sometimes it helped you from going off in you head and like I don't know.....

8. Anything you found particularly helpful?

Well, I think you are very intuitive.

Thank-you.

So I think that helped, um...I mean (you are intuitive) about people and about how to approach things... so I think that helped...what else? I also think that maybe not everyone here was willing to do therapy for themselves all the time but everyone was willing to help other people, at least in this class... I mean I would never find anyone shrugging it off or anything or not listening to the person before they say something about what they think...

9. I would like to ask you one more question.

Okay.

I was just thinking that perhaps one way to avoid the feeling of being overwhelmed and of inter-member conflicts affecting the experience, might be to screen participants beforehand. To see what their goals are...what they are expecting, and also, to try to get together a group of people who are from different social circles. What is your opinion on this?

I think that the screening beforehand would be really good. Yeah, I guess that's what I was thinking could have helped. Yeah I think that's a really good idea especially cause you realize that everyone has different expectations...different goals....um...

10. Is there anything else you would like to add?

No.