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**WHERE THE BOYS ARE:
THE EXPERIENCES OF ADOLESCENT BOYS
AND THEIR FEMALE TEACHER IN TWO SINGLE
SEX DRAMA CLASSROOMS**

by

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ABSTRACT

This qualitative case study explores the experiences of adolescent boys and their female teacher in two single sex drama classrooms over a two year period. It has been influenced by sociological and educational frames of knowledge with a specific emphasis on gender studies. Driven by the work of Biddulph (1995), Bly (1990), Pollack (1999), Hawkes (2001), Hartman (1999), Connell (1995,1996) and Kenway (1997), this research is ideologically grounded in theories that investigate the areas of masculinity, boys' education and drama practice. It takes as its pivotal focus the notion that educationally, adolescent boys are facing complex and troubled times and that a reassessment of the way boys are taught in schools is crucial. Additionally, the role and influence of the female teacher in the single sex boys' classroom was significant, providing an essential backdrop for investigating the classroom experiences of the boys.

In the area of educational drama, research into adolescent boys and classroom drama is still unfolding. This thesis contributes to knowledge in this area and reveals the important benefits and potential that educational drama holds for empowering young males to explore their own masculine identities and understand their world with clarity and insight. Data collected during this research forms the basis of a narrative journey shared between the reader and the researcher. The research is heavily grounded in the ethnographic tradition of 'telling stories' from the field - stories which reveal the authentic lived experiences of the participants. Part of the greater story told here includes that of the researcher and documents some of the more notable challenges and highlights of working in the field over an extended time frame.

Specifically, the research addresses the following questions:

- What benefits do adolescent boys perceive they gain from doing drama?
- How do adolescent boys communicate with each other in the drama classroom?
- How do adolescent boys approach drama work in their classroom?
- How do they perceive their own experiences and relationships in a single-sex drama classroom?
- What role does their female teacher play in their experiences in the drama classroom?

The research revealed a number of important considerations for the fields of sociology, gender studies and education. Amongst some of the major findings was the potential of drama to break down stereotypical notions associated with masculinity and boys' abilities to excel in area such as the Arts. The enjoyment and fulfillment that the boys felt they gained from participating in drama resulted in a healthier classroom environment characterised by a greater tolerance and understanding of each boy's individual masculinity. It was also revealed that the presence of a female drama teacher was considered an advantage, granting the boys access to a field of knowledge and feeling that was different to their 'male ways of knowing.' Additionally, for the field of drama, the research revealed that the value of solid planning, a defined understanding of contemporary drama practice and implementing learning experiences carefully and thoughtfully grounded in the lives of the students, cannot be underestimated as essential components of effective drama teaching.

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STATEMENT OF AUTHENTICITY

This work has not previously been submitted for a degree or diploma in any university. To the best of my knowledge and belief, the thesis contains no material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the thesis itself.

Signed:.....

Date:.....

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CHAPTER ONE

BEGINNINGS

*Casting my eyes, brown brick, hallowed halls,
Boys scurry, an ocean of grey, droplets of sweat on furrowed brown,
Venturing up those wooden stairs, worn with years
Stepping back as a rush of youth blows by
Pen in hand, researcher face,
I sit and wait. willing my eyes to be open...*

(Analytic Memo 3, April 1999)

In the summer of 1994 in a flurry of curiosity and enthusiasm, I began a research journey of discovery and unravelling complexities. What drove me forward and grounded my developing fledging knowledge about drama research was a desire to explore an area I had long mused about - the issue of gender and learning in the drama classroom. In particular, my interest centred on the education of adolescent girls and how contemporary educational drama could serve to empower their lives both inside and outside the drama classroom. (Lee 1997)

Although that journey ended in 1997 with my thesis submission, my interest and evergrowing myriad of questions about gender in the classroom did not. During my research into adolescent girls and their classroom drama experiences, I was continually confronted by an inner nagging voice asking 'What about the boys - are their experiences and needs any different or indeed any less important?' In the decade leading up to my research period, much had been written and researched

about the disempowerment and low status of girls in schools and whilst I held strong contentions that this had been historically true, I was no longer convinced that adolescent males were not facing some of the same educational and personal challenges as the girls.

Indeed, were the answers and attitudes the girls presented about boys not being able to participate as passionately or empathetically in certain areas of drama [e.g. expressive movement, prose etc.] (Lee 1997), possibly true? Were boys really unable to give of themselves in confident and unselfconscious ways because of male stereotypes and associated cultural expectations? Was drama viewed by boys as unmanly and feminine? Could educational drama empower adolescent males and offer alternative realities (O'Neill 1997) and endless possibilities to investigate and perhaps transform their manhood? Did the gender of the teacher impact on the effectiveness and enjoyment of the dramatic learning experience? My questions were further fuelled by growing media attention to an impassioned new men's movement in this country led by Steve Biddulph. Biddulph's idea that young men need to learn new ways of being confident, of establishing meaningful friendships and cultivating healthy, creative and spiritual inner lives received widespread attention. (Biddulph 1995) Biddulph's argumentative thrust maintains Australia has historically constructed a culture of males who believe toughness and aggressiveness are expected and accepted mainstream male traits.

Alarmed by the high incidence of adolescence male suicides in this country, [the leading cause of death amongst men aged between 12 and 60 is self inflicted death] Biddulph embarked on a quest to raise awareness about the importance of educating men of all ages how to relate meaningfully with others, how to uncover

and nurture their creative core and how to overcome male gender stereotypes which hamper their wholistic development. (Biddulph 1995, p.6)

Biddulph asserts that it is the school which offers the chance for adolescent males to experience valuable surrogate fathering and mentoring through the influence of male teachers as role models. This notion interested me but did not wholly convince me that male role models in classrooms provided the most enriching personal and academic influences on adolescent boys. Given that a high percentage of drama teachers in this country are still women, I decided that it would be most revealing to work in a classroom facilitated by a strong female drama practitioner who embraced and modelled carefully defined drama practice and philosophy in their curriculum planning.

I am heartened by new educational work with boys which advocates and highlights the important influence female teachers can have on male students. Whilst Biddulph may wave the flag promoting male mentorship for boys, there are many who believe that women can offer significant insight for boys about the female world which may prove advantageous to boys' emotional and academic lives. Hartman (1999) stresses that female teachers can provide information, both personal and historical, on sexism and structural impediments to women in the workforce and in everyday life. Women can also contribute positively to the self esteems of boys by respecting and supporting all forms of masculinity in the classroom and encouraging boys to encourage and empathise with each other. Strong female teachers can also show boys that women can be leaders as well as nurturers and partake in partnerships with males in active and empowering ways.

In past reading on feminist paradigms and education for girls, I was inspired by the many writers in the field who stressed the multifariousness of female identity and the multiplicity of knowledge. (Belenky 1986) In many ways, my grounding in feminist theory has brought me to this new place of research. Feminist notions that challenge the perceived universality of gender roles are the same ones which inform socially critically theorists investigating the nature of masculinity in historical and cultural contexts. Kimmel (1987) argues that feminism offers men a different and potentially powerful view of themselves releasing them from traditional patriarchal constructs of what it means to be a male and providing them with alternatives and possibilities.

Maher's and Thompson Tetreault's work (1994) on establishing 'feminist' classrooms in all girls' schools reveals that when teachers set up environments for learning which acknowledge difference and allow girls to have a freedom of 'voice', classrooms become 'communities of discourse and dialogues (that are) shaped by permissible and/or impermissible topics, and concerns.' (p.92) There is much to learn from feminist research for teachers and leaders of boys in terms of acceptance, equity and support. I carry with me one of Maher's and Thompson Tetreault's beliefs about learning in the classroom which I feel is as essential in classrooms attempting good 'boyswork' as it is in the girls' classrooms they write about:

Voice is the awakening of students' own responses - the ability to speak for themselves, to bring their own questions and perspectives to the material. Classrooms are arenas where students and teachers fashion their voices rather than 'find' them (where they) shape a narrative of emerging self. (pgs. 18-19)

And so, this journey began. Finding a female practitioner who would allow me to become part of her classroom culture for an extended period of time was not difficult. Sal had been a colleague of mine for a number of years and I had worked closely with her as committee members for the Queensland Association for Drama in Education for three years. I had long been impressed by her commitment and vision for the promotion of educational drama in Queensland and her generosity in sharing her work with others, particularly neophyte drama teachers, was well known. In her practice (I had visited her classroom before supervising student teachers) she had managed to combine what I considered to be the best masculine and feminine traits of teaching management and planning. Her discipline in her all boys' classrooms was strong and directive but at the same time she was able to work collaboratively with her students in a way that was warm, supportive and empathetic. Her students knew their boundaries and understood the meanings of respect and honour in the drama classroom. I was convinced that I would have an enriching and highly informative experience as a researcher in Sal's classroom and felt positive and excited when she agreed to be part of the journey with me.

Contextualising the Research

In the past ten years, my research area of specialisation has been gender, adolescents and the drama classroom. Throughout my twenty years of teaching, I have drawn great inspiration from watching young people create amazing, at times extraordinary, dramatic work often only within the confines of the four walls of a school classroom. The desire to research single sex drama classrooms originated in a concern for the education of adolescent girls and how drama might assist them in making sense of their place as women in a complex, historically patriarchal society.

In 1997 my work with adolescent girls in one drama classroom was completed and whilst I had gained considerable insight into this area, I was drawn, rather curiously and to my great surprise at first, (I had been an advocate for improving girls' education for many years) to what exactly might happen in a boys' drama classroom. Contemporary educational and sociological discourse about the well-being of boys was gathering momentum and I became interested in why, in what seemed a sudden and urgent new direction in gender studies, were theorists arguing that our boys were in real trouble. I wanted to know why writers such as Biddulph were claiming that we were failing to educate our boys about their own masculine identities in ways which were empowering and liberating. I wanted to know why educational writers such as Hawkes (2001), Pollack (1999) and Browne and Fletcher (1995) were advocating that schools needed their own 'boyswork' policies and curriculum in order to help solve some of the problems boys are now facing. I wanted to know if drama could be of use in helping boys of all kinds of masculinities and dispositions to somehow improve their own lives and their own understandings about who they are.

Before I began, I examined what exactly was meant by 'boyswork' in the classroom. Hartman (1999) describes 'boyswork' as a positive approach to boys' learning that examines all aspects of gender with boys with the aim of encouraging and supporting them to develop into fine young men. (p.23) She argues that good 'boyswork' acknowledges that every boy is different, needs to learn about developing positive relationships with both men and women and has a masculine identity which needs to be respected and explored. She is critical of contemporary schooling of boys which ignores the importance of the social dimensions of boys' lives and how this can affect their academic performance and attitudes.

The concept of 'boyswork' involves a complete reworking of the way teachers plan and implement learning experiences for boys. As Salisbury and Jackson (1996) elaborate:

The alternative priorities of a new curriculum design and a changed approach to teaching and learning in the field of working with boys is tied into a radical rethinking of boys, men and masculinities. This rethinking has been provoked by the recent explosion of interest in the 'crisis of masculinity' and the related expansion of a critical men's studies literature, especially over the last five years.

(in Ryan 1996, p.3)

As I read more about the work of Hartman and others, it became clear to me that what we do in drama and what 'boyswork' hopes to achieve share a number of important conceptual foundations. One of the most basic elements of educational drama is to offer empowerment and insight to students not only about the art form itself but also about the complexities of relationships, situations and moral and ethical issues in our everyday world. It is as O'Neill (1995) writes, a way of looking at life, a reflection and illumination of the real world which embodies significant meanings and raises critical questions. One of the fundamental premises of 'boyswork' is to offer an education which is empowering and multi-faceted.

In terms of positive boyswork in boys' schools, I believe that drama offers a learning medium where boys can be free to explore differences, to celebrate commonalities, to respect individual strengths and weaknesses and to learn to work as a group towards an aesthetic goal. It aptly attends to what Hawkes (2001) describes as education for social responsibility and education for moral and social awareness

and justice. It certainly attends to providing boys with an education which can assist them to be creative and critical thinkers and one which encourages them to be lifelong thinkers capable of working productively individually, and collaboratively. This, then was my starting point, the grounding philosophy of my quest, the impetus that made the journey possible and kept my energy and vision from waning in the more difficult times of the research.

From the start I knew that Sal did not approach her drama planning with the idea of directly exploring gender as a social issue with her boys but from observing her work and analysing her drama programs, it was evident that helping boys become the best men they possibly could be, lay at the very heart of her teaching philosophy. Sal's program was steeped in the basic tenets of the Augustinian (an order of Priests originating in Ireland and founders of the College) philosophy of support and community and I felt that although I was not directly examining the effects of Catholicity on the boys' learning experiences, it could not be ignored as an influence on some of Sal's program themes. Sal is a Catholic but had worked in non Catholic schools for many years and was well aware of the difficulties of finding coherent and meaningful themes for students to work with. She felt that the underpinning Augustinian values of the school gave her 'something to hang her hat on' in planning effective learning experiences. (Interview 4, October 2000)

As I worked through my initial discussion notes with Sal about the school's philosophical influence on her, I felt this was an important element in considering the way the overall ethos of the drama classroom impacted on the boys' learning experiences. In previous research on classroom drama, McDonald (1994) notes that the educational 'setting' is absolutely crucial for providing effective aesthetic

learning. Reaching far beyond the four walls of the drama classroom, empowering learning is dependent on the atmosphere created through teacher management and instruction, the context of the greater school and local community, and the culture, attitudes and values the students bring along with them to class. Sal is highly influenced by the sense of community and partnership espoused by Augustinian philosophy. The College motto, 'Truth Conquers' seemed to echo in many of her drama activities that continually challenge the boys' to look beyond the obvious, to ask questions, to accept difference. Sal's specific approach to drama programming and its links to the school's Catholic ethos will be discussed more closely in Chapter Four but it is worth contextualising some of her influences here through a brief discussion on educational policy for the Catholic school.

The Catholic School (1977), a founding document on Catholic education, states that Catholic education 'must help (the student) spell out the meaning of (their) experiences and truths', so that they may be able to make informed and responsible decisions (in Ryan, p.18) and 'contribute to the good of society as a whole.' (Vatican 11, Declaration on Christian Education, 1966, p.640 in Ryan, p18) In increasingly difficult times, the Catholic school is urged to offer an education which attends to the wholistic development of the student:

(The Catholic school) is intent upon freeing both the masculine and the feminine dimensions of the boys in (its) care and to do this in a context of counter culture if the accepted peer culture is not based upon gospel values. (Collins 1987 in Ryan 1996, p.20)

As Crawford and Rossiter (1988) point out, the challenge for Catholic schools is to provide not only a sound academic education for its students but one which

embraces their spiritual and emotional development as well. In the Catholic school, a boy can expect to be 'educated in a system which espouses a holistic education, a system which will prepare him to "promote the Christian transformation of the world" and "contribute to the good of society as a whole.' (Vatican 11, Declaration on Christian Education, 1996 in Ryan, p.20) Ryan (1996) reflects that much of the literature about Catholic schooling, although well meaning, has up to this point approached education as a homogeneous entity with no real emphasis on the differing needs of the genders. She writes:

The movement demanding specific educational pedagogy for boys is only just beginning. When the religious orders of teaching brothers and priest emerged from the last centuries with a specific mandate to educate boys to become good Christian men, it was a different world. It was taken for granted that these boys would be leaders and protectors of the family and in fact the world... the philosophy for educating boys in today's world is still in the process of being formulated. (p.21)

It would seem that in general, Catholic education philosophy has much in common with many of the basic aims of 'boyswork' in terms of equality, empowerment and acceptance. In writing on the identity of the Catholic school, Hugonnet (1997) stresses there is an urgent need for schools to continually clarify just who the students are and what kind of world they are living in. I deemed that Sal's approach to drama teaching would be significantly complementary with the mission statement of the all-boys' college she taught in and this interested me in terms of how this might be evident in the way Sal approached her teaching.

Positioning the Research

This research has been influenced by sociological and educational frames of knowledge with a specific emphasis on gender studies. Whilst the work of Biddulph (1995) and Bly (1990) have been important in grounding the work in contemporary discourse about the men's movement, it is the work of socially-critical theorists, Connell (1995, 1996), Kenway (1997), Salisbury and Walker (1996) and educational theorists, Pollack (1999), Fletcher and Browne (1999), Hawkes (2001) and Hartman (1999) that have been most influential. Connell and Kenway share the view that gender is a result of enculturation and social practice, a creative and inventive construction generated within specific structures of social relations. In reference to the concept of masculinity, both Kenway and Connell are critical of views (such as that of Biddulph and Bly) that claim men share homogeneous needs and traits. Specifically, Connell (1995) argues that there are many kinds of masculinities which are clustered on the basis of general social, cultural and institutional patterns of power and meaning and that schools need to first acknowledge this fact if they are to meet the needs of boys in this new millenium. Additionally, Kenway contends that many schools have historically worked to perpetuate dominant discourses about what it means to 'be a man' significantly failing to take into account the influence that variants such as ethnicity, socio-economic status or sexual beliefs may have on a boy's development and academic performance.

Notable educational gender theorists concerned with the education of boys (Pollack, Fletcher & Browne, Hawkes and Hartman) concur with Connell's and Kenway's contention that boys are indeed different, have individual masculinities, needs and aspirations and should be offered an education which espouses and

celebrates difference as well as commonality. I have been particularly influenced by the work of Tim Hawkes (2001), Head of The King's School in Parramatta in Sydney and leading authority on boys' education, who writes:

Why shouldn't boys enjoy reading? Why shouldn't teachers expect the expression of feelings in boys? Why shouldn't it be fine for a boy to be gifted in an area? It is vital that there is no compromise in what teachers expect of boys while remembering that at all times, there must also be compassion and an understanding that excellence can be expressed in many ways... Teachers of boys should be transformational, dedicated to changing their students, moving them from one state to another... they need to believe that transformation is possible.
(pgs.48 & 72)

Pollack (1999) attributes many of the problems boys are now facing to education systems that do not acknowledge the different learning styles of boys, are not well versed in the emotional and social needs of boys, are not 'boy friendly' and fundamentally lack creative teaching methods and curricula suitable to the needs and interests of boys. This is not limited to Australia alone. Pollack (1999) cites research which spans thirty years from the University of Chicago that reveals that in relation to reading and writing, boys outnumbered girls at the bottom of the scales by a margin of 2 to 1. In another report 'The Conditions of Education' published by the U.S Department of Education, it was found that 'females continue to outscore males in reading proficiency.' (in Pollack, p.234) Pollack points out that it is not a case of boys simply being 'poor' readers and better at math and science than girls as traditionally has been claimed. Whilst girls have steadily improved their performances in these areas, boys have statistically shown that they 'are (now) at

the lowest rungs of the ladder of academic achievement that we had ever imagined or been led to believe.' (in Pollack, p.235)

As I continued my research in this area, I found more evidence to suggest that boys were failing in schools across a wide range of areas. Most alarmingly however, was the way boys seemed to be struggling in their everyday personal lives evident in high rates of youth suicide, violence, drug abuse and associated behaviours. As a drama educator who believes in education as a liberating and inspirational medium for young people, I found this disturbing. I have been privileged to work in a country where drama education is a dynamic and visionary discipline and having witnessed some of my mentors (O'Toole, Taylor, O'Neill) working with students on themes spanning racism, oppression, gender conflict and patriotism, I knew that drama was capable of changing students' perceptions of themselves and others in truly transformative ways. I hold close the belief that drama is indeed a dynamic meeting of minds where we can recognise difference whilst still promoting 'cohesive sociality'. (Simons 1998, p.72) Whilst the everyday classroom teacher may not be able to significantly change a complexity of problems affecting hundreds of adolescent youth across the country, I do believe that a difference can be made in the lives of the dozens of students who pass through our care over years of teaching practice. This alone makes all the efforts worthwhile.

In recent times in Australia, the issue of gender and education has been addressed by the National Association of Drama in Education (1998) through the publication of the 'Gender Equity Policy and Guidelines'. This policy was disseminated to every member of State drama associations in 1998 in the hope that drama teachers would actively reflect 'on the role drama education plays in contributing to the ways

gender is constructed (and how) drama can be used to both reinforce and challenge limiting gender roles and expectations.' (p.1) It was a timely and essential publication alerting teachers to the importance gender plays in planning educative and equitable learning experiences for all drama students and one that has guided me in my research direction over the last few years.

As a drama practitioner, I came to the research guided by the philosophies and writings of Bolton (1992) Heathcote (1984, 1995), O'Toole (1992), O'Neill (1995) and Taylor (1998, 2000). Their combined work has given me a deeper understanding of the way drama can be transformative and empowering, how it enables possibilities and meanings to unfold as students 'slip the bonds of their identities' and 'partake in other existences' (O'Neill 1995) as they 'learn something about themselves and the world in which they live.' (Taylor 1998. P.62) O'Toole's (1992) assertion that drama 'is not just mimetic reflection of life but (is) essentially both an oblique and transcendent medium' has been a powerful reminder to me of the enormous responsibility we hold as drama practitioners and the potential drama holds to transform the lives of students. This idea of drama as a reflection or a 'mirroring' of life has been particularly important in shaping my own philosophical stance on why I teach drama. O'Neill's (1995) words succinctly reflect my own beliefs:

Drama, whether scripted, devised, or improvised is a way of thinking about life... if drama is a mirror, its purpose is not merely to provide a flattering reflection that confirms our existing understanding. It must be used as mirrors often are, as a means of seeing ourselves more clearly and allowing us to begin to correct whatever is amiss. It is not merely an instrument of reference, but also a place of disclosure. (p.152)

O'Neill's last words that drama can also be 'a place of disclosure' have been crucial for me in developing a more defined understanding of the potency drama holds for changing students' lives. It also means that as a research site, the drama classroom offers the qualitative researcher an incredibly rich and diverse microcosm of human interaction and introspection. The notion of the drama classroom as a site of empathetic disclosure and sharing has been a significant influence in both my own drama practice and in the manner in which I have chosen to research. Arnold's (1994) work in this area has been particularly valuable. In discussing the concept of psychodynamic pedagogy (pedagogy which develops empathy, empowerment, engagement between thinking and feeling and introspection in student experiences) Arnold outlines some important considerations for drama practitioners. She argues that the physical enactments of drama 'can allow affects to break through into consciousness and become felt emotions.' (p.18) This is not to suggest that the drama classroom is a therapeutic medium for the exploration of 'deeply personal issues', (p.18) but rather a dynamic space for students to develop empathy and insight about the human condition as a whole. As Arnold suggests:

Drama in education is well placed to develop and promote a particular aspect of psychodynamic pedagogy, the function of empathy in teaching and learning. Empathy is developing particular meaning within educational contexts. Some direct focussing on the way empathy functions in human dynamics may be necessary and drama enactments can provide contexts for such experiences and their analysis. (p.18) The classroom can become a workshop for real life and a safe environment for experimentation and risk-taking. (p.22)

Guided by the work of Arnold and others, I considered that qualitative ethnographic research would be one of the most enlightening and appropriate research

paradigms for my time in the drama classroom. The added potential for drama to invite disclosure, empathy and discourse from its participants made it an exciting and challenging research prospect.

A Research Relationship

A tentative smile, laboured steps of a pregnant researcher

*My attempts for appearing cool, confident, have been in my mind coloured
by a disposition of matronly preoccupation,*

One runs with a chair; 'Sit Tracey' urges Matt, intelligent, demanding Matt.

I am a researcher. The chant echoes in my head.

How can I enter this youthful masculine world when I feel so 'uncool'?

(Analytic Memo 1, February 1999)

My memo in prose reflects the tensions of my entering the classroom in the first few weeks of my research. Over the past months of data collection and analysis, I have grappled with the idea of whether or not to include discussion of the effect my pregnancy in 1999 had on my relationships with the first group of boys in the field. As I write now, I feel it must be given some attention because of the way the boys treated me overall and how indeed it affected the way I perceived myself as a researcher and as a woman. It was also problems associated with the pregnancy which meant the fieldwork extended into the following year resulting in research which had more depth and variety than I had ever expected. So for these reasons alone, I have included it as a worthy consideration in the research relationship between myself, Sal and the boys.

'Feeling uncool' is an apt description of the way I entered the classroom of adolescent boys. Their youthful energy and vision was astounding to me in the first

days because of my own lack of vitality and 'heaviness' and I knew that I needed to be careful of allowing my feelings to colour or bias the data. The fact that I was a female, and a pregnant one, alerted me to the need for caution in this male world. What struck me most was an overwhelming maternal feeling towards the boys and whilst this was not a negative attitude, I saw it as possibly problematic for my desired neutral researcher stance. Bogdan and Bilken (1992) stress that the gender of the researcher can be an important variant in the way participants respond. They describe gender as 'a central organising identity' in qualitative fieldwork which affects the way the researcher relates and reacts in a given situation. I was also aware however that personal feelings, when acknowledged and checked regularly in the field can also have a positive and enriching effect on the research because of the rapport and empathy that can be brought to the field. (Rosaldo, 1989)

In many ways I felt that being a female researcher in a male environment could be advantageous in that it forced me to work harder to remain observant and alert, to constantly check for gender bias and helped keep me in a perpetual state of 'preparing to be surprised and amazed' by what the boys said and did. It was in fact a much harder task in my previous research (1997) with girls because of the constant possibility of becoming 'a prisoner of our own preconceptions' (Lightfoot 1974) about the female world. I had much to learn from the boys and this kept my perspective relatively balanced. My concerns about my pregnant appearance were kept in check by my resolution to let meaning unfold from the data slowly and to observe if and how my state would impact on the boys' relationship with me. Memos such as the one which introduces this section were instrumental in keeping a record on my changing feelings in the field.

Finally, I came to the field with the firm view that many ways of 'knowing' exist, that multiple intelligences and boundless perspectives shape our lives, that truth is

never static. I hoped that the classrooms in which I was a privileged guest would abound with colourful dialogue and challenge me to reassess my own perceptions about adolescent boys and their world and that, in the words of Maxine Greene (1995), my research would in some way, *make possible the interplay of multiple voices of 'not quite' communicable visions', to attend to the plurality of consciousness, (to attend to) the recalcitrances, the resistances along with the affirmations and songs of love.* (p.198)

Purpose of the Research

It is my philosophy that educational research should inspire and empower, challenge and transform. It should activate lively discussion and evoke creative thought and in some way positively contribute to the future of educational practice in a given discipline or area of interest. My hope is that this research was an enriching and enlightening experience for the boys and Sal in that they, along with myself as researcher, were invited and encouraged to explore the dimensions of their own roles in the drama classroom and appreciate the experiences and relationships that structure the classroom community. Whilst the experiences are unique, they contribute richly to our understanding of how drama can work to empower and liberate all students and how responsible and visionary drama practice can make the learning experiences of boys memorable, transformative and joyous.

This research documents the unfolding experiences of adolescent boys and their female teacher in two single sex drama classrooms. It is a case study which endeavours to reveal some of the everyday activities of these boys in a classroom context, to give voice to the boys and their teacher about their feelings and attitudes about learning in a drama classroom and to explore aspects of the complexity of

relationships shared between the students, the teacher and the researcher. Other aspirations of the research include:

- To find out what drama can do for adolescent boys in the classroom.
- To activate positive discourse and thought about the many forms of masculinity which can exist in any given culture and the need to find proactive ways to help boys accept their own and others' 'masculine spaces' particularly in the classroom.
- To explore aspects of drama practice in an all boys' drama classroom in a hope that other teachers of adolescent boys may be encouraged and challenged to assess their own approaches to 'boyswork'.
- To highlight to other educators and leaders of boys, the possible potential classroom drama offers in helping empower all boys to live more positive and confident lives.

The focus question for the research 'What are the experiences of adolescent males and their female teacher in two single sex drama classrooms?' was further framed by the following sub-questions:

1. What benefits do boys believe they gain from doing drama at school?
2. How do adolescent boys communicate with each other in the drama classroom?
3. What behaviours are apparent in the daily interactions of these boys in the drama classroom?
4. How do adolescent boys approach drama work in their classroom?
5. How do they perceive their experiences and relationships in a single sex drama classroom?

6. What role does their female teacher play in their experiences in the drama classroom?

Each sub question had its own sub-foci (see Figure 1, Chapter Three, pg 100) essential for ensuring I could deconstruct the data with appropriate analytical clarity and depth. These questions guided me in my everyday field note collection and overall analysis providing clearer signposts for myself, Sal and the boys to follow on the journey that we had agreed to take together.

A Special Consideration: The Silent Voices of Ethnography

Maintaining authenticity in qualitative research reporting is one of the major considerations for the ethnographic researcher. Honouring the voices of the participants in a way that best represents the ‘reality’ of the research context, is arguably one of the greatest challenges in data analysis and interpretation. In this case study, much of the descriptive narrative of my time in the field, reveals a positive, and at times, extraordinarily cohesive classroom relationship between students and their female teacher. My observations, questionnaires and interviews with the participants confirmed that this was, at most times, the case. Whilst there were undoubtedly times when I observed the camaraderie and harmony of these classrooms was affected by conflict and tension, these were the exception rather than the rule.

Whilst I have endeavoured to include the more negative and difficult times in the drama classrooms, it is the positive voices that dominate the narrative. Indeed, it could well be argued that Sal’s classrooms represent a somewhat ideal or atypical

drama learning environment. Certainly, what I observed and heard in the field suggests that the participants believed this to be so. With this point in mind therefore, it is important to acknowledge that despite my efforts to record data authentically and truthfully, there may have been times when not all voices were heard and not all difficult times were recorded for the following reasons:

- The boys and Sal may have felt compelled to show me the very 'best' of their classroom practice and interactions.
- Some of the boys may have felt too shy or distrustful to disclose more negative attitudes about their teacher or their relationships with their peers. Hence, there is a possibility that their 'silent' voices were unknowingly excluded from the data.
- Some of the boys may have felt intimidated by others whose voices were more confident and articulate and so chose to remain silent or to represent a more positive picture in their interviews with me.
- The impossibility for me to be with the boys every minute of every drama lesson they shared with Sal meant that there would be times I would not be privy to all aspects of their overall experiences together.

Organisation of the Study

This chapter has outlined the sociological and educational tenets which guide and inform the research. Chapter two 'Foundations' more deeply explores contemporary discourse on gender, adolescent boys and education with special emphasis on the nature of educational drama, drama practice and current research in drama and adolescent boys.

Chapter three, 'Establishing a Framework' addresses the epistemological and methodological frameworks of the research including an overview of the research field and participants. It describes the research analytical process and examines the nature of the ethnographic case study, its application, methodology, analysis and synthesis.

In Chapter four, 'Leading the Way Whilst Walking Backwards', we begin the narrative journey of the research, privileging the voice of Sal, the female teacher in the study. Her approach to teaching in all boys' drama classrooms, her evolving relationship with the boys she teaches and her attitudes about classroom practice and approach to teaching as a whole will be examined. Chapters five 'Drama is Good Shit' and six 'Understanding Mr Brecht' are devoted to the journey of the boys in both drama groups tracing their experiences, attitudes and responses over the two year research period. Through these chapters I hope to weave a tapestry of images and voices shaped by narrative and prose.

Chapter seven, 'Waiting in the Wings' is an exploratory journey of myself as researcher. It highlights my own relationship with Sal and the boys, their changing perceptions of me and my work, and how this impacted on the overall research experience. In particular, this chapter endeavours to explore the complexity of tensions which exist in case study work and how at times, the perception and personal bias of the researcher can affect the 'telling of the story.'

Chapter eight 'Discoveries and Signposts will synthesise and critically discuss the experiences and responses of Sal and the boys, identifying emergent findings, implications and recommendations for teachers of drama in all boys' classrooms.

CHAPTER TWO

FOUNDATIONS

In schools around Australia there has always been a lot of good 'boyswork.' But we need more and it has to be more conscious. We have to counter the signals sent to boys (from society; the media...) that being male is somehow intrinsically dirty, dangerous and inferior.. boys will change when they are helped to understand themselves better; are affirmed and valued.

(Steve Biddulph in Browne & Fletcher, 1995, viii)

This chapter seeks to identify and explore popular perspectives pertaining to contemporary debate about the education of Australian males and associated perceptions of gender and the construction of adolescent masculinity. More specifically, traditional notions of boys' communication and play and the growing importance of gender and learning in contemporary educational drama practice will be discussed. Additionally, this chapter will explore a number of theoretical perspectives on effective teaching practice with a particular emphasis on the role of the female drama teacher in an all boys' drama classroom. For clarity this chapter has been divided into two parts, the first devoted to the discussion of the notion of masculinity and associated discourse on gender and the developing male and the second, an overview on educational drama, its potentially powerful benefits for the single sex drama classroom and the important role played by the female drama teacher.

PART ONE

Introduction

The issue of gender is a complex one. A myriad of sociological, educational and cultural theoretical frameworks exist that seek to explain the concept of gender in terms ranging from Marxist and feminist perspectives of gender construction to those favouring biological and genetic determinism. Put more simply, the multitude of gender theories can be positioned somewhere along what is more commonly known as the 'nature' or 'nurture' continuum of ideological discourses.

In terms of exploring males in Australian education and society, the notion of what it means to be masculine in Australian society remains controversial and multi-faceted. Debate as to whether masculinity is biologically inherited or culturally constructed (through institutions such as schools) remains dynamic discourse for gender theorists. Most dominant in contemporary educational literature is the 'men's rights' (Biddulph 1995) perspective with its emphasis on the emotional life of boys and strong male role modelling in the familial and educational lives of young males. Critics of this perspective argue that it neglects the influence of 'broad social structures and matters of power, social and cultural complexity and dynamics' (Kenway 1997, p.4) on the construction of masculinity.

More precisely, advocates of the 'nature' ideology (Bly 1996, Biddulph 1995, Formani 1990, Farrell 1993) fundamentally believe that every man possesses intrinsic primal traits of masculinity which await unleashing. Those favouring the 'nurture' argument, (Connell 1989, Walker 1988, Salisbury & Walker 1996, Maccoby 1988)

argue that male and females are essentially born the same but develop differently over time due to societal and cultural expectations and perceptions. Here cultural conditioning plays an integral part in shaping the gender sex roles of masculine or feminine.

The nature versus nurture debate is complex and multi-layered. Whilst the work of writers such as Bly (1996), Biddulph (1995) and Connell (1995, 1996)) dominant contemporary discourse about masculinity, there is an abundance of literary perspectives on the subject. In terms of educational research, the concept of gender and learning is a relatively new phenomenon. It is only in the last two decades that academic attention has begun examining the influence education has on the gender development of our students. Whilst this has punctuated an important development in the reassessment of educational policy and practice, the focus of inquiry has been primarily on the education of girls.

Feminist scholars in particular (Nicholson 1994, Spender 1984, Walkerdine 1990, Mahoney 1985) argued that a major reassessment of the status of girls in society and education was long overdue. A dominant view emerged that the traditional 'masculinisation' of schools and curriculums (Nicholson 1994) has resulted in the 'invisibility' of females in the classroom (Spender 1982) and generations of girls who live and learn about their gendered lives at best, in 'a kind of negation.' (Greene 1978) Walkerdine (1990) argues that girls at school have become 'performers', enculturated by dramaturgical metaphors about the expectations of what it means to be female. In essence, they learn to act out a series of gender based roles which offer them little alternative to move outside traditional female stereotypes.

Leder and Sampson (1989) contend that more than a century of schooling in Australia has still not produced equally valuable outcomes for girls in terms of gender equality. Negative female stereotypes, perpetuated by patriarchal structures such as education, have resulted in girls developing narrow and limited concepts of femininity. (National Action Plan for the Education of Girls 1993 in Lee 1997) The result of such lobbying was governmental responses to addressing gender inequality for girls in Australia. A number of government sponsored programs (*Girls, School and Society 1975, Girls and Tomorrow: The Challenge for Schools 1984, The National Policy for the Education of Girls in Australian Schools 1987, The National Action Plan for the Education of Girls 1993-1997*) were established specifically to reassess national curriculum statements for Australian schools.

Whilst this shift in educational philosophy and policy to reassess the education of girls was undoubtedly overdue, there is now a new concern that the push to empower females has indeed come at a cost to adolescent boys. A new millennium catchcry 'but what about the boys' (Salisbury & Jackson 1996) has seen the swing of the gender pendulum move from the plight of adolescent girls back to the educational and social well being of boys. As Pollack (1999) writes,

'in the heat of the debate about girls, we have failed to analyse how boys are doing at school... just like adolescent girls, boys are suffering from a crisis in self esteem which threatens their capacity to learn, achieve and feel successful.'
(pgs.231&239)

and in 'The Bulletin' (1995),

women are smarter, healthier, more honest and live longer. These days it's the men who need help! (in Gilbert 1998, p.4)

West (1996) adds that up until the 1980's-90's gender lines for boys were relatively firm but changes in societal and cultural structures resulted in a blurring of those lines. He argues that the former period saw a number of important shifts which affected family stability:

- The stature of churches failed.
- The authority of fathers was challenged by changing perceptions about the role of women.
- Divorce rates skyrocketed.
- Many boys grew up without a father.

West (1996) contends that in Australian society we do not provide males with enough strategies for dealing with conflict resolution except through violence. He calls for the return to the 'renaissance' man, one who is encouraged to excel in the area of performing arts as well in other more culturally esteemed areas such as sport. For West, the women's movement allowed the empowerment of women but resulted in a crisis in men's identity. Hawkes (2001) elaborates on West's list outlining a litany of societal problems that he argues have resulted in the disenfranchisement of boys. Some of the more significant ones include:

- Power wielded by peers resulting in a form of tribalism which requires members to conform or be expelled.
- The heavy influence of the media resulting in traditional values such as fidelity, forgiveness, chastity, service and love being deconstructed and dismissed as irrelevant.
- A growing sense of boredom and pointlessness among some young people. (p.10)

In 1994, growing media controversy about the academic failure of boys relative to that of girls' achievements resulted in the launch of a parliamentary inquiry into boys' education. One spin-off of this inquiry was the establishment in many boys' schools of specific 'programs for boys.' This happened not only on a national level but an international one as well. In Germany, educational programs on gender have been established outside of schools, whilst in Japan, debate has centred on the value of introducing 'men's studies' into learning institutions. (Connell 1996 in 'Celebrating the Education of Boys in Catholic Schools' 1996) Further action in June 2000, saw the launch of an inquiry into boys' education in Australia by the federal Education Minister, Dr. David Kemp, but changing political orientations resulted in the inquiry's results and implications never reaching fruition. Boys seemed, more than ever before, to still be in the dark.

Certainly the diverse multitude of research on the construction of masculinity in our society suggests that this is undoubtedly a complicated and dynamic area of discourse. One thing seems a certainty however - the development and education of our boys warrants close investigation. The traditional assumption that boys are the 'tougher' breed who can look after themselves is under scrutiny. Theorists such as Pollack (1999) and Biddulph (1995) argue that education and more specifically, boys' classrooms, can significantly foster the healthy development of young males not only on an academic level but an emotional one as well.

Pollack (1999) contends that boys themselves can lead us in the process if we would only listen to their voices articulating what they really think and need. Spaces such as the drama classroom can be significant in providing experiences which allow male voices to be heard in liberated and empowering ways. Introducing boys

to aesthetic dimensions of learning can be one of the most powerful ways of releasing their imaginations and discarding their own masks of masculinity without the risk of censure. As O'Neill (1995) writes,

In the drama world, participants are free to alter their status, adopt different roles and responsibilities, play with elements of reality and explore alternate existences. When the drama world takes hold and acquires a life of its own, all of the participants will return across the threshold of that world changed in some way.. (they are free) to slip the bonds of our identities and participate in other forms of existence. (p.151)

and as Taylor (1998) adds,

(in drama) people's perceptions change as they do in life, passionately held positions can transform on the basis of experience and human interaction, once strongly held viewpoints on the world can be displaced and forgotten. (p.132)

The words of Antonio Machado translated by Robert Bly (1990) that urge individuals to look more introspectively at themselves, provide some evocative thought of why creative pursuits such as drama can be potentially so enriching for young men in exploring and evaluating their gendered identities:

Look for your other half

Who walks always next to you

And tends to be who you aren't. (p.51)

These former frames of reference provide the infrastructure for the following discussion which will begin firstly with a more comprehensive exploration of various perspectives on the construction of masculinity and then move into a more focused exploration of boys' education and the drama classroom.

Constructing Masculinity: The Men's Movement

The new men's movement was the direct result of growing controversy about the overall well-being of men. Grounded in the philosophies of the nature versus nurture debate the movement can be identified as having two distinct categories:

1. The mytho-poetic and popular literature approach (Biddulph, Bly 1990, Pollack 1999)
2. The socially critical approach (Connell 1995, Mac an Ghail 1994, 1996, Salisbury & Walker 1996)

Advocates of both ideologies acknowledge that the development of masculinity is intrinsically complicated, linked to a diversity of knowledges, symbols, styles and subjectivities within distinct cultures. (Lesko 2000) Where they fundamentally differ is in their perspectives of how exactly masculinities are constructed and maintained in any given society and how best men can be helped to live positive enfranchised lives. These debates continue to underpin and inform contemporary academic discourse about masculinity, society and the education of males.

The Wild Boy Within – The ‘Nature’ Argument

Two of the most notable voices in the ‘nature’ debate about masculinity are Steve Biddulph (1995) and Robert Bly (1990). Whilst Bly is generally regarded as the father of the mytho-poetic men’s movement, it is Biddulph whose influence in Australia has been of more significance. In particular, Biddulph has been instrumental in evoking an important seachange in the way fathers view the upbringing of their sons and the approaches male teachers can employ in planning empowering educational experiences for boys. It is his work with males that has established the foundation for many of the male self-development programs currently active in this country.

The underpinning assumption of both Bly’s and Biddulph’s philosophy is that men are born a homogeneous group whose sex role is genetically determined. According to this perspective, men have fundamentally ‘lost their way’ in a society which has ‘under-fathered’ and ‘over-masculinised’ its boys. (Biddulph 1995) A lack of male role models and strong male mentoring for young boys has resulted in a fragmentation in the process of becoming a man. For Biddulph, the natural sequence of men’s development has been forgotten in a society that does not honour the importance of strong rites of passage for our boys. More specifically, Bly’s book ‘Iron John’ (1990) promotes the benefits of men reclaiming their connections with their primal selves - the mythic notion of the warrior. For Bly, the return of the millenium man to the ‘wild man’ within is a direct path to the rediscovery of men’s emotional core.

Bly believes that the move away from the notion of the tribal community where men and women worked collaboratively sharing parental responsibility has resulted

in an emotional life for men which is impoverished. In particular, he argues that in order to help boys identify their transition into manhood, society needs to reinvent traditional indigenous styles of initiation. The significance of the initiation for boys in tribal societies is that it not only marked a rite of passage in a boys' journey to manhood but also intensified the important involvement of other males (father, grandfather, uncles etc) in the boy's life. (Biddulph 1995)

(Initiation) helped to convey living skills, the male spirit and ways of doing things. None of these cultures would dream of leaving masculine development to chance the way we do. (Biddulph 1995, p.201)

Effectively, Bly and Biddulph assert that young men today effectively never know the inner emotional or spiritual world of the 'older' male mentor and instead create images of masculinity derived from television and their peers. Gilbert (1998) adds that television programs are marketed and identified for boys featuring a genre called 'action teams' where superhero and action toys are promoted as aggressive, uncommunicative heroes in hierarchical worlds where good versus evil. In turn, many boys in everyday life act out these images in an attempt to prove that they are 'real men'.

Whilst Biddulph acknowledges that women have had to deal with their own societal oppression, he believes that men face their own unique oppressive difficulties with isolation and loneliness. Formaini (1990) concurs,

In being divided against themselves men face many personal and collective difficulties. Most important of all, men get cut off from direct contact with the 'essential self' and this then means that great problems arise which inhibit the kind of psychological development leading to maturity. (p.47)

Beyond the Wild Man: The Nurture Argument

The idea of masculinity as homogenous and inherent is strongly challenged by socially-critical theorists. Kenway (1998) is particularly critical of the mytho-poetic men's movement describing it as naïve and reductionist. She argues that in privileging biological determinism, it fundamentally ignores the wider social and cultural implications of the gender power structures which underpin contemporary life experiences. For Kenway the problem lies not only in the gender relationships of males and females but also in the tensions which exists between men themselves. As she argues, 'it is increasingly evident that questions of institutionalised masculinities and masculine identities are at the core of many of the problems men have, from suicide to literacy, and addressing the issue of masculinity will begin to address these problems.' (Kenway 1997, p.7) Ryan (1999) adds that theories such as Biddulph's assume that traits of manhood passed on from father to son are homogeneous and culturally transportable. She argues that not all boys have the same, needs, hopes and preferred style of learning and that change must come from a much wider societal context.

Robert Connell (1995), one of the foremost writers in the area of gender studies, argues that the development of gender roles is a socially constructed practice generated within definite structures of social relations. Connell (1995) contends

that in order to understand the concept of masculinity, we must first examine the cultural processes and social relationships through which men conduct their everyday gendered lives. (Connell 1995) For Connell, there are many identifiable patterns of masculinity constructed throughout history across different cultures. He also rejects the notion of a homogeneous masculinity contending that in a multi-cultural country such as Australia, there are multiple definitions of masculinity ranging across a complexity of racial, class, religious and sexual frameworks. Within these patterns of masculinity (such as specific ethnic traditional notions of masculinity or homosexual cultures) further layering exists.

These patterns of masculinity share distinct relationships, with some, more subordinated and marginalised (e.g. homosexual or disempowered ethnic minorities) than others. The most influential of the masculinities which occupies 'a position of cultural authority and leadership' (Connell 1995) is known as hegemonic masculinity.

This (form of masculinity) is familiar in school peer groups where a small number of highly influential boys are admired by many others who cannot reproduce their performance. Hegemonic masculinity is highly visible. It is likely to be what casual commentators have noticed when they speak of 'the male role.' (Connell 1996 in 'Celebrating the Education of Boys in Catholic Schools 1996)

In Australia, hegemonic patterns of masculinity have often manifested themselves as highly recognisable stereotypes constructed throughout history. The 'bushman' 'the Man from Snowy River', the bronze Aussie', 'the good mate', the stoic 'Anzac' 'the larrikin' are all masculine 'ideals' which have been constructed at different times as

the 'essentialist Aussie male.' (McDonald 1999) For men, (in particular, adolescent males) the challenge of managing collective public perceptions of what it means to 'be a man' with their own private aspirations, can often be overwhelming.

In her discussion of the construction of masculine spaces (such as the classroom) McDonald (1999) writes that often the culture of masculine institutions such as the all-boys' school coerces boys to become significantly aware of how their physicality fits or does not fit into the school space or the greater community. She suggests:

...because of the system of rules and regulations that govern the body inside these institutions, boys learn to modify their behaviour according to the social context they find themselves in... (they) navigate their bodily performances in various contexts (and this becomes) a bodily-kinesthetic intelligence which reflects their understanding of the masculine culture of their school. (in McDonald 1999 , p.20)

The 'body performance' (e.g. weak versus strong) is significantly important in establishing hegemonic masculine spaces. As Davies (1993) suggests the body is used by males as an external object which needs to be controlled and perfected. A tough durable body with the potential to dominate others is fundamental to the creation of the masculine identity. This is one reason why competitive contact sports are so popular and important in the male experience. The chance for males to challenge themselves against others, to test their body's ability and demonstrate their physical prowess and competence makes sport a desirable and dynamic space for affirming masculine supremacy.

Lewis (1983) and Mac an Ghail (1994) elaborate in arguing that masculinity is constructed out of a social, psychological and emotional space which lies somewhere between the public and private persona.

Kirby (1996) adds that the masculine space is a securely bounded and expansive region which is far less flexible than that of the feminine and it is here that masculinity/ties are constructed and defined. Silverstein and Rashbaum (1994) also suggest that society establishes specific taboos on more marginalised patterns of masculinity (e.g. homosexuality) in an effort to prevent the dominant order of heterosexuality from being challenged. Such taboos act as powerful weapons of oppression. Indeed, Carrigan (1996) argues that the homosexual-heterosexual dichotomy, so strong in male communities, acts as the central symbol in all rankings of Western society masculinity. (Carrigan et al in McLean 1996)

Wanna Be in My Gang? The Power of Hegemonic Masculinity

Hegemonic masculinity is most easily identified in groups or gangs of males whose traits and behaviour are accepted by other males as being the established norm. This group usually holds most power (e.g. in the playground) and actively alienates more marginal groups which do not fit with the prevailing pattern of masculinity. It is this group that other males defer to in an effort to be accepted or in many cases to be protected from exclusion and bullying. Spender (1982) in discussing the dynamics of all male cultures (such as the single-sex classroom), argues that males actively create a hegemonic 'inside' group and a marginalised 'outside' group so that they can level abuse at the 'outsiders' which normally would be directed at girls. Indeed, males can act as their own patriarchal oppressors.

Walker (1988) provides a useful ethnographic study of the construction of masculinity and male patterns of hegemony in one school in his book 'Louts and Legends'. The school 'Stokeham Boys' High School' in the Australian State of NSW is

described as a single sex disadvantaged state school largely populated by migrant working class boys. Walker identified and studied four friendship groups of adolescent boys and followed their progress over a period of five years.

The four groups identified by Walker as the 'Footballers', the 'Greeks', 'the Three Friends', and the 'Handballers' were by no means the only identifiable masculinities in the school population but offered the most noteworthy insight into the hegemonic structures which can exist in spaces such as all boys' schools. Without a doubt, the 'Footballers' claimed status as the hegemonic group establishing the ground rules of what was accepted as masculine behaviour. As Walker describes, 'they controlled the largest section of the playground and when they walked around, they expected everyone to make way.' (pgs. 38-39) The 'three friends', who ran the school newspaper were highly successful in drama and were stigmatised as 'poofs' by the footballers. Their prowess 'on the boards' was met with disdain and they were relegated to marginal status. 'The Greeks', banded together on the grounds of ethnicity against what they called the 'over-inflated, self-important' 'Aussies'. Their strong bonding and some of their shared views (about homosexuality and women) with 'the footballers' meant they survived reasonably well in the playground. The 'Handballers', predominately of Asian hertiage, were regarded as a 'colourless lot' by the stronger groups and generally were treated with indifference. They were described as a relatively loose band of friends whose love of handball was the major link in their camaraderie. (Walker 1988, p.56)

Walker's research is not alone in providing insight into the power of masculine groups in male spaces. Connell (1989) also conducted interviews with a number of males who clearly identified their experiences of school typographies of masculinity as 'cool guys', 'swots' and 'wimps'. Willis' (1977) now classic research

into working class boys in England identified groups of 'lads' and 'ear'oles' whilst Kessler's (1985) work gave us the 'bloods' (sporting types) and the 'cyrils' (academic types). More recently, Mac an Ghail (1996) investigated male sexuality in school in an exploration of three defined groups, 'macho guys', 'academic achievers' and 'entrepreneurs'. Like the 'lads', 'the cool guys' and the 'footballers' before them, the 'macho guys' set the rules of what was acceptable as masculine behaviour. They rejected school, looked after their 'mates', 'looked good', 'had a laugh' and 'had a good time'.

McDonald's (1999) study into masculinity and drama in three private boys' colleges highlights distinct typographies of boys who studied drama. Interviews with the boys revealed a number of 'types' of boys including the 'sportos' or 'jocks', the 'Drama-heads', the 'laid-backs' and the 'all rounders.' McDonald found that boys were more likely to cluster in these groups in the junior drama classroom and whilst evident in the senior school, they were less marked. McDonald comments,

(These) types were not archetypes, rather they were like a continuum where the boys placed themselves and each other. The 'sportos' could vary from being the rugby star with no brain to the svelte gymnast who was popular, just as the 'conch' (conscientious) student might not have a personality, the 'Drama-head' might play soccer, or the 'cruisy' boy who might think Drama is a bludge... the 'all-rounder' was a cohesive element in the class: the sporty, musical, well-built, popular, smart student who was also a 'good bloke.' (pgs. 115-116)

What is interesting is McDonald's conclusion that despite the apparent typographies of masculinities in the classroom, the boys were able to overcome their differences and work towards common dramatic goals. As McDonald argues, drama may well be the only space in a boys' school where all 'types' can

communicate together regardless of their social or cultural backgrounds or orientations. Indeed, the diversity of boys in the classrooms was used advantageously by the drama teachers in the research to explore any existent gender tensions through the dramatic form.

Gilbert (1998) suggests that being 'appropriately' masculine is an accomplishment which boys and men feel compelled to constantly achieve in every situation they enter. Butler (in Gilbert 1998) describes it as an active performance, 'a re-enactment and a re-experiencing of a set of meanings already socially established.' (p.47) He argues that we do not need to degender men but rather to focus on gender inequalities and power relations and how they operate daily through symbols, stories and practices. McLean (1996) adds that until we address gendered power structures (such as educational institutions) as major catalysts in men's gender conflict, we cannot hope to change the existing problems.

Men are not simply victims of distorted emotional roles - their pain and suffering are real but they also hide feelings in order to withhold information which might make them appear inadequate. (McLean 1996, p.22)

Rituals of Masculinity

In Australia, the significant emphasis placed on mateship, team sport and competition is problematic. Men are encouraged to become 'close' (but not too close) through rituals of battle such as sport where rules must be followed and ritual adhered to. Ritual practices such as the 'footy' match, work to maintain and strengthen perceived hegemonic masculine traits of toughness, endurance and aggression. Pollack (1999) argues that whilst the rituals of sport can also be

advantageous in encouraging males to be more open and intimate with others, more often than not the level of competition is so fierce that males are forced into a defensive rather than offensive mode of play.

Sports can thrust (males) into a cult of competition , the goal of winning at any cost, a quest for narcissistic glory at the expense of others. (It can cause) those who are not interested in sports or those not skilled at playing them to feel left out, unworthy and ashamed. (Pollack 1999, p.273)

Hawkes (2001) contends that the personal sense of worth for many boys is inextricably linked to their success in sport. The sporting 'jock' is given high status as a desirable masculine aspiration in a society where the body is often valued more than the mind. Whilst Hawkes acknowledges the many positive aspects of sport for boys, he points out that in order for males to explore their physical and emotional potentials, they need to be offered other alternatives to contact sports such as tennis, volleyball, cross-country, aerobics and various styles of dance.

Fitzclarence, Hickey and Matthew (1997) view popular masculine sports such as football, as 'communities of practice.' (Lave & Wenger 1991). They argue that team sports such as football are directly linked to patriarchal relationships and structures of the wider society. With particular reference to football, they write that as 'a cultural phenomenon, (it) is intrinsically political and involves processes of enculturation... newcomers can identify and ascribe to the patterns and conducts that have been legitimised and reproduced.' (in Kenway (ed) 1997, p.23)

To return to the former discussion on the body and the construction of masculinity, Connell (1995) points out that school team sport is particularly problematic for

boys because of the enormous pressure placed on them (often by parents, teachers and peers) to perform well physically on the field. Performing well means being tough, being a hero, being durable, taking it 'on the chin.' For this reason, competitive sport is a key point of entry for boys into the world of masculine codes and social relations:

The construction of masculinity in sport illustrates the importance of the institutional setting. Messner emphasises that when boys start playing competitive sport they are not just learning a game, they are entering an organised institution. (Connell 1995, p.35)

Fitzclarence, Hickey and Matthew (1997) are interested in the way 'communities of practice' such as football teams can be encouraged to reconstruct some of the coaching and training approaches which continue to perpetuate hegemonic masculine traits of aggression and hardness. Their research is particularly useful for application in other masculine communities such as all boys' schools. Drawing on the work of Lave and Wagner (1991) and White and Epston (1992), they explore the process of effecting change through story-telling in the creation of institutional memory. Rather like the approach used by Augusto Boal in 'Theatre of the Oppressed' they discuss the use of story-metaphor. Here, groups are encouraged to remake dominant story-lines which have framed their gendered knowledge and look for new ways of confronting traditional (possibly oppressive) ways of knowing. This occurs 'through searching for and finding moments that contradict and resist the dominant stories which are constructing the lives of young males.' (Fitzclarence et al, in Kenway 1997, p.26) This approach has particularly powerful applications for the drama classroom with its own 'community of aesthetic

practice' and this issue will be further discussed in the section on educational drama practice.

Pre-adolescent and adolescent boys: 'Playing' the game

In the tradition of the socially-critical theorists, Oakley (1972) argues that gender enculturation is a process that every child learns early in their life. These gender roles are acquired and maintained through social interaction with each other through gaming and dramatic play at school, sporting events and in the classroom. Play, described by Whiting and Whiting (1975) as an 'expression of culture', is a fundamental mode through which children's gender roles are maintained and strengthened. As Maccoby (1988) adds,

Social behaviour... is never a function of the individual alone... it is the function of the interaction between two or more persons... there are certain important ways in which gender is implicated in social behaviour - ways that may be obscured or missed altogether when behaviour is summed across all categories of social partners. (p.260)

Davies (1993) suggests that boys know already in preschool (and possibly earlier) that the world is divided into male and female, hard and soft, powerful and weak. They know 'though not necessarily in a way they can articulate, that they are located in the male half of an oppositional and hierarchical dualism.' (p.89) Furthermore, Davies argues that boys learn very early about what clothes they should wear, how their hair is styled, how to walk, talk and play in ways which are considered appropriate for little boys.

The way children play can be a significant indicator of the way they perceive their cultural and gender identity and whilst this argument may remain the centre of debate for many gender theorists, traditional studies on children's play (Piaget 1962, Lever 1976, Thorne 1993) reveal that girls and boys do play and interact with each other differently. There is evidence to suggest (Maccoby 1988, Libby & Aries 1989, Pollack 1999) that the play of girls and boys differs in two distinct ways: the style of the play and the modes of social influence on the play. Research has shown that at primary school level, boys and girls tend to play in same-sex groups where the approach to playing is quite different.

Whilst boys tend to engage in active and competitive games, girls seem to gravitate towards co-operative play in small groups in private places. Collaboration, sensitivity and high levels of verbal communication emerge as significant markers of girls' play. There is a lack of specified rules, and process rather than product is given high priority. (Lever 1976, Maccoby 1988, Thorne 1993, Tannen 1990). Competition, whilst present, tends not to take precedence over the relationship elements of the game. If a problem arises, girls will tend to talk over the difficulty and resume the game when all is settled. (Pollack 1999) Lever (1976) observed that traditional girls' games 'like hopscotch and jumprope, predominately turn taking games, do not contain rules of strategy as in sporting games but rather are regulated by rules of procedure.' (pp.478-7) Girls seem to be more tolerant of deviations from the game and are seemingly more open to innovations in game structure. Girls may well change the rules as they go and spend time negotiating with each other possible changes of direction or intent.

Conversely, boys' games tend to be highly structured with set rules and procedures and taunting, boasting and jousting form a major part of the fun. (Pollack 1999) Boys' games create arenas where boys can test their skills against each other and this level of competition even at an early age punctuates an important element in the development of male relationships into the adolescent years. Pollack (1999) writes,

Competition among boys is more about competing with another boy rather than against him. Boys seem to enjoy asserting themselves with other boys and like making their presence known and appreciated. They like feeling competent at the activities and tasks in which other boys are participating. (pg. 188)

In choosing objects for play, boys have traditionally favoured toys of a physical or mechanical nature (trucks, cars, aeroplanes) whilst girls select those toys which reflect domesticity, nurturance and aesthetic adornment. Whilst this is not always the case, it is most often the reality. Clark (1989) points out that the mode of play and selection of play objects is a case of collective understanding. She argues that many young boys will play dress up or play with dolls but when they come together, a collective understanding of 'boyiness' emerges as an active antithesis to 'girliness.' The result is often antagonistic or tough behaviour. Clark argues that this particular mode of behaviour highlights a key element in boys' 'active production of gendered behaviour and attitudes.' Davies & Banks (1993) add, that boys' games reveal an obsession with hardness and invulnerability where toys crash into each other, superheroes jump from high moulds of dirt and boys run and bang into each other. As Davies suggested earlier, this use of the physical body is an early preparation for pitting masculine strength against other males in other forms of

competitive interaction. In adolescence, the level of competition often increases as the stakes move into area of sports, sexuality and status.

Boys don't Cry: Friendship, Communication and Intimacy

Boys don't cry

They tend to laugh about it

Cover it up with lies

They tend to laugh about it

Hiding the tears from their eyes

Because boys don't cry

(Smith, Tolhurst & Dempsey, 'The Cure', 1979. Fiction Records)

In previous research (Lee 1995) I noted the importance girls placed on friendship groups to give them security and direction in their everyday lives. The peer group, particular in the school context, is one of the most important influences in the life of the adolescent girl often taking the place of the family's nurturing role. Often it is the peer group which validates decision making in the girls' life whilst providing support for their independence and emotional growth. (Pipher 1994) For all the girls in my earlier research, one of the strongest lures for them to do drama in the senior school was the fact they could be so close to their friends and work them on an intimate ongoing and liberated basis.

Pollack (1999) suggests that boys build friendship connections through the physicality of rowdy play. Boys value friendship for the fun they have, and the noisy, energetic, playful and ribald behaviours are essential for their sense of connection with other males. It is amid battling, swearing and conspiring against one another

that Pollack believes a respect and fondness can develop between boys. Whilst this may be the case, it is in the way that boys feel they must express their feelings for each other that many gender theorists take issue with. In terms of communication, high levels of intimacy and empathy are generally described as feminine traits. Boys are expected (and perhaps more importantly perceived) to be more objective and distanced in their physical and emotional relationships with their peers than females. But as Pollack points out, boys are quite capable of high levels of intimacy, empathy and friendship - it is the way they experience and demonstrate it that is different to girls.

Hawkes (2001) concurs with Pollack's findings. Despite the fact that boys often wear a mask of indifference about feelings, they need to give and receive love, friendship and intimacy just like their female counterparts. Hawkes suggests that boys undergo stages where they value and demand independence and self sufficiency but these are fundamentally passing phases of identity development. In general, male friendships often experience undercurrents of ongoing competition which can prevent the sharing of overt displays of intimacy and closeness with each other. Research reveals that in displaying affection, boys will often express their feelings through practical rather than oral means. As Hawkes points out, boys have learnt that the articulation of feelings is a weakness and not a strength, the remnants of a social convention which dictates men should mask their true feelings. (p.148)

Biddulph (1994) believes that young boys start out in life as tender and demonstrative individuals but learn quickly to hide overt displays of emotions in a society which expects them to 'act like a man'. Indeed, the Australian tradition of

'mateship' demands a code amongst boys of loyalty and protection which is difficult to break. In a society which values and promotes male prowess, to be emotionally intimate with other males is to risk being accused of being soft or unmanly. It is a game very difficult to play and can result in a form of masculine intimacy which Swain defines as 'covert' - one that is expressed unobtrusively and silently. In essence men's capacity for feeling is censored and held in check:

Males who are denied appropriate physical affection with other males while growing up become people who never mature. In fact many men who are so denied will strongly repress their need for manly affection. You can see these men in any football game or boxing match. They seem to thrive on the violent aspects of male contact, whilst distancing themselves from any form of intimacy. (Cooney in Biddulph 1994, p. 179)

In relation to adolescent boys and female relationships, research shows that boys value intimacy and romance just as much as girls do but also demonstrate this in quite different ways. Contrary to belief that the majority of adolescent boys predominately 'put girls down' and indulge in all kinds of sexual harassment (The National Plan for the Education of Girls, 1994), boys do value (and seek out) intimacy and socialisation with girls. Pollack (1999) contends that adolescent boys and girls can experience close and wonderful friendships with each other and this is important for allowing boys to 'replenish and restimulate the "lost half" of the feeling selves they buried when they experienced the trauma of prematurely separating from their mothers.' (p.198)

Research by Shulman et al (1997) found that one of the key differences in the way boys relate to girls in relationships is that they try to maintain their own sense of identity. In contrast, females tend to emphasise the interrelatedness of the relationship and strive for an intimate sharing of feelings and mutual concerns. Boys tend to hold their feelings in check until they feel secure enough in the relationship to openly reveal them. (Hawkes 2001). In terms of sex, girls view the act as a signal that the boy loves them in the most intimate connection whilst boys view it partially as a way of confirming their masculinity. (Pollack 1999)

I believe that the way young males express their sexuality is inextricably woven with the traditional Australian male cultural belief that men need to look good in 'front of their mates.' Browne (1995) points out the power of the 'audience' (particularly in the classroom) is particularly significant in understanding the displays of aggression, disruption and hostility we often see in male groups. His contention, that 'many of these behaviours have a strong sexual component such as constant sexual references, calling each other 'poofers' and other forms of sexual harassment', has strong implications for classroom teachers, group leaders and coaches in all-boy communities.

Boys' Talk: The language of the masculine

It is traditionally accepted that men and women communicate quite differently. Several years ago John Gray (1992) told the world that the problem with communication between men and women is that, metaphorically, men come from Mars and women from Venus. The consequence of this, argues Gray, is that neither gender can easily hope to understand what the other is really trying to say. Whilst I

would suggest that Gray's argument implies a homogeneity of gender-specific communication which is relatively static, its emphasis on difference has its merits. Langer (1953) wrote of a 'discourse of communities', a sharing within specific groups of a communicative symbol system with distinct semantic meanings. Labov (1972) extends on this idea in his definition of 'speech communities', a defined sharing of communicative norms and practices clearly understood by a specific culture or social group.

More specifically, Johnson (1989) argues that men and women possess two distinct gendered speech communities which have specific meaning and form for each group. Tannen (1990) concurs in describing communication between the sexes as a cross-cultural discourse, prey to a clash of conversational styles and forms. Broadly, women have been described as having innate needs to share feelings, fears and problems with each other in a style which Fillion (1996) terms 'rapport talk.' In this way they ensure connection, support and understanding from their female friends. Men on the other hand, have been traditionally viewed as more controlled and conversational in their communication with less intimacy and empathy.

Gray (1996) writes that when women talk they use high levels of superlatives, metaphors and generalisations whilst men tend to be highly literal in their use of language. Cooper and Friedley (1986) add that whilst female conversation reflects 'who they are', male conversations are more about power relations and 'what they do.' (in Gluck and Patai 1991). Maccoby (1990) critical of men's style of conversation, labels it 'restrictive' - a communication style which stifles further interaction. Conversely, she describes female conversation as as 'enabling', encouraging conversation to continue in an empathetic way. Both Tannen (1990) and Maccoby

(1990) suggest that male conversation is predominately about one-upmanship and ego and lacks the ability to connect with others in any meaningful way.

Other researchers suggest that views such as Tannen's and Maccoby's are misguided and uninformed. Biddulph (1995) argues that men's inarticulateness simply stems from a lack of opportunities to share feelings and ideas with other men. If men were given more quality time to talk to each other freely, their ability to communicate would be enhanced. Biddulph advocates men's weekends and boys' sharing programs as positive ways for men to learn how to talk to each other whilst also learning about their own capacity for empathetic communication. In a discussion on Tannen's study on boys' and girls' communication styles, Pollack (1999) argues that 'boys in Tannen's study are less Machiavellian princes, concerned with dominance and power, than they are our own real boys. They are (simply) boys trying to make friends, be accepted by the group, and avoid rejection or humiliation.' (p.195) Pollack is critical of Tannen's view arguing that boys' communication style is fundamentally different but not inferior to girls. He describes the process of boys' communication, particularly in the early years as 'doing together' or as psychologist Ronald Levant (1992) terms 'action empathy.'

It seems boys may follow their own formula for friendship (communication): start with action and energy, throw in loyalty, laughter and 'doing together'. Add covert verbal expressions of caring, earnestness and hidden physical touching and you get a good friend. This formula may differ completely from that of a girls' friendship but it may be no less real or intimate. (p.195)

Despite Pollack's affirmation and support of 'real boys' communication style, research into oral literacy and interpersonal communication skills does reveal boys can do better in the way they relate both inside and outside the classroom. Indeed many of the problems boys face (e.g. suicide, loneliness, violence) have been attributed to an inability of many boys to meaningfully express their feelings to friends, teachers or family. This is not just a case of semantics but rather a move towards helping boys to be able to clearly and more confidently express their needs, to actively partake in discussions on social and ethical responsibility and to trust themselves to explore their own emotional responses in a community of other males.

PART TWO

Educating Boys: Issues and implications

A boy's will is the wind's will

And the thoughts of youth are long, long thoughts.

(Henry W Longfellow, 'My Lost Youth', 1922)

The evidence which supports arguments that boys are in trouble in our schools is alarming. The 1994 NSW report into boys' education strategies identified that on the whole boys do more poorly than girls in exams and have lower school retention rates. The Literacy Standards in Australia report in 1997 revealed that as a group, boys achieved significantly lower scores than girls in both reading and writing. (in Hartman 1999) In 1998 in NSW, HSC (the higher school certificate) girls average marks in 64 out of 70 subjects, exceeded that of the boys by 11% and in the NSW

Board of Studies list of top percentage students, only one third of these were boys. In the same year in Queensland, top performance bands in 36 out of 45 subjects were dominated by girls whilst in South Australia, girls outperformed boys in the 27 of the 34 senior subjects. (in Hawkes 2001. P.24) Teese (1995) found that boys are making less use of the senior years of schooling than girls, still choosing to select traditional 'masculinist' subjects such as maths and sciences above those considered to be more feminine subjects such as the arts and languages.

In 1994, the discussion paper "Inquiry into Boys' Education" commissioned by the NSW advisory committee on Education Training and Tourism, released a number of findings which clearly indicated the high level of difficulties affecting many boys in schools. Some of these findings included:

- Boys are uncommunicative and will not talk about their problems.
- Boys do not want to be seen to excel except on the sporting field - they fear ridicule if they succeed in non-traditional academic areas such as music, dance and drama.
- Physical confrontation is an acceptable way to deal with conflict.
- Boys generally have low self-esteem.
- 'Cool to be a fool' behaviour is a popular mode of leadership.
- In co-educational schools, the majority of behaviour problems come from the boys.
- Boys respond less well to traditional methods of teaching and respond better to more active styles. (in Healy 1995, p.2)

Supporting evidence on boys' emotional responses to school reveals boys generally experience lower levels of enjoyment at school and a higher rate of classroom inattentiveness. They also exhibit higher levels of impulsive risk-taking behaviour than girls and have less concern for their own safety. Rates of adolescent male suicide in 1997 were alarming with 417 male suicides between the ages of 15 and 24 compared with 93 for females. (in Hartman 1999, p.16) Additionally, Fletcher (1997) argues:

There is little that is natural about 29% of 14-24 years old males drinking on at least two days a week as compared to 16% female. There is nothing natural in boys having 700% more convictions for assault than girls. There is nothing natural with boys excelling in drownings, drug related crimes, suicides, assaults both physical and sexual, alcohol abuse, work injuries and spinal cord damage. (in Hawkes 2001, p.14)

It is not simply a case of academic failure but also failure at both emotional and social levels as well. Certainly there appears to be no one definitive answer as to exactly why this has happened but most researchers seem to agree that the problem stems from traditional patriarchal perceptions of what is expected from boys in school and in society in general. Bullying, violence and continuing homophobia are but some of the problems identified as affecting boys in schools, and more alarmingly, it seems that some schools encourage or simply ignore these forms of destructive power play between boys:

Aggressive play by boys towards girls (and each other) (is) often described as 'typical' or 'boys will be boys' behaviour. It (is) even encouraged. It (is) the acceptance of this behaviour as normal which (is) most damaging in the school environment... Homophobia and misogyny are key gender policing discourses

which serve to ensure that not too many boys challenge existing masculinized behaviours... For too long, the relationships between masculinities and violence have been ignored within too many schools. (Mills 2001, p.8)

Hartman (1999) suggests that boys in education are fundamentally not doing worse than girls, they are just doing badly period. She argues that boys are failing to reach their full potential not only in academic terms, but in social and emotional ones as well. The real heart of the problem argues Hartman, is that as academic and social outcomes are intrinsically linked, when a boy struggles in one area, he usually does poorly in the other also. She identifies three elements significant in the development of healthy adolescent boys:

1. Masculine identity
2. Relationships with others
3. Difference in masculinity

These three interwoven elements lie at the very heart of the difficulties many adolescent males face as they move towards manhood. Societal expectations of what it means to be a 'real man' are often at odds with the private needs and aspirations of the adolescent male. Hartman (1999) writes,

The issue of a positive masculine identity is the next big male issue we need to address as a society and as an education system. We need to do this both for our boys and our girls. Confusion over what might be acceptable, positive male identities now and in the future, has left many boys disengaged with school and vulnerable to unhealthy and dangerous practices as they try to identify what for them might be appropriate behaviours for a male. (p.21)

Of particular interest is the idea of boys' experience with what Best (1983) calls the 'third curriculum.' This is a powerful dynamic infrastructure, particularly in all boys' schools, that demands males be tough, hard and macho. Arguably, this pressure to conform to culturally specific masculine ideals is significantly greater at pubescence. Connell et al (1982) argue that the beginning of secondary school (in Australia approximately 13 years of age) with its coincidence of the onset of puberty is particularly problematic. It is a time of fragile and unsettled identity development as well as a period of marked disruption of relationships with childhood friends and parental authority.

Contemporary educational research continues to suggest that many boys are still influenced by the 'third curriculum' agenda of choosing subjects which are perceived as being more suitable for boys. As Collins (1996) writes, 'boys (still) shy away from subjects with a feminine past - the influence of the past is still surprisingly strong (and) boys particularly try to put others off crossing gender boundaries.' Collins adds that boys in her study expressed that they felt no support from the school in choosing subjects other than traditional male subjects. Fletcher describes this active influence of the 'third curriculum' as extremely limiting for boys and identifies three areas he views as serious educational deficiencies for boys in schools:

- An under-participation in all subjects with a non-technology focus and the complete lack of subjects in some crucial areas. (e.g. parenting)
- Failure to consider friendship, family and community aspects of preparing for a career.
- A dependency for self esteem on traditional estimations of masculinity such as sporting or fighting skills. (in Gilbert 1998, p.18)

A lack of representation of boys in subjects such as the Arts has resulted in an education for boys which cannot claim to be holistic and developmental. Although many boys in Australia do participate in Arts subjects such as drama at an increasingly higher rate, many schools still do not recognise the immense benefits these subjects hold for all boys. Teese (1995) writes,

Personal development through the Arts is in practice much less accessible to (boys) as is language development through the study of modern languages. Their ability to communicate both with themselves, as individuals and with others is handicapped... a potentially heavy price is paid by the highly vocational nature of boys' subjects. (p.10)

Traditional ideas of vocational training for boys still pervades even the most progressive schools for boys. Whilst many boys are encouraged to experience learning in humanities subjects, there is still pressure (particularly from parents) to take 'more reputable' empirical subjects such as sciences and maths. This is particularly prevalent amongst the more scholastic middle class males with a desire to enter university. Other boys whose potential vocational path lies outside a university education (e.g. through training colleges), may well find themselves enrolled in subjects which offer a more diverse approach to learning. More specifically, for boys from lower socio-economic or culturally disadvantaged backgrounds, the difficulties associated with gender and education are often more problematic. Indeed, the case of class structure and boys' educational experiences is a complicated area and one that reaches far beyond the scope of this discussion. What is useful here however is the acknowledgement that school curriculums across a complexity of communities can serve all boys better by encouraging some

experiences in subjects which transcend gender and cultural boundaries (such as the Humanities and the Arts) and offer alternative modes of learning and understanding.

As Connell (1989) elaborates, it is through curricular definitions of knowledge that schools exert their strongest effects on the construction of masculinities. Schools need to seriously address the underlying assumptions of educational philosophies and clearly identify 'what is it in our ideas and practices that contributes to the masculine culture of hardness, competition, the obsession with strength and power, emotional distance and boys' determination at all costs not to be female.' (McLean 1997, p.9) McLean (1996) argues that it is not a simple case of getting more boys into humanities and arts classes so that they can learn 'about their feelings.' More precisely, schools and their teachers need to look at the big curriculum picture identifying ways boys can experience learning which encourages them to look more closely at their gendered experiences and how they can live more positively in their world. Vardon (1994) contends, if schools can first attempt to help boys get in touch with their inner most feelings in small ways, the more complex gender issues can be addressed more effectively. As Vardon stresses there are many ways of 'thinking' about the world other than scientific and mathematical modes of intelligence.

New thinking about providing students with a variety of learning approaches can be attributed to Howard Gardner's (1995) theory on multiple intelligences. Groundbreaking in its proposition that we are capable of learning using multiple intelligences, Gardner's work is particularly relevant to the planning of diverse and

creative 'boyswork' in schools. Gardner has identified nine forms of intelligence, all of which he argues should be implemented at some level in every classroom:

1. Verbal/linguistic
2. Visual/spatial
3. Body/kinesthetic
4. Logical/mathematical
5. Musical/rhythmic
6. Interpersonal
7. Intrapersonal
8. Naturalistic
9. Existential

Hawkes (2001) asserts that in order to give boys an enriching holistic educational experience, teachers must embrace the concepts of difference and diversity in boys' learning:

Boys are different. Despite the desire of the members of the herd to melt unseen and unnoticed within the shadow of their peers, closer inspection will reveal difference. These differences are part of the magic there is in raising boys. It is important to acknowledge sameness so a boy feels he can identify with the group. It is also important to acknowledge a boy's uniqueness. (p.76)

Creating safe spaces: Strategies for teaching boys in single sex classrooms

Hawkes (2001) warns us of the dangers of assuming that in order to help boys at school, we need to make schools overly 'boy-centred.' Instead, he calls for schools which provide safe but definite boundaries and structures of behaviour for boys whilst balancing a genuine duty of care and love of the boys they teach. Boys need to feel an inter-connectedness with their school participating in learning activities that relate to their personal interests and competencies and which enable them to sound their individual authentic voices. (p.253) Whilst Fletcher (1999) advocates a learning space which encourages a feeling of liberation for boys he also stresses the need for firm discernible teaching structure and discipline boundaries. He lists five essential elements he believes boys need to learn in order to live fulfilling lives, all of which are pertinent to teachers in the Arts:

1. Self-awareness and self-assessment.
2. Self-regulation using emotions to facilitate being conscientious, persevering and resilient.
3. Motivation and self-guidance towards goals, taking the initiative in tasks, striving to improve and persevering in the face of setbacks and frustrations.
4. Empathy, the ability to take others' perspectives, cultivating rapport.
5. Social skills, handling emotions well in situations, reading social situations accurately, interacting smoothly and effectively and using these skills to persuade, lead and negotiate in teamwork.

One of the problems identified in boys' learning styles is their high need for physicality in the classroom. Educational research suggests that many of the

disruptive behaviours attributed to boys such as hyperactivity, inattentiveness and fidgeting are more the result of boys' boredom and frustration from being confined to desks each day than serious behavioural problems. Generally it seems that boys prefer to learn by doing, engaging in activities which are challenging and action-oriented rather than those which require long periods at a desk. Psychologist Van Derhorst describes the problem:

In most classrooms, students are discouraged from getting out of their seats and are forced to learn by listening. This frustrates students who can learn better when they visualise concepts and physically move around. (in Pollack 1999, p.247)

The single sex boys' classroom may well be advantageous in providing a safe space where boys can explore their own physicalities and identities without the stress of feeling they have to 'perform' for girls. Pollack's research reveals that many teachers of all boys' classrooms believe that without the presence of girls, boys are able to support each other better, feel freer to voice opinions of the heart and are less inhibited to try new things. Pollack argues that co-educational classrooms unwittingly favour female students because teachers are so sensitised to the voices of girls, they have become 'gender blind' to the learning needs of boys.

Not only can the single sex classroom accommodate the physical needs of adolescent boys but also, with careful planning, contribute positively to their emotional life. Schools that foster humanities and arts subjects for boys can help develop positive gender relationships (both between boys and boys and girls and boys) as well as enable boys to explore their feelings through other forms of

'intelligences' such as body/kinesthetic and the interpersonal and intrapersonal. Hulse (1997) conducted research which revealed that boys in single sex schools seem less defensive and less susceptible to peer pressure than their coeducational counterparts, are generally more comfortable with their own 'aggression', and are more egalitarian in their attitudes about male and female societal roles.

However, Connell (1995) alerts us that not all single sex boys' schools foster gender equity. In particular, he argues that many private boys' schools are so steeped in traditions of patriarchy, that they often, and at times overtly, uphold and maintain patterns of hegemonic masculinity both in their discipline and philosophy. McDonald (1999) adds that without the presence of girls in all boy classrooms, boys rely on each other for the construction and validation of their masculinities and without effective teaching which takes account of gender influences, this in itself can be problematic. Indeed, it is not only the infrastructure of schools which can perpetuate gender boundaries and stereotypes but also the teachers responsible for everyday classroom learning. Traditionally the responsibility of hard-line discipline has been relegated to male teachers. The belief that females are 'too soft' to command appropriate behaviour from boys has long influenced educational philosophy on the teaching of boys. This ideology has served to perpetuate the idea of 'authority' as a masculine trait and has in many ways proved a disadvantage for boys whose schooling has lacked a balance between caring and empathy and tough discipline measures.

Past research into the education of boys in single sex classroom has found that effective boys' schools recognise and encourage the unique learning styles and tempos of their boys (Hawley 1991) and develop the school curriculum accordingly. The overall result is a school culture where boys feel comfortable about themselves, are confident in their own abilities and, on the whole, do relatively well at school. (Pollack 1999) The Cotswold Experiment in Leicestershire England, traced the change over in one school from co-educational English classes to single sex classes. For the boys there was a 400% increase in scores achieved suggesting a significant benefit for boys' learning in a single sex environment. Teachers were better able to focus on the weakness of the boys' literacy and to encourage them not to 'play the fool' in front of girls to hide their perceived inadequacies. (in Biddulph 1997) As Biddulph points out, boys ask for help in different ways to girls - boys will 'act' for help whilst girls will ask for help.

Balancing the gender scales: Female teachers in boys' classrooms

Biddulph's (1997) belief that boys are best served by the presence of strong male role models in their lives is now well documented. He calls for male role models at every level of boys' schooling as well as greater parental responsibility from fathers in the family home. Pollack (1999) supports this view in arguing that an overabundance of females in schools (particularly at the primary or elementary level) has resulted in an absence of male voices in boys' classrooms. For Pollack and Biddulph, males can show boys most effectively how to be successful learners and proactive men.

What is interesting about this view is that many of the approaches Biddulph and Pollack advocate for empowering boys at school are grounded in the very elements of teaching practice and emotional engagement that female teachers are known to employ effectively in their everyday teaching. Valuing boys, building self confidence, exhibiting high levels of empathy and teaching students about expressing feelings, are some of the strengths (and some argue, the weaknesses) identified in approaches used by female teachers. McLean (1996) argues that the push for men as role models for boys in school is problematic in that it inadvertently supports the idea that women are unable to take charge or offer valuable life lessons to boys. In essence, it stresses and reinforces the 'special' and separate nature of the masculine experience and assumes a universal belief that all male teachers are themselves 'in touch' with their own emotional lives and gender identities.

In her book 'I can hardly wait till Monday' Hartman (1999) documents eleven case studies which exemplify the empowering influences female teachers can have in boys' classrooms. One of the messages emerging from these studies is that women can be effective leaders in boys' schools by working collaboratively with male mentors in providing a comfortable and gender balanced learning environment. Hartman writes, 'in the practice of boyswork, women can provide models of women in leadership, in authority positions and in relationships with men that are characterised by equality and respect by both.' (p.27) She stresses that many boys want to know what is like to be a female and are extremely interested in how women think and behave. When teaching is combined with both male and female life perspectives, boys have enriched opportunities of exploring many aspects of their relationships with each other and women.

Hartman found that the most successful strategies used by female teachers in boys' classrooms are those which acknowledge the differing learning styles of boys and are based on mutual respect between teacher and student. Offering boys learning activities which encourage healthy risk taking and competition, maintaining a sense of humour in teaching, demanding high expectations and setting clear behavioural boundaries are some of the approaches female teachers have found boys respond most positively to. A genuine invitation to boys to consider multiple perspectives of their gendered lives in the everyday classroom provides a comfortable classroom zone that many boys have never experienced.

Women teachers have an important role in supporting boys to broaden their sense of masculine identities and to accept differences amongst themselves. Women teachers can help develop (respectful relationships) by communicating with boys in clear and authoritative, yet light-hearted ways, to encourage the same kind of respect in the boys. (Hartman 1999, pgs 33-34)

Hartman's case studies provide important insight into the way both men and women are conducting 'boyswork' in contemporary Australian schools. In one particularly candid interview, teacher of boys Michael Flood reflected on some of the more negative aspects of men teaching boys:

I've grown up knowing that playful, masculine banter which males do with each other where you take the piss out of each other and you muck around a bit and you laugh and it's a kind of bonding. I've sometimes used that sort of playful, jokey style. But I also know that that kind of style can be a real way of reinforcing hierarchies among males and a way of insulating myself and others from actually thinking personally and reflectively about an issue... I am also

conscious that boys themselves will perceive me (if I change my style) to be violating the norms of masculinity because I'm criticising aspects of masculinity and taking a stand... boys (assume) men who do that are gay. (in Hartman 1999, p.110)

Ryan (1996) conducted a study in one Brisbane boys' college of the effectiveness of a school based 'boys' program' implemented by both male and female teachers. Her conclusion was that it was a question of 'balance' in teaching approach and not necessarily gender that made a teacher effective in all boys' classrooms. In her study, 'Susan' the female teacher participant proved to be as powerful a role model for her boys as were the male teachers in the research. Her genuine affection for the boys coupled with a love of the job resulted in classroom environments of trust and collaboration where the boys 'worked with her without any feeling of holding back because she was a woman.' (p.111) For Ryan it confirmed the 'nagging suspicion that it was possible for women to succeed in this area as well as men.' (p.111)

One curriculum area in Australian schools where female teachers have dominated male/female teacher ratios is drama. This is more a case of a traditional vocational skew towards women entering in large numbers into the teaching profession and the disciplines of the arts and humanities in particular, than one which might suggest that men are not effective drama teachers. Indeed, this is to the contrary. Many of the leading voices influential in establishing a strong philosophical and pedagogical base in educational drama in Australia have been men (e.g. O'Toole, Haseman, Taylor, Burton) but there continues to be a dominance in schools and in the administration of State and National drama associations by female practitioners. Even in all boys' colleges where the teacher population is often heavily male, drama

is more often taught by female teachers. For those who advocate female teachers in all boys' classrooms, this would indeed seem advantageous but others would argue that all-boys' drama classrooms need male leaders.

McDonald's (1999) study of drama in three private boys' colleges revealed that the male drama teachers in the school were convinced that female teachers could not connect meaningfully with the boys because they simply 'don't really know what it's like (to be male)' (Teacher, 'Jay' in McDonald, p.213) McDonald herself contends that 'certainly males seem to have a physical advantage over women that might gain them more access to a boy's psyche in an all-male environment.' (p. 21) She identifies that one of the most successful female drama teacher roles was that of the 'mum' figure. This was one the most desirable and popular approaches with the boys because it made them feel safe and secure and was considered non-threatening. The boys perceived that female teachers could never be 'a good bloke' the way a male teacher could or coach and be involved in sports in the same way.

McDonald contends that female teachers who wanted to be successful with boys in drama in all three schools needed to embrace and model ideals of the 'good bloke' in order for the boys to accept them. She cites one female teacher, 'Tori' who commented,

I've put on my 'blokieness' with them, we'll talk rugby, and I do it with the boys too and I think that's why I've had success with my drama classes... and their lives are centred around football and y'know mateship and whatever else, and a part of me needs to be their mate as well. (in McDonald, p.104)

An aesthetic male space: The drama classroom

There are more things in heaven and earth, Horatio

Than are dreamt of in your philosophy.

(Shakespeare, 'Hamlet', Act, Scene 5,

Pollack (1999) contends that boys themselves can lead us in the learning process if we would only listen to their voices articulating what they really think and need. Spaces such as the drama classroom can be significant in providing experiences which allow male voices to be heard in liberated and empowering ways. As Hamlet reminds Horatio, there are many other ways of seeing than that which we hold most dear in our lives. Teachers need to help boys to consider the multiple possibilities that exist for them outside their own lived experiences of masculinity. Introducing boys to aesthetic dimensions of learning can be one of the most powerful ways of releasing their imaginations and discarding their own masks of masculinity. As Greene (1978) suggests, teachers need to provide a creative space where inspirations of unprecedented kinds can occur, where males (and females) can reflect on their identities and explore 'new fusions' of what it means to be male (or female). (p.218) And as Kokori, a teacher of classroom drama writes,

Institutions such as schools have to work with a diversity of entrenched attitudes... contradictions and differences often manifest in situations of conflict... the place to work with such differences (such as gender) is the drama classroom... it provides a nonthreatening environment for intense, situational roleplay... by allowing differences to surface in their raw form we can apply a range of dramatic techniques to extend students' understanding of what is behind a situation. (Kokori in Browne & Fletcher 1995, p.52)

O'Neill's (1995) assertions that drama somehow allows the individual to 'slip the bonds of their identities and participate in other forms of existence' aptly describes the power drama offers students to safely consider the ways others live, perceive and respond to an array of everyday life experiences. For many boys this kind of experience in the drama classroom is often unexpected and at first profoundly confronting. The reason for this I believe is that males have been culturally conditioned to keep feelings in check and participating in subjects such as drama fundamentally challenges innate patriarchal ideologies of male control and emotional discipline. For this very reason, drama holds tremendous potential for releasing boys from traditional expectations of masculinity. I agree with McLean's (1995) assertion that drama grants teachers the agency to provide opportunities for students to 'investigate how the world is constructed rather than continually replicating the philosophies of the dominant paradigms such as patriarchy and capitalism.' (p.46)

For drama teachers, one of the most significant distinctions of learning in this area and others subjects such as science and maths is the potential for learning within the aesthetic dimension. Far more than just an appreciation or enjoyment of a piece of artistic work, the aesthetic in educational drama is a total engagement, an immersing experience with the dramatic work which 'intensifies, draws together (our experiences)... and when it is over we feel a dislocation, a jolt, a coming to another world.' (Stanwick 1982 in McLean 1995, p.24) This should be both an intellectual and emotional response and have purpose and meaning in the lives of the students. Imperatively, as McLean (1995) reminds us, the dramatic content with which our students engage should have some relevance to their own lived experiences: it should attend to the 'grounded aesthetic' (Willis 1990) of their lives.

Willis describes this term as the 'meanings given to the symbols and practices young people adopt which express something about the cultural significance they believe them to possess.' (in McLean 1995, p.25)

In discussing the aesthetic in educational drama, Taylor (2000) provides us with a succinct summary I particularly like:

The aesthetic refers to how satisfying we find the dramatic work, how well it massages our senses... the reasons for drama practice are the insights to be made, the revelations to be had... it is vital for educators to remember that the arts role through the generations has been to 'chronicle the time' to unfold the nature of our lives and the world in which we live. If operated well, theatre can be a powerful educative medium. (p.5)

Possibilities and encounters: What drama can do

Taylor's statement is vital in understanding the nature of educational drama. The fusion of the aesthetic with the educative has resulted in a learning medium for schools which offers benefits far beyond traditional notions of drama as a tool for building self confidence and self esteem. Contemporary drama practice is the manipulation of theatreform by educators to assist learners to act, reflect and transform. (Taylor 2000, p.1) O'Neill (1995) elaborates,

As theatre and process drama share structure and form, so too they share a purpose. Drama, whether scripted, devised, or improvised, is a way of thinking about life. The characters, situations, events and issues that are created and explored within the dramatic world reflect and illuminate the real world. (p.152)

The Queensland Senior Drama Syllabus (2001) describes drama as a medium for exploration, social criticism, celebration and entertainment. As well as exploring the aesthetic dimensions of drama as an artform, students are also able to define and shape their own identity within relevant social and cultural contexts. The collaborative nature of drama encourages interpersonal and intrapersonal skills which help develop in students a critically active orientation necessary, 'to play a full part in their own culture, the culture of others and the world of work.' (p.1)

More specifically, educational drama is an interplay of discourses between participants and the facilitator where meanings emerge, unfold and are made 'sense of'. It is a dynamic invitation to explore what we understand to be true and to investigate and probe the validity and reality of those held truths. (Sanders 2001) One of the most significant strengths of drama in the classroom is its potential to reveal alternative visions of the relationships between the individual and society and how those relationships impact on everyday life. (Doyle 1993) For this reason alone, drama offers a powerful teaching medium for helping students explore their own gendered experiences in relation to the wider social and cultural context they live in.

Heathcote (1984) argues that educational drama allows the student to isolate life events, to compare the experiences of the past with those of the present and reflect on actions and decisions made both inside and outside the dramatic event. For Heathcote, drama must bring about a process of change shaped by the participants who interact and negotiate with each other within the dramatic form. Without this process of change, there can be no real transformative power in the dramatic experience. Bolton (1992) adds that one of the key outcomes of engaging in the dramatic process is to essentially 'see something differently' or to 'disturb the

known' (p.16) and it is through this change that students can 'learn about themselves through the potency of engaging in the dramatic moment. (Bolton 1986 p.82)

It is more than just 'seeing things differently' which makes drama such a liberating and powerful teaching discipline in any classroom. It is as Heathcote points out, its potential to help students transcend what they already know and move to a higher plane of cognition in considering those things that have perhaps lain dormant in their own consciousness. This process is akin to what Polanyi (1974) describes as 'indwelling', the act of relying on what we intrinsically know whilst we attend new meanings or concepts. O'Mara (1999) reflects on this point:

Indwelling is an act of the imagination and I believe it is at the heart of what we do in process drama where often the focus of the meaning of the drama is arrived at by focusing on something else... through the dramatic moment we rehearse the actions of such a moment and experience the joint meaning of those actions by dwelling in them from the outside... (it allows) us to know alternative viewpoints and realities. (pgs. 33-34)

Dewey's (1934) classic work 'Art as Experience' reminds us that the imagination is indeed the 'gateway' through which meanings are derived from past experiences which find their way into the present. It is 'the conscious adjustment of the new and the old... (imagination) breaks through the inertia of habit.' (p.272)

Aligning Drama Practice, Research and Gender

It is only in recent times that gender has become a dynamic issue for drama practice and research. As I previously wrote, 'post-modern rhetoric has alerted (drama) educators to the multiplicity of viewpoints and possible dimensions of learning and artistic endeavour available to us and as a consequence, research (and teaching) in drama is now a diverse and multi-layered field of study.' (Lee 1997, p.58) This idea of 'multiplicity of viewpoints' was the catalyst for a reassessment of drama curriculum and syllabi alongside an acknowledgement of the powerful influence that ethnicity, gender and class can have on student achievement and behaviour. The result has been a new emphasis on providing students with aesthetic learning experiences which embrace the ideals of difference, multiplicity and 'fields of possibility.' (Possur 1985 in McLean 1996, p.34)

Errington (1992) argues that traditionally classroom teachers have often make assumptions about the 'fixed' nature of knowledge, pedagogy and learning. Arguably, gender has been one of these 'fixed' areas of knowledge. As discussion has previously highlighted, one of the underpinning arguments of socially critical theorists is that gender is socially constructed within frameworks representative of specific hegemonic cultural ideologies. Gender is just one of the important areas of 'difference' which now come into play in planning meaningful units of work in the drama classroom.

Tait (1992) stresses that one of the strengths of educational drama is that it champions the exploration of social values in a safe communal space. She writes, 'it may be this capacity to negotiate meaning between the individual's experience which attracts students to drama.' (p.29) Whilst Tait is speaking specifically about

the female experience and drama, her point is just as relevant in understanding why more male students are now attracted to drama as a learning alternative. Drama with its unlimited potential to explore values and ideals in our society offers teachers and students diverse opportunities to assess their gendered lives:

To bring about changes in social behaviour, it is necessary to interrupt the replication of stereotyped (gendered) behaviours with alternative role models. Drama provides a particularly effective way of introducing original creative interpretations of gender roles. (Tait 1992, p.27)

Whilst research into gender and drama classrooms is growing in momentum, studies are still relatively limited. There has been a surge in interest in the experiences of females in both the drama classroom and the theatre (Griffiths 1984, Tait 1992, Nicholson 1995, Lee 1997, Dunn 2000) alongside studies of the effects of drama in co-educational classrooms (Errington 1992, Nilan 1995) but current research into drama and adolescent boys in single sex classrooms is still largely under-represented. Whilst Dean's (1994) and McDonald's (1999), scholarship has contributed richly to our understanding of boys and educational drama, there is a need for more intensive research into how drama can benefit boys in their contemporary lives. This research hopes to provide further insight into how boys work inside the drama classroom, how they interact with each other and how their female teacher contributes to their understanding of their masculine identities in a complex and changing world. Its importance lies in the insight it will provide into the everyday drama experiences of adolescent boys and how these experiences affect their overall feelings, responses and attitudes.

I would argue that using drama to widen the gender boundaries in the all-boys' classroom can significantly enhance not only the personal lives of boys but also their responses to social, moral and ethical issues in the wider community. One of the basic requirements of drama, the ability of the participant to put themselves 'into shoes of someone else' offers unique learning potential. Hawkes (1999) argues that boys often find it hard to get in touch with feelings of empathy and compassion for others and that aesthetic dimensions of learning are instrumental in helping them to see that there is more than one way, one answer or one response to being male.

My reflections in 1997 on how powerful drama could be for exploring gender with adolescent girls resonates strongly with the former points on educating boys. As I reflected, *in entering the aesthetic space of the drama classroom the adolescent female is liberated from her persona being directly gazed upon by her peers (and) she is allowed to explore ideas and values more deeply through the safe confines of dramatic action.* (pg.118-119) Kokori (1995), a drama teacher in a co-educational school in Sydney, trialled a unit of work called 'Breaking the Rules' with a senior drama class. The unit was specifically focused on gender and harassment issues. She reflects that although the early weeks of the work were fraught with confusion, aggression and resistance from some students, (the boys were defiant in showing any emotion despite the fact she suspected they were deeply affected by many parts of the drama) the continuing support and encouragement from her finally paid off:

A deep level of understanding and recognition for each other's individuality had developed... I could see wonderful progress where issues that previously had been points of contention in their interpersonal relationships were now being dealt

with calmly. Their confidence and self-esteem came through a new found responsibility - that of belonging to a group in a professional capacity. (p. 52)

Walker's (1988) study of three groups of boys in one Sydney school makes some noteworthy observations about the possibilities of drama to 'connect' boys from differing male typographies. Walker reflects that drama represents a subject which could well be used in more powerful ways for diverse groups of boys in schools such as Stokeham Boys' High, because it offers the potential to be a central aspect of contemporary youth culture. (p.165) Walker observed that the socially progressive potential of drama at Stokeham became clear in realigning the culture of the 'three friends' (see previous discussion) with some of the more 'creative' macho boys when they all realised that they shared creative talents. However, due to traditional notions of drama being 'less masculine' than other curriculum subjects, teachers failed to take advantage of the potential drama offered to bring these groups of boys together in a collaborative supportive effort, and thus group tensions continued to prevail.

McDonald observed in her study (see earlier discussion) that drama's potential to disrupt and challenge boys' thinking about masculinities was dependent upon the gender and methods used by the drama teacher and the 'sense of community' the teacher had managed to develop in the classroom. As McDonald reflects, drama was able to create a collective of "men" in the spirit of working together as a community in the classroom and this is where the power lies. (p. 213)

The observable use of drama as a 'contestation' of... gender was initiated by drama teachers who built a specific rapport with their students which encouraged them to be inquisitive, demonstrative, and take risks with their drama work... it is drama's human face that is at the heart of its subtlety and complexity. (p. 228)

Dean's research work (1994) highlighted the experiences of three single sex schools (two female and one male) during the production of a combined school drama performance. Whilst Dean's emphasis included the advocacy of drama as an art form through the school performance, it also encompassed how the issue of gender might impact on the combined efforts of the students. One of the findings was the concurrence by the students on the value of collaborative practice in large drama productions. As one female participant commented it allowed 'all voices to be represented and all points of view to be considered.' (p.28) Certainly for the boys as well as the girls, the unique opportunities awarded to them of working in single sex classrooms was balanced and extended by the chance to work collaboratively with opposite members of the sex in a larger scale drama performance. Most importantly I believe, it allowed all the students to explore gender tensions which inevitably arose during the experience and to acknowledge and celebrate difference and commonality through the safe environs of the dramatic space.

Towards an effective aesthetic space: Practice and planning

I am ever inspired by those educators who transcend traditional notions of knowledge as fixed, empirical, predictable frames of learning for those which celebrate diversity, possibility and multiplicity. Freire's (1970) belief that the essence of education is the ability of the teacher and their students to reflect and act upon their world in a way that may transform it in some way, lies at the very heart of my own educational philosophy. It also reflects the fundamental premise of contemporary educational drama. His use of the word 'practice' to describe the action, reflections and transformations of individuals as they engage with each other, is particularly pertinent for the planning and teaching of drama in any given

school context. To me, the idea of practice suggests a dynamic and fluid juxtaposition of theory with action, a teaching approach which allows for changes and diversities in the drama classroom. Whilst the teacher must have goals and direction in the work they do, the process rather than product nature of educational drama, means that at any given time, the responses and needs of the students can change the shape of the learning experience.

As Taylor (2000) points out, 'the cultural, social, sexual and physiological make up of a classroom context inevitably impacts on attitudes students reveal in drama and teachers have a responsibility to recognise how understandings are constructed in process and how they can co-construct the curriculum and its implementation.' (p.7) The responses of students in drama can dynamically alter and impact on the direction of the drama in ways the teacher may not have expected. This is not to suggest that teachers do not have a clear and structured approach to drama teaching and learning with specific outcomes and expectations. Indeed, it is to the contrary. The careful planning of dramatic aesthetic experiences is paramount in assuring the learning is contextualised in the lives of the students and constantly honours the elements of the dramatic form. McLean's (1995) 'aesthetic framework' which underpins the philosophical framework of the Queensland Senior Syllabus has been instrumental in providing a strong and clear pedagogical structure for drama teachers in their planning of work programs. Based predominately on the work of Dewey (1934) and Abbs (1989), the framework privileges the important connection between art, culture and education and the need for co-artistry between teacher and students. Whilst encouraging the teacher to 'ground' the work in the lives of the students, McLean (1995) also urges teachers to,

Give students other paradigms from which to view the world. Issues such as world ecology and the sharing of global resources, the changing roles for women, the operation of power and justice are some of the subjects teachers need to incorporate into their students art-making and critical reflective processes. (p.35)

In planning meaningful aesthetic experiences for students, McLean stresses the need for the teacher to embrace the epistemologies of art, education and culture. Without such understanding, she argues that the teacher cannot attend to the wider social and cultural influences that students encounter in their everyday lives nor have a clear concept of how particular learning units should be planned and implemented. More specifically, in order to build trust and empowering learning in the drama classroom, McLean identifies a number of teaching strategies all of which I believe are vitally important for the teaching of boys in the drama classroom:

- The encouragement of co-artistry between teacher and students
- Contextualising and connecting the work of the students to their own lives, the drama program and the wider community.
- Approaching the work with energy and focus to assist the students to immerse themselves in the work.
- Developing a climate of trust and comfort so that the students feel able to take risks and 'surrender' to the form.
- Striving to develop questions which evoke interest and curiosity in different paradigms of knowledge.
- Setting high expectations and demand a professional stance towards the art form from the students at all times.
- Teach what is assessed and assess what is taught.

- Offering quality reflection time for students to validate their thoughts and responses to the work and each other.
- Encouraging the students to take a critical stance to the aesthetic and the arts in past and present context. (McLean 1995)

In further considering how drama teachers can provide effective and empowering learning experiences for boys, I am inspired by the words of Palmer (1998) who argues that the world of objectivity, the very heart of traditional education, has resulted in the disconnection of teaching with the inner lives of both teachers and students. For Palmer, this has resulted in an education that has separated the head from the heart, facts from feelings and theory from practice. He provides six paradoxical tensions for teaching which I propose are essential considerations for teachers of boys in the drama classroom. Palmer's emphasis is on creating a classroom 'space' which develops not only an ethos conducive to academic learning but to emotional dimensions of learning as well.

1. The classroom space should be bounded by expectations but 'open' with clear and compelling experiences and resources which invite and encourage learning.
2. The space should be hospitable but 'charged' with an energy which supports risk taking and experimentation.
3. The space should invite and value the voices of the individual and affirm the voices of the group. Voices should be gathered and amplified so that the group can affirm, question and challenge questions and idea raised by individuals.
4. The space should honour the 'little' stories of the individual and the 'big' stories of disciplines and tradition. Personal stories should be embraced but act as points of reference for the more universal and archetypal stories.

5. The space should support solitude whilst surrounding it with the resources of community. At all times, dialogue should be encouraged so that ignorance can be aired, and biases can be challenged and knowledge expanded.
6. The space should respect silence whilst celebrating vocality so that reflection can be shared and respected. (adapted from p.77)

Palmer's ideas are consistent with many of the philosophical tenets of educational drama as well as many of the strategies and approaches associated with quality 'boyswork' in schools. His emphasis on the paradoxes of good teaching, structure with flexibility, individuality with community, boundaries with openness, security with risk taking, resonates strongly with the components of Mclean's aesthetic framework. Palmer's respect for the integrity of students' lives and the stories they can bring to the classroom continues to light the way in my own teaching particularly in times of extreme academic burnout and days where my efforts with students seem to have failed. Palmer writes that the traits of extraordinary teachers is the ability to see students lives more clearly than their own, the capacity to look beyond students' initial self presentation, to hear what it is students don't say and a desire to look more deeply into themselves as educators.

In the teaching of boys, these traits are particularly important because of the masks boys have learnt to wear and the macho games they have been conditioned to play. Instilling in boys a sense of playfulness, openness and well-being is the first step of helping them live richer more enfranchised adult lives. As Maxine Greene (1995) sums so aptly, the most pressing task for educators is to provide learning contexts which enable students to make decisions intelligently and authentically for themselves. Learning experiences must equip students with conceptual tools, the

self respect, and the courage and conviction to choose what they consider right for them in their lives. Allowing boys to be 'as they are' is the first step in allowing this to happen.

Summary

This chapter has attempted to highlight and explore the notion of masculinity as both a biological determinant and a social construct. It has sought to provide an insight into the influence gender roles can have on the development of young males and examined some of the more popular contemporary debates about the relationship between masculinity and the education. It has been argued that educational drama offers a powerful teaching medium to assist adolescent males in learning about their own and others lives in a learning environment which can be uniquely liberating and creative. Discussion has also underlined the elements of effective teaching practice in the drama classroom alongside the potential benefits the female drama teacher can bring to the all-male classroom.

The power of the teacher in the drama classroom to 'net' the students' interest in the dramatic form cannot be underestimated. As Palmer reminds us, teaching is an act of hospitality from the teacher towards the students, to participate in, challenge and explore the learning experience. It is the teacher's energy, passion and vision which provides the impetus for the pursuit of knowledge and without this, students can face an improvised and mundane learning experience.

CHAPTER THREE

ESTABLISHING A FRAMEWORK

...Research in drama demands careful observation, generalisation and the expression of results in a community of educators. Like science, the study of drama requires detail and precision and will emphasise certain fundamental processes. Thinking creatively and critically, solving problems, deconstructing knowledge, 'reading' results and developing productive theories are as essential for development in the arts as in the sciences.

(O'Neill 1996)

Identifying an Epistemology

This study is grounded in the classroom experiences of twenty-six adolescent boys in two all-male senior drama classrooms over a period of two years. The everyday classroom experiences of the boys alongside the drama practice of their female teacher underpinned the research framework and informed my overall research design and analysis. At all times the 'voices' of the boys, their expressed needs, behaviours and daily modes of communication, guided the impetus and direction of the work; it was their experiences and evolving relationship with their teacher 'Sal' which provided the essential investigative foci of this research.

The philosophical assumptions of the research are grounded in cultural, sociological and educational ideologies that highlight and emphasize the important

connections between gender, schooling and life experiences. It is a study driven by the belief that adolescent boys' lives are inextricably interwoven with dominant cultural and social constructs of gender roles which in turn affect every facet of their daily classroom lives. Furthermore, in establishing an epistemological frame of reference, I subscribe to the following beliefs:

- Gender is an important determinate of the behaviour and attitudes for students in all classrooms. Stereotyped concepts and traditional assumptions binding the sexes to separate roles (can) limit the potential of both girls and boys during schooling. (Leder & Sampson 1989)
- Contrary to the belief that boys have fared well under a traditionally patriarchal educational system and the 'masculinisation' of schools (Nicholson 1994 in Stone 1994), they are in fact facing just as many personal and educative (if not more) problems as their female counterparts. As Pollack (1999) argues, new educational research has found boys are 'faring less well than they did in the past (in comparison to girls)... have remarkably fragile self-esteems... and the rates of depression and suicide are frighteningly on the rise', (xxi)
- Teaching is a transformative act and those teachers who are able to reach beyond the students' own sense of what is important, offer effective and valuable learning experiences. (Sprague 1993). Effective classroom teachers can offer adolescent boys a way to socialise and grow into manhood with resources far beyond what their family can offer alone. (Biddulph 1995)

- Drama can be a particularly useful way for boys to explore their emotions and their relationships with each other. (Hawkes 2001) Boys need to be introduced to other modes of learning intelligences such as body/kinesthetic, interpersonal and intrapersonal, verbal/linguistic and musical/rhythmic instead of the more traditional logical/mathematical intelligence associated with 'male perceived' school subjects such as Mathematics and Science. (Hawkes 2001)

A Workable Paradigm

Choosing a research paradigm for this research was an easy decision. My previous classroom research work (Lee 1997) had favored a case study approach using qualitative and ethnographic techniques of data collection and analysis. This had proven a highly effective and informative mode of working and one that I believed would once again suit the needs of my current research. The need for a flexible and focused methodological framework that would allow me to gather a rich and varied cross section of data was a significant priority.

I needed a framework which would in essence, offer a collaborative partnership with the participants in the research allowing them a space to analyse, discuss and challenge the data with me when the need arose. What was most important to me was a paradigm, which would allow me, and indeed essentially liberate me, to freely immerse myself, observe and muse about the sociological and educational macro-community of which I was to become part. As I had documented previously, (O'Neill in Lee 1997) I needed a paradigm which would allow me 'to listen intensively and extensively to the kinds of discourse at work in the drama classroom... a space to listen to the voices of those being researched. (p.74)

Importantly, I understood the need to become part of the boys' classroom culture without influencing or immobilising them with an intrusive research presence but I also knew that I needed to be part of the classroom culture on a continuing basis in a way that would allow me to:

'know the (students) from the inside as they know themselves, to understand the social phenomena involved by sharing in the interpretation and handling of them in everyday (classroom) life.' (Ball 1982)

In view of these guiding criteria, a descriptive interpretative case study using both qualitative and ethnographic techniques seemed most appropriate. The descriptive narrative tools of the ethnographer were particularly attractive as they allowed me to gain a 'close up' understanding of the drama classroom over an extended period of time in a 'reasonably unstructured manner.' (Yin 1991, p.46) Thus, whilst the research cannot claim to be ethnography in the purist sense, it does, in true ethnographic style, strive to describe the experiences of a selected group in a specific life context. It also endeavours to discover 'multiple truths' whilst telling a tale which is a 'means of experience for the reader.' (Denzin 1997).

The combination of these two research approaches was governed by my intention to observe and document the experiences of the boys and Sal in the drama classroom as a detached researcher rather than have any direct input into the teaching or planning of the drama curriculum. Arguably, one of the most effective modes of research methodology which allows ongoing 'naturalistic' observation of research participants with minimal intrusive impact is that of 'participant observer.' (McCormack 1991) The participant observer role allows the researcher to probe more deeply (but unobtrusively) into the research culture whilst intensively

analysing the multifarious phenomena that constitute the life cycle of the group. (Cohen and Manion 1989) Additionally it awards the researcher the opportunity to document quality observations in a natural setting where it is more difficult for them to consistently 'mask' what is really going on. (Smith 1978 in Borg & Gall, p.392)

Wolcott (1988) defines three distinct styles of the 'participant observer': the active participant (who has a job to do in the given setting as well as that of researcher), the privileged observer (someone who is known and trusted and given easy access to the context), and the limited observer (those limited to researching, observing, questioning and building trust over time). Lofland and Lofland (1984) provide a simple but useful description of participant observation as an interweaving of looking and listening and of watching and asking. For the neophyte ethnographer such simplicity is often missed. The temptation to record everything that is seen or heard can result in the researcher sometimes overlooking the more important nuances, that exist in the communication of the participants.

The acts of really listening to the participants and asking for clarification are I believe the founding elements of effective case study work. In previous work (Lee 1997), I had straddled dual roles of the limited participant and the active participant. On occasions, I had taught the students (adolescent girls) specific plays which dealt with gender issues. I had hoped that this direct approach would allow me to delve deeper into their personal beliefs about their roles as young women in society. Instead, it created enormous role conflict for me and the girls on a number of occasions. Confused by my changing role status from observant researcher to teacher researcher, they often experienced difficulties in communicating their real

feelings on the issues. The lines between researcher detachment and emotional involvement became blurred.

As I reflected,

I need to be careful about dominating the girls work with my perspectives... their familiarity with me now has led to the line between researcher and participant being reactions... imposing my ideological views on (them)... it is a difficult and fragile role I play. (Lee 1997, Field Log 23, Lines 68-75)

This fusing of roles is not uncommon in ethnographic case study work as the researcher's need for clarification and analysis grows and narrows. In an effort to ensure authenticity in the collection and analysis of data, there are often shifts in the researcher's perspective. As Spradley (1980) comments:

The role of participant observer will vary from one social situation to another and each investigator has to allow the way he or she works to evolve. But as the role develops you will have to maintain a dual purpose: You will want to seek to participate and to watch yourself and others at the same time. (p.58)

Glazer (1980) stresses the necessity for the researcher to be able to become deeply involved with the data whilst still remaining emotionally detached enough to step back and critically perceive and evaluate the contours and shifts in the information. I believe this role shift is more complex than the neophyte researcher first realises. The ability to understand the perspectives of the participants whilst remaining

relatively objective is challenging. It can demand a remarkable shift in the researcher's own knowledge base.

Polanyi (1974) describes the 'knowing', which results from immersing oneself in the lives of participants as 'indwelling.' For Polanyi all qualitative research begins with 'tacit knowledge' - the knowledge a researcher already processes but is not yet consciously articulated. Through the process of indwelling, the researcher is able to draw on this tacit knowledge and in turn, make explicit new forms of meaning. In this way, the tapestry of field work comes together to make 'joint meaning.' (Polanyi 1967) It is an empathetic and imaginative act beautifully suited to the modes of drama work. (O'Mara 1999).

I felt that the role of 'participant observer' would allow me to achieve immersion in the field whilst still maintaining a personal communicative space between Sal, the boys and myself. My intention was to be able to shift between the more limited participant observer role and the active participant (participating in rehearsal and planning sessions) in ways that would enrich my understanding without stifling their natural responses of my participants. Whilst I did not plan to take part in any active teaching of the boys, I wanted to have close access to them as they discussed performance choices and ideas, either individually, in pairs or in groups. Sal agreed to my suggestion, considering it a positive and pro-active way of gaining the trust and support of the boys for my research in the classroom. My goal was to learn from the boys and Sal without being obtrusive and making them feel uncomfortable or intimidated by my presence in any way.

Defining the Case Study

Skilbeck (1983) describes the case study as a 'key factor in the revitalisation and democratisation of educational practice and knowledge.' (p.18). In terms of its research value, Yin (1991) expands:

(the case study) is an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real life context when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident; and which multiple sources of evidence are used. (p.23)

Wiersma's (1991) description of the case study as 'characterised by an investigation of a single group, event, institution or culture' (p.422) is one I have long favoured for educational research but it is John Carroll's (1996) discussion on the use of case study in the drama classroom which best serves this research. Carroll argues that the case study is significantly suitable for research in drama because drama participants 'create a unique set of social relationships that become a single unit of experience capable of analysis and study.' (p.77). The drama classroom offers a unique insight into the experiences of participants because it evokes a learning microcosm where 'the whole creative sequence needs to be studied, (in order to make sense of the dramatic process) and not just aspects of it.' (Carroll 1996, p.77) In drama research, the case study 'honours the agency of the participants and sees them as experts not just as a source of data for analysis.' (Carroll 1996, p.77)

In particular, Carroll outlines four criteria as described by Lamnek which make case study methodology so valuable in the drama classroom. As Carroll stresses, 'these

four criteria fit drama research because the interpreted reality of the drama frame becomes the meaningful and significant everyday reality of the research process':

- Openness: there is no restriction that could limit the action of the researcher or direct the research into predetermined goals or paths of action.
- Communicativity: case studies perceive reality as emerging interaction between the actors (sic). Action and communication constitute reality.
- Naturalism: the researcher studies relations in their natural stage, not as artificially constructed models.
- Interpretativity: social reality is defined as 'interpreted' reality and not objective reality. (Lammel in Carroll 1996)

Case Study as Reflective Practice

In a study on reflective practice in the drama classroom, O'Mara, (1995) wrote of the necessity for educators to 'transplant epistemologies' of academic theories and knowledge to the everyday pedagogical practice of the classroom. O'Mara asserts that in order for drama teaching to be transformative, teachers must endeavour to fuse contemporary educational drama theory with what actually happens everyday in their drama classroom. In essence, there needs to be a reflective dynamic relationship between the theory of what we do and exactly how we do it. As Hooks (1994) adds:

When our lived experience of theorising is fundamentally linked to processes of self-recovery, of collective liberation, no gap exists between theory and practice. Indeed, what such experience makes more evident is the bond between the two - that ultimately reciprocal process wherein one enables the other. (p.61)

Whilst this research does not fall explicitly within the paradigm of reflective practice, it does combine reflective components of analysis and synthesis in terms of Sal's reflections on the field notes and logs and my conclusions about classroom interactions and practice. Sal's musings could certainly be constructed as reflective practice on her part in the respect that she provided member checking and confirmation on my observations as well as some personal thoughts on her attitudes to drama teaching. Undoubtedly she gained important insight from my observations of her work in the drama classroom but essentially this was a by-product of the consultation process rather than one of the important guiding objectives of the overall research.

As time progressed, I realised I needed to make a reassessment of the importance I placed on the significance of Sal's teaching style and the associated responses from the boys. My observations expanded to closely describe and interpret her work with the boys at every level and her ongoing thoughtful contributions in validating my observations and interpretations became invaluable in ensuring accurate data analysis.

As with previous research (Lee 1997), I hoped that the study would enrich understanding of the teaching of boys in all male drama classrooms and the importance of effective teaching practice and style for effective learning. The final documentation in itself offers the opportunity for further discussion and assessment of specific educational practice. Thus, whilst this research was not grounded in reflective practice, I do believe that case studies which seek to uncover classroom 'truths' through observations and discussion are instrumental in illuminating possibilities and alternatives for teaching. Indeed, they are reflective by

their interpretative and analytical nature. I am reminded of Taylor's assertions (1996):

To be an arts educator is to be a reflective practitioner. Both give birth to ideas: both search for a medium to express and honour their vision. (p.7)... to interrogate the truths that (we) daily confront and imagine what is not possible, and what might be. (p.54).

The Case Study as Ethnography

One of the most significant benefits of using an ethnographic approach is the opportunity it offers researchers to 'place' themselves in the lives of the participants through the process of 'verstehen' or empathy. (Smith 1983). In the past few years, the use of ethnographic techniques in educational drama research has proven popular in Australia. (Donelan, 1995; McDonald 1994; McLean 1995; Mienczakowski 1994; O'Mara 1995,1999; Lee 1997). Taylor (1996) argues that one reason that this mode of research works so effectively in the drama classroom is that 'like ethnographers, students in drama can explore and interpret imagined social contexts.' (p.93)

In describing the benefits of using ethnographic approaches in drama research, Donelan (1992) contends that 'nothing gets you closer.'

Ethnography like drama is based on the human capacity to empathise, to imaginatively project into a situation, to identify with another's point of view: Writers about ethnography describe the process of conducting participant

observation in terms that are familiar to us as drama educators. (Donelan 1992 in Lee, 1997, p.83)

The drama classroom, rich in opportunities for students to explore a multiplicity of life perspectives is a dynamic diverse research medium. No day is the same, no dramatic activity repeated in quite the same way. It demands a research methodology which can accommodate its fluid ever-changing form. (Hamilton 1991) O' Neill (1996) speaks of the drama classroom as a 'laboratory' of rich possibilities where 'human behaviour can be displayed and manipulated through metaphor, repetition and exaggeration.' (p.142) For me, the diversity and mobility of the ethnographic stance was the most natural choice for my work.

Whilst the classroom provided me with an intensive, unique field of qualitative inquiry, I am cognisant that the research, despite employing ethnographic techniques, cannot claim to be ethnography in the purist sense. The fact that I could not be in the drama classroom with the boys every moment of every day, to essentially 'capture their complete lived experiences' was a constraint in itself. However, the intensity of the observations, the prolonged time in the field, and the overriding commitment to 'tell the stories of the participants as they were' allows the work to fit comfortably within an ethnographic paradigm.

Players in the Field: Defining the Group

In 1998 I rang Sal for the first time and asked her if she would be willing to take part in this research. I had long observed Sal's work and had been her working colleague over a number of years as co-members of the Queensland Association for

Drama in Education. In professional terms, she had been part of ongoing consultative processes about drama curriculum changes in Queensland and had played an active part in trialling the new 2001 P-10 Queensland Arts Curriculum. In short, she understood the spirit of the Queensland drama curricular and more importantly implemented them with commitment and diversity in her everyday drama teaching.

Sal cuts a formidable figure. Her stature is confident and assured, complemented by her short well-cut blonde hair and her classically co-ordinated wardrobe. When she walks into the classroom the boys cannot ignore her presence. Her well-articulated, finely honed voice is the result of many years of tramping the boards as an actor and director and when she speaks it is with command and intent. She has spent many of her teaching years in co-educational schools but made the change to an all boys' Catholic College several years ago.

Sal's response to my request to work in her classroom was as I had expected – enthusiastic and welcoming. Originally we had negotiated that I would spend one year with her Year 12 boys (17-18 years old) with me visiting the classroom at least three times a week in double teaching periods (approx. 50 minutes). This group consisted of sixteen boys predominately of Australian origin with two of immigrant parents. However, our plans were thrown into disarray when I became pregnant before the research period and subsequently faced a series of health problems. Continuing illness meant I was not able to follow our research plan as rigorously as I had hoped and early hospitalisation demanded we reassess the overall research direction.

Concerned about the quantity of data I had managed to collect with the first research group, I decided I needed to spend another year with an additional group

of boys in Sal's drama classroom. Sal and the school administration agreed to this time but, to my disappointment, added an unexpected constraint. Due to behavioural and attitudinal difficulties with the incoming senior class, Sal felt my presence would be disruptive to their overall learning progress. She also expressed a concern about her own stress level in dealing with this difficult group whilst having to meet the requirements of my research.

Sal suggested that the Year 11 class would be a better alternative and knowing that this group would still be working with the senior drama syllabus, I agreed. As I was to find the two groups of boys were vastly different and provided a rich tapestry of contrasts. My data analysis became multi-layered with the boys' voices providing a fascinating array of stories from within.

Accessing the Field: The Gatekeepers

In my earlier research (Lee 1997), gaining access to the classroom had been smooth and problem free. I naturally assumed that this would again be the case. As the sub-gatekeeper, Sal had been agreeable and co-operative about my desire to work in her classroom but I knew I needed to gain permission from the college principal before I could formally conduct any research. This proved to be more difficult. Some years before, there had been some research conducted in the college where the researcher had used unethical practice. In short, in public discussions on the findings, the college had been named and confidential information disclosed. This had caused embarrassment and discomfort for all concerned.

Consequently, the principal was now wary and understandably suspicious about educational research being conducted in classrooms. I knew that I needed to

convince him that my researcher posture would be ethical and trustworthy. I did this by meeting with him on a number of occasions both with and without Sal. Initially I provided him with the original research proposal and talked at length about the mode of research I was interested in conducting. As meetings progressed, I showed him letters of explanation and permission which the parents would receive alongside some of measures I would put in place for 'quality control.' (Ely 1991) I talked at length about my previous research and offered him the opportunity to read my findings from my work in an all-female drama classroom. (1997)

At each meeting he relaxed more and more until finally he agreed to my proposal to work in Sal's classroom. Whilst I offered to meet with him throughout the research period to keep him informed about the proceedings, I was surprised when he declined. It seemed that once I had convinced him that I would ensure the research would protect the name of the college and the integrity of the boys' contributions, he was content to leave me to work uninterrupted in the school context without any further consultation.

Safeguarding the Field: Consent and Ethics

With guidance from my university handbook (Research and Higher Degree Handbook, Griffith University 1996) I drafted appropriate consent forms and letters of explanation for parents, College principal and the participants themselves. (see Appendix A) After clearance from the university's ethics committee, these were given to all concerned. I did not expect any problems from the parents and so was not surprised when I received no correspondence about the research ahead. I took

time to explain to the boys that they could withdraw from the research at any point and assured them that at all times their contributions would be treated with integrity and confidentiality.

In terms of maintaining ethical practice, Babbie (1998) provides useful guidelines for collecting and analysing data:

- Voluntary participation
- No harm to participants
- Anonymity and confidentiality
- No deception of participants
- Accuracy in analysis and reporting. (in O'Mara, 1999, p.60)

Soltis (1989) adds that researchers must be ethical not only in the practice of what they do but also in the processes they use. I was careful to discuss all aspects of data collection with the boys and Sal striving to accommodate or modify any modes of working which they felt uncomfortable with.

Describing the Field: The School

The research college is an independent Catholic school for boys from Year 5 (in Queensland, this is approximately 10 years old) to Year 12 (16-17 years old) and is conducted by the Order of St. Augustine. The Augustinians, a religious community of priests and brothers have been involved in education for over 600 years in schools and colleges all over the world. The order espouses a love of learning, truth and understanding as one of the key criteria in their Mission Statement. The college

describes itself as a community made of parents, staff and students striving to be 'of one heart and one mind on the way to God.' (St. Augustine)

Key objectives in the College's Mission Statement include:

- Students are encouraged to realise the fullness of their potential as they learn those skills necessary to participate as competent members of society.
- The College actively promotes friendship, truth, initiative and a joy and zest for life.
- The College's paramount value of being a living community of faith finds its expression in the human concern that is expressed for past and present students, parents and staff.
- The college promotes the value of justice, equality of opportunity and collaboration in decision making.

The College places significant emphasis on the pursuit of truth in learning and everyday living. The Augustinian's notion of education seeks a balance in learning between the disciplines of the Arts and Sciences and encourages the development of individual strengths and talents. Historically, the learning areas of Language, Music, Drama and the Visual Arts have played an important part in the curricular and co-curricular programs. The staff is made up of a combination of male and female teachers with a male Augustinian priest currently the College principal.

Field Methodology: The Process

I have already outlined the necessity for a methodology which would allow a diverse and flexible means of data collection. In view of the fact that I needed to

document the everyday classroom experiences in a variety of ways, I chose the following methods of data collection:

- Field note of classroom experiences
- Logs and analytic memos
- Personalised journals (where possible))
- Audio and visual documentation
- Class questionnaires
- Focus group interviews
- Member and peer checking consultation (Ely 1991) (See Appendices A and B)

As Figures 1 and 2 illustrate, (see following pages) collection and analysis of data was multifocal and ongoing. The use of videotape allowed a more scrupulous and comprehensive analysis of the data and revealed some important non-verbal cues to complement Sal's or the boys' dialogue in interviews or performance rehearsals. The use of multiple methodologies ensures greater trustworthiness of data in that the analysis of a variety of sources allows for more believable findings of the research. (Glesne & Peshkin 1992)

Field Notes

My field notes acted as a mirror of what I saw and heard in the drama classroom. Frantic scribbles and musings filled a variety of notebooks that were rewritten and interpreted into my field log journal at the end of each research day. Past experience (Lee 1997) had taught me not to try to be selective about what I recorded, or assume that 'nothing important happened' in the field. I knew that what appeared to be insignificant to me at the time might prove to be of vital

OVERVIEW OF RESEARCH DESIGN

Research Question: What are the experiences of adolescent boys and their female teacher in two single sex drama classrooms?

Sub-Question	Focus	Sources of Information	How was information obtained?	When was information obtained?
Sub-Question 1 <i>What benefits do boys believe they gain from doing drama at school?</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Benefits of participating in drama socially, personally, emotionally and educationally 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Year 11 and Year 12 adolescent boys in two all boys' drama classrooms in an all boys' Secondary Catholic College in Brisbane 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Group Interviews Questionnaire Informal discussion 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Twice a week – two lessons @ 1 1/2 hr x 2 years Regular lunch interview sessions (20 min) throughout research period Video recording
Sub-Question 2 <i>How do adolescent boys communicate with each other in the drama classroom?</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Relationships between adolescent boys in the drama class Modes of communication between adolescent boys 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> As above 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participant Observation Group Interviews 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> As above
Sub-Question 3 <i>What kinds of behaviours are apparent in the daily interactions of these boys in their drama classroom?</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What behavioural modes are evident? How do they interact at individual and group levels? How do they work together in groups? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> As above 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participant Observation Group Interviews 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> As above
Sub-Question 4 <i>How do adolescent boys approach drama work in their classroom?</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How do adolescent boys participate in 'making' drama? What are their interests in drama? What choices do they make? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> As above 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participant Observation Group Interviews Questionnaire 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> As above Distribute Mid Semester 1 & 2 (1999 – 2000)
Sub-Question 5 <i>How do they perceive their own experiences and relationships in the drama classroom?</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Do adolescent boys consider drama worthwhile? Why do they participate in drama? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> As above 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Group Interviews Questionnaire Informal discussion 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> As above
Sub-Question 6 <i>What role does their teacher play in their experiences in the drama classroom?</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How important is the teacher's style in the drama classroom? What attributes make an effective drama teacher? Does a female drama teacher affect the dynamics of an all male classroom? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> As above 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Group Interviews Informal discussion Questionnaire 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> As above

Figure 1

**CLASSROOM CONTEXT
SITE OF CASE STUDY**

Questions posed

- Focus
- What benefits do boys believe they gain from doing drama at school?
 - How do adolescent boys communicate with each other in the drama classroom?
 - What kinds of behaviours are apparent in the daily interactions of these boys in their drama classroom?
 - How do adolescent boys approach drama work in their classroom?
 - How do they perceive their own experiences and relationships in the drama classroom?
 - What role does their teacher play in their experiences in the drama classroom?

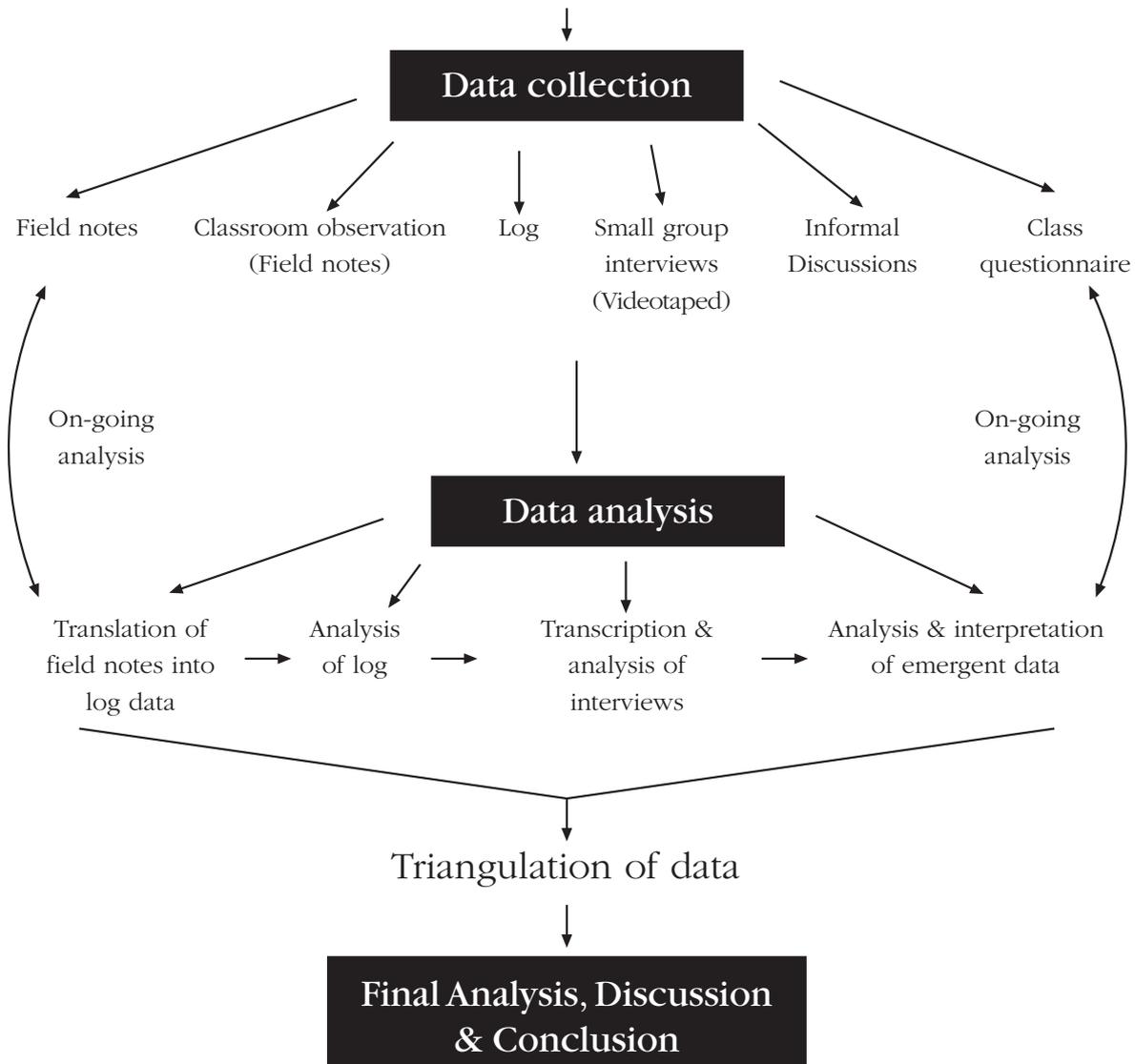


Figure 2

importance to me in the analysis at a later date. Careful attention to objectively and prolifically record what is seen or heard in the field allows for thick or rich description of the data. (Geertz 1993) Happenings I did not understand or needed to think more deeply about were highlighted with brackets containing 'observer comments.' (Taylor & Bogdan, 1984) These sideline musings and hunches are invaluable to the researcher in providing layers of understanding and meaning in the final analysis and discussion.

The Field Log

In describing the essential nature of the field log, I particularly like McCormack's (1991) notion of the log as a 'personal dialogue about moments of victory and disheartenment, hunches, feelings, insights, assumptions, biases and ongoing ideas. (in Ely, 1991. P.69) Ely (1991) adds that the log forms a cohesive history of the participant's lives which allows details to unravel slowly along the research journey. For me, the logbook became like a colourful multi-layered chronicle, fascinating stories of the classroom that gave me changing insight into the school lives of Sal and the boys. My own moments of joy and struggle punctuated the dialogue allowing comprehensive assessment of my own research journey and building an historical narrative of this unique classroom experience.

Field notes and video taped interviews and sessions were transcribed, translated and interpreted through the use of the logbook. Transcribing the video interviews was a challenging task for as Dunn (2000) found, the transcribed texts 'could never hope to convey (fully) what was appearing on the screen.' (p.78) Whilst every attempt is made to retell the participants' stories as authentically as possible, there

is often an underlying tension that exists between the researcher's interpretation of the participant's words and what was actually meant. Britzman (1991) writes:

The retelling of another's story is always a partial telling, bound by one's perspectives, but also by the exigencies of what can and cannot be told. The narratives of lived experience - the story, or what is told - are always selective, partial and in tension. (p.13)

Each field log entry was word processed, with every line entry numbered for easy cross-reference in the final stages of coding and analysis. Margins were left for keypoints or comments and questions. (see Appendix B) As the data grew, I identified a number of emerging themes that allowed me to code the data under specific criteria:

- Drama practice (DP)
- Teacher stylistic elements (TSE)
- Interpersonal relationships (IR)
- Classroom behaviour (CB)
- Adolescent communication (AC) (see Appendix B)

Each reference code was highlighted in the field log with an assigned colour allowing me to check and cross-reference the data when necessary. Additionally, log entries were accompanied by analytic memos which McCormack (1991) describes as 'conversations with oneself about what has occurred in the research process. (in Ely 1991) I found these reflective conversations significantly meaningful and revealing about my own research journey as well as important signposts about possible researcher bias or issues which needed further investigation.

Personal Journals

Taylor (1996) argues that journals in drama research can act as powerful devices for providing new perspectives on the student's work. Through an invitation to write about their feelings and experiences in the drama classroom, students can reveal much about their evolving relationships with the dramatic form and each other. I have always loved this idea for research but have found it difficult to gain student commitment to the ongoing task of journal writing. The reasons for this are twofold.

In both previous (Lee 1997) and current research, the classroom teachers required the students to keep ongoing journals for them. These were not always deeply reflective emotionally but rather more intellectual responses to the dramatic form about how the students pragmatically approached the work. Useful reflections but not always introspective enough to provide me with the data about their reactions to the work as individuals. Additionally, access to the journals was sometimes haphazard and difficult between sessions as students would not have them when I arrived or in some instances could not find them.

Secondly, when I did get students to write for me (with guidance to possible ways 'into' the writing), they were often intimidated or distrustful about the process. My assurances that they did not have to disclose their names were not enough to secure full class participation. As I previously reflected,

Susan comes to me and asks me what I 'want' her to write in the journal... I tell her the journal is about her (experiences in drama). (Whilst) she seems to

understand this, I get the distinct impression, she is feeling a little unsure about whether to trust me with some intimate information. (Field Log 21, Lines 80-84, in Lee, 1997)

Whilst Group One did manage to provide me with some valuable journal data, (see Appendix B) Group 2 seemed to find the demands of Sal's journal writing and my research requests too difficult. Consequently, I decided I would read as much as possible of the material they wrote for Sal and gain what insight I could from those sources.

Class Questionnaires

I distributed three questionnaires to each research group. (see Appendix B) Cognisant of the demands on the boys' time during drama lessons and hoping for honest comments, I asked them to complete them in their own time stressing that they did not need to disclose their real names. The boys were all co-operative about completing the questionnaires although at times the responses were less detailed than I had hoped for. They were however honest in their responses and this gave me some rich and interesting data to work with. The questions focused on the boys' perceptions of their drama classroom, their drama experiences and the impact these had on them, their perceptions of Sal, their relationships with their peers and their attitudes to the benefits they gained from participation in educational drama.

Small Group Interviews

Each semester over the two years in the field, interviews were conducted with every boy in each group. These always took place at lunchtime in the drama classroom and were videotaped for transcription. It was essential to record the sessions in this way to ensure longevity of the data as well as the opportunity to analyse the sessions repeatedly if necessary. Mehan (1993) suggests that when we listen to and look at a (slice of life) closely via a videotape, we see and hear a different version of social life than is otherwise possible.

Each session formed part of my overall research journal and provided important supplementary material for my field notes. Some of the boys expressed the wish to be interviewed in groups of three or four whilst others liked the idea of individual interviews. I found this an interesting comparison with the female participants in my previous research (Lee, 1997) who refused to come for interviews alone. Their need for friendship support groups during the interview process was a strong criterion for gaining their cooperation and trust.

Glesne and Peskin (1992) contend that group interviewing can prove beneficial to the researcher for 'some young people need company to be emboldened to talk; and some topics are better discussed by a small group of people who know each other.' (p.64) Whilst this seemed to be the case for the majority of the boys, there were the odd few who wanted to talk to me on their own. I allowed them to choose whichever mode they preferred.

In planning the process for the interviews, I was reminded of the feminist ideology of Ann Oakley (1981) who argues that traditional patriarchal interview methodology with its emphasis on detachment and objectivity tends to make

participants 'close' up and become unresponsive. Her advocacy for a communicative empathy of the researcher with their participants worked well for me with the girls. I was interested to see whether it would work just as well with the boys given that the nature of drama encourages high levels of interpersonal relationships. As later discussion will reveal, this was the case with nearly all the boys. Interviews were filled with surprising candour, intimate adolescent revelations and at times, much laughter.

I decided that whilst I would have some structured questions which would punctuate the framework of the interviews, I wanted the boys to feel free to discuss issues which arose that they found most interesting and pertinent to their drama classroom lives. Their voices were the threads of my stories and I did not want to inhibit those voices by any insistence on them answering specific questions. As the interviews progressed, I noted themes emerging which I asked the boys to elaborate on the next time, and often I found their growing experiences in drama meant their perceptions of things were more finely honed and comprehensive.

There were many opportunities to talk to the boys informally during rehearsals or brainstorming sessions and this more relaxed form of data collection proved to yield rich insight. The boys, seemingly more amiable to my informal presence, would talk to me about all kinds of issues and difficulties with the dramatic process. They would often openly swear or argue about issues. It was during these times that I remembered my interview mantra to 'talk less and listen more' (Wolcott 1995) letting the boys' free comments fill the conversation space. Devoid of my notebook in some instances, I made 'headnotes' (Ottenberg, 1990) of what I had seen or heard which I then carefully recorded in free time. These were the sessions I grew to love best because the naturalness of the boys' responses were so honest and unencumbered. (in Ely, 1991)

Analysing the Data

There are two aspects of discussion to be outlined here, the methods of data analysis and the considerations of trustworthiness and researcher posture. For clarity, I will begin with the first and the second will be addressed in the next section on data trustworthiness. As previously discussed, data analysis was an ongoing task. Field notes and logs, journals, questionnaires and interview data were interpreted and coded systemically throughout the research period. Aware of the panic which can beset the researcher when faced with copious amounts of data, I was careful to analyse and code data on a weekly basis. As a qualitative researcher I have always been what Lofland and Lofland (1984) term a 'steady plodder'. Whilst it allows sanity to prevail, it also is useful for identifying emerging themes with some accuracy and precision.

In terms of the refinement of data categories, I use an old fashioned approach - data cards saturated with cut-and-paste descriptions (colour coded) from my field log journal and associated data. Whilst I am aware of technological qualitative analysis packages such as NUD.IST, I believe the time in learning how to use some programs is better devoted to analysing the data manually. For me personally, I also believe that the cut-and-paste method narrows and identifies the thinking units (Lofland and Lofland 1984) more clearly. As noted previously in 'The Field Log' discussion, analysis was guided by the emergence of five significant themes that pertained to both Sal's style of teaching and the behaviour and attitudes of the boys. As I analysed data on a daily basis, these themes were identified and highlighted and further commentary added for my own information or further clarification with the participants. (see Appendix B)

Data Trustworthiness

Being trustworthy as a qualitative researcher means at the least, that the processes of research are carried out fairly; that the products represent as closely as possible the experiences of the people who are studied. (McCormack 1991 in Ely 1991)

The issue of trustworthiness in data analysis and interpretation should be constantly at the forefront of the researcher's consciousness. Not only must the researcher strive for honest and accurate interpretation of the lives of the research participants, but also be aware of their own latent or emerging biases. In regards to the latter, I had no real conception of what it would be like to be in an all boys' classrooms. Indeed, I had very little understanding of the adolescent masculine world at all. Having been part of a strong female family and having taught in a girls' college for five years, I was excited at the prospect of learning about the male world.

What I did need to be careful about was bringing my feminist views about patriarchy into the classroom. Having completed a Master's thesis on the experiences of adolescent girls in one drama classroom (Lee 1997), I had been immersed in literature about the disempowerment of girls in education and the supremacy of boys' experiences. Thus I was reminded by McCormack's (1991) assertion that researchers must educate and re-educate themselves to practise detailed observation without reading in our own answers and our own biases.

The way that this is made possible is to allow enough room to be detached whilst maintaining a communicative relationship with the participants for to become too

immersed in the field, critical and analytic exploration of data is jeopardised. (Hammersley 1983). I have always found this complex researcher posture a problematic one for research in the drama classroom. (see chapter 9) The very nature of the way we work in drama is one of immersion and engagement and in order to learn more about our participants, there is often no choice but to work closely with them; to surrender ourselves to the form.

It is this immersion which can complicate the objective stance of the research. Prolonged immersion in the field can result in the researcher identifying so strongly with the participants that defending their values takes precedence over actually studying them. (Wood 1986) For me, the comfort zone of the boys' classroom was so secure and intimate that I needed to continually reassess my research posture. I found myself closely involved with the boys in so many situations that at times, my role as researcher was compromised by a fusion of mother, sister and teacher roles.

Addressing these concerns of trustworthiness was made easier for me by following a number of process steps. The use of multiple data collection methods, (previously discussed), identifying themes for coding, working with a research peer and using member checking of data (Lincoln and Guba 1985) contributed to ensuring my findings were credible and authentic.

In order to present credible data, researchers strive to identify convergent points of multiple data sources through the process of triangulation. In general terms, this process is one where points of truth or actuality are identified and defined. In relation to drama research, I agree with Taylor (1996) and Ely (1991) who suggest that this form of data checking can constrain the multiplicity and complexity of human experience. (p.43) As Ely argues, 'we do not (want to) read (data) as much for accuracy as we do for a multiplicity of views.' (in Taylor 1996).

Taylor provides a workable alternative for the concept of triangulation in referring to the work of Richardson (1994). In considering trustworthiness in data analysis, Richardson describes the rendering of truths in research data as a process of 'crystallisation.' Like crystals Richards suggests, data creates different colours, patterns and arrays, casting light in many different directions. Thus, viewing data as a multiplicity of hues and colours can allow the researcher to attain a deeper, often more complex understanding of the overall research canvas. I particularly like this metaphor and subscribed to it throughout my data analysis. Through the use of peer and member checking as well as my other forms of data collection, I was able to explore and investigate many angles of repose (Richardson 1994 in Taylor 1996, p.44) and overcome some of the ambiguities that present themselves to the qualitative researcher.

Peer Support and Member Checking

I used two methods of checking data with others - peer checking and member checking. My peer was a colleague at the university where I work who was heavily involved in other qualitative research outside the field of educational drama. This worked particularly well because he brought an objective and fresh view to the data and could query comments about my observations and musings which were often insightful and unique. The fact that he had no connection with the discipline of drama was an advantage in many ways because he was able to read the analysis as a detached 'other', objectively open to the stories I was trying to relate from the field. Lincoln and Guba (1985) describe the advantages of using peer checking in research:

The process (of peer debriefing) helps keep the inquirer 'honest'; exposing him or her to searching questions by an experience protagonist doing his or her best to play the devil's advocate. (p.308)

Sal and the boys formed my member-checking group. Sal became an important co-researcher in terms of the field logs she would receive on a weekly basis. I would pose questions to her in the logs about issues I was not sure of and she would reply by writing notes in the margins of the log. (see Appendix B) These acted as what I termed 'communication letters' between Sal and me and gave me significant and vital insight into the accuracy of my observations. The boys were surprising in their responses to my observations and interpretations. Intelligent and honest, they would put me straight quickly about anything I had misinterpreted without any sense of self-confidence or doubt. Their contributions were invaluable in helping weave the stories which would combine to form the final discussion.

Finding a Narrative Voice: Data Reporting

Storytelling is one of my great passions. As a small child, reading and telling stories formed an important part of my development and my pastime. Listening to the stories of others through the wonder of books and eventually telling my own stories through poetry and essay filled my life with colour, dimension and drama. It was no wonder that I pursued the teaching of drama as my life career path. When I first considered selecting a research paradigm for postgraduate study, I was naturally drawn to the descriptive mode of ethnographic case study. As an approach to recording and interpreting data, Erikson (1982) argues that it has rhetorical, analytic and evidentiary functions:

The (story) persuades the reader that things were in the setting as the author claims they were, because the immediate presence captures the reader's attention... the richness of detail in and of itself does not make a (story) ethnographically valid. Rather, it is the combination of richness and interpretive perspective that makes the account valid. Such a valid account is not simply a description, it is an analysis. (in Denzin & Lincoln 2000, p.650)

The opportunity to explore the lives of a research group through the use of narrative devices was exciting and challenging. Weaving stories threaded together with strong descriptive metaphors and poetic devices was my ultimate aim. Description, writes Ross, (1988 in Ely 1991) should transport the reader to the scene of the research, conveying the pervasive qualities of the phenomenon and evoke the nature of the experience. For Ross, the reader must be able to see and hear the experiences of the researcher and the participants.

In past research (Lee, 1997), I remember approaching the 'telling' of the research journey like a playwright does the writing of a playscript. Finding thematic links, identifying sub-text, exploring the roles and intent of the players, I became director, designer, writer and critic of a tale I hoped my audience would respond to. Ely (1997) adds to this metaphor of the narrative as playscript when she argues that the dialogue of the researcher must reveal the complexities of plot, action, characters, motivation and context. The reader, she writes, 'can indeed see the copious stage directions as well as be situated in the textual framework of the research.' (p.123)

I was ever aware of the difficulty of relating my journey to the reader in a way which would honour the voices of Sal and the boys whilst maintaining a credible

scholarly voice of my own. Stake (2000) warns, ' a researcher's knowledge of the case faces hazardous passage from writing to reading and the writer must seek ways of safeguarding the trip. (in Denzin et.al, 2000, p.443) Van Maanen (1988) identifies three distinct styles of ethnographic writing commonly used for relating qualitative narratives; realist, confessional and impressionist.

Realist tales are a direct, matter of fact style of narrative privileging the participants' experiences. Confessional tales focus more closely on the researcher's experiences than on the culture studied whilst impressionist tales are fleeting accounts of moments in the field which are highly personalised and descriptive and combine elements of the realist and confessional modes of writing. (in Ely 1991, p.171) My own love of stories which capture heightened dramatic moments of the players lives punctuated with the authority of the author's voice, drew me to the impressionist mode. As I previously wrote, 'I wanted a narrative style which was descriptive and personalised but maintained professionalism and credibility as a piece of qualitative research.' (Lee, 1997, p.100)

I chose a number of narrative devices which I felt would provide variety and insight for the reader. Snapshots, vignettes and poetry as well as descriptive passages from my field journal were the dominant forms of narrative. The use of poetry was a technique of documenting data I had never used before. In my reading I had come across Laurel Richardson's (1994) discussion on the use of poetry to write up interviews. I felt this interesting method also could be applied to other kinds of data such as field notes and analytic memos. As Richardson points out:

Writing up interviews as poetry honours the speaker's pauses, repetitions, alliterations, narrative strategies and so on. Poetry may actually better represent

the speaker than the practice of quoting snippets of prose. (in Denzin et.al 1994, p.522)

Langer (1953) adds that ‘the poet’s business is to create the appearance of experience, the semblance of events lived and felt and to organise them so they constitute... a completely experienced reality.’ (p.212) Previously (Lee, 1997) I had simply transcribed and analysed interviews word for word and although insightful, it was a task I felt lacked creativity. Therefore, I loved the idea of putting the words of Sal and boys into poetic form and allowing the dialogue to breathe life into the narrative. Whilst I did not use this technique for every interview or field note, it became one of my dominant forms of recording data. On occasion, I also asked Sal and some of the boys to write me poems about their experiences in the drama classroom and this proved to be a popular task with them. (see ‘Heavey’ pg. 149 and ‘The Recipe’ pg. 178)

Constraints and Considerations

This case study was confined to two all male drama classrooms in one Catholic boys’ college in southeast Queensland over a period of two years. The purpose of the research was an intensive descriptive study of these two classrooms with a special emphasis on the role of their female drama teacher. It is acknowledged that the cohort of boys is a small representation of adolescent boys in drama classrooms in this country but the intention was never to conduct a large comparative study of male drama classrooms or drama practice. This is a unique descriptive and interpretative study of Sal and thirty-two adolescent boys; it is their story alone.

The research did not intend to investigate the effects of familial, religious, class or ethnic influences as variables in the classroom experiences of the boys and any references to such issues is minimal or incidental. Whilst it must be acknowledged that the Catholic ethos of the school had an undeniable effect on the objectives of the drama program and the relationships of the boys within the larger school environment, I did not attempt to explore the Catholicity of the College as a major variable in the case study data. To do this would have required a much larger and intensive sociological and religious study of the College, which was beyond the scope and interest of this research.

In respect to time spent in the field, I was unable to attend every drama class the boys experienced on a weekly basis. Given the changing demands of the drama program and the boys' development at different stages of their drama learning, I could not hope to document every aspect of their experiences or be privy to every aspect of their classroom behaviour. I was also aware of the possibility that my presence in the drama classroom may have altered their behaviour at times and I endeavoured to overcome such a constraint with the use of multiple data collection methods.

Whilst the research highlighted some noteworthy observations about masculinity in the drama classroom, in terms of the boys' changing relationships over their five year drama experiences in drama, it did not have the scope to explore this issue more comprehensively. The research time frame was limited in what it could reveal about the boys' possible changing perceptions about their own masculinity and that of their peers.

A final word on researcher bias. I was a female researcher in an all-male drama classroom. Besides Sal's contributions, the world in which I worked for two years was very much male dominated. In view of this, I needed to constantly assess my perceptions of this male world and validate time and time again that what I interpreted as reality in the classroom was in fact 'real'. To the best of my knowledge I managed to do this successfully through the techniques of peer and member checking but as every qualitative researcher comes to learn, maintaining objectivity in the field is an ongoing major consideration.

The following four chapters mark the beginning of the narrative journey both for myself as researcher and those who travelled the research road with me. In Chapter Four, Sal's own classroom journey is explored alongside her educational and personal teaching philosophies and how these in turn impact on her everyday practice. Chapters Five and Six are devoted to the two year research period with the two drama classes and privileges the voices of the boys. Chapter Seven is dedicated to the exploration of the researcher, my own journey, and traces some of the difficulties and joys I encountered along the way.

CHAPTER FOUR

LEADING THE WAY WHILE WALKING BACKWARDS

(Adapted from Cecily O'Neill 1995)

I brush the hair from my eyes to see Sal clearly. The light in the classroom is early morning dull and the air is heavy with heat, an oppressive cloud pressing above our heads. The boys, malaised and sluggish, saunter pass me and seemingly slide down the walls to sit and watch, adjusting sweaty shirts, wiping beaded brows. Sal, even in these conditions, is energised and focused. She breezes or should I say 'blows' into the classroom eyeing each boy as she goes, acknowledging me with a warm smile, books flying, a dynamic presence. Clapping her hands she moves the boys into a circle, ready to work. She flicks on all the ceiling fans as she goes and the air swooshes. When the boys' response is slow, she senses trouble and quickly works to defuse the impending 'stop work'. 'Yes, I know it's hot but let's work together here and see if we can do some exciting work. I know you can! Which game could we warm up with?' It is enough to activate the more hardy who in turn act as catalysts for the others and the boys leisurely unite. An exciting diverse learning experience is on offer but Sal has to work hard today to achieve some kind of 'spark' from the group. She is undaunted, shrugs at me once or twice as if resigned to the fact that today's drama will be an ordinary event. Tomorrow, I would hazard a guess, this extra-ordinary teacher will make up the pace. (Field Log, March 1999)

This chapter is devoted to Sal's journey in the research classroom, her personal philosophies of teaching drama in an all boys' classroom, her relationships with the boys she teaches and my observations of her practice throughout the two year period in the field. It incorporates both my own research voice and that of Sal's and draws from the many interviews and discussions we shared during our time together. It begins with an introduction to Sal and her philosophies of teaching drama and moves on to a more focused narrative representation of her work in the classroom.

Introducing Sal

Excitement

Noise

Corridors crowding

Overflowing... a room brimming with the joy of learning!

"Drama" I hear others retort with a sign of relief

Body beat

Chatting and laughter

The room once desolate

Suddenly fills with the rituals that belong to my boys

Pushing, shoving, slapping backs, headlocks

"G'day Miss" "Sue" "Miss" "How are you" greets me as they stumble in

I think they're glad to be here

(Sal 2000, Interview Reflection in poetry, Lines 1-11)

This first verse of a poem written by Sal as a reflection on how she would sum up her role as a drama teacher, documents well the passion and energy which prevail in her classrooms. In the months spent with her in the field, it became clear to me that she considered the boys very much her 'own', a responsibility she took seriously in every aspect of her practice and her planning. The line, "I think they're glad to be here" was validated by the boys' obvious enjoyment in entering the drama classroom and this was something that I witnessed day after day, week after week. As the research progressed, I was to find that the relationship Sal shared with her boys would result in some of the most astounding and powerful classroom drama that I had seen in a long time. As I reflected:

*In this extra ordinary space, a richness of learning prevails,
On stage, ruffled hair players, grey shirts askew, espouse the virtues of Mr. Brecht
And make much ado about Mr Shakespeare whilst still managing the odd punch
Bodies sweat, scripts fly in a flurry of concentration
The practised eyes of 'Miss' watch, deeply focused,
Encouraging, urging, showing, giving,
This is, I muse, how good teaching should be.*

(Analytic Memo 6, July, 1999)

I first met Sal when I was elected to the management committee of the Queensland Association for Drama in Education (QADIE) in the mid 1990s. Her tremendous energy and zest for the promotion and development of educational drama never wavered and it was these attributes which impressed me as we worked together over a three-year term. I remember walking with Sal one misty, cold, but perfect morning in Launceston, Tasmania where we were attending the national drama conference in 1996. In front of us, the icy blueness of the Cataract Gorge was

brehtaking in its stillness. As often happens in times of such beauty and peace, we felt compelled to share some stories about our lives and as I listened to Sal, I knew that one day I would like to document her practice and see some of her passion for teaching played out on the classroom stage. It was sheer good fortune that Sal should be teaching in an all boys' college at a time when I had become interested in gender, adolescent boys and the drama classroom. When I approached her about researching in her classroom, she was enthusiastic and supportive and it was an easy and uncomplicated transition from the initial research proposal to the reality of working in the classroom.

A Grounded Philosophy

My philosophy has changed since I had first started teaching because at the time I believed it should be about content. I think that comes out of becoming a teacher at my age... I remember my prac experiences with my supervising teacher - hearing the kids have to know this, the kids have to know that. My first HOD (Head of Department) said the kids have to know 'things' and I remember questioning the whole idea about content versus process and I said, couldn't the kids look that up in a book and that caused the first friction I ever had... and I wanted to take a risk and think about why do the kids have to know this. (Sal, Interview 1, 2000, Lines 2-8)

In order to understand Sal's educational philosophy, I asked her to list what she considered to be the essence of her approach to her classroom practice. The following were her responses:

- I love what I do.
- I am passionate about what I teach.
- I am approachable when the boys need help.
- I will contact their parents and share the good and the bad.
- I expect my boys to take risks.
- I believe there's nothing they can't attempt.
- Nothing is too hard.
- I really do care about them.
- The boys will be challenged with every new task.
- Life is not a dress rehearsal - this is it!
- Every lesson is a learning experience.
- The boys must feel comfortable in the drama space.
- The boys must feel comfortable with each other.
- The boys must feel comfortable with me as facilitator of their learning. (2000)

Sal's approach to the planning and implementation of her drama program is significantly grounded in both the philosophical and ideological tenets of the school's Augustinian background and McLean's (1996) aesthetic framework. The program is cleverly woven around Augustinian values such as partnership and community whilst still attending to the adolescent interests and needs of the boys. Unit titles such as 'Let's Lift Out Game' [see Appendix B] (a double reference to the boys' sporting pursuits and Thomas, an Augustinian priest who was a true model for raising consciousness about the poor), 'What's the Real State of the Pitch?' (a sporting metaphor to examine the elements of drama) and "Let's Applaud All Aussies As They Run On The Field', (a sporting metaphor for Australian drama study) aim to engage the students' interest by cleverly contextualising and positioning the

drama work in the everyday lives of the boys. As Sal explains in her 'Rationale' for the unit, "What's the Real State of the Pitch?":

As the boys study this unit immediately after the cricket season, the analogy of the preparation of the cricket pitch in determining the state of play, is very relevant for them. The boys can then transfer this metaphor to enhance their understanding of how the preparation for the actor towards a meaningful, truthful, realistic performance is realised. (Lawson, 1999, p.2)

When I interviewed Sal about her approach to designing drama programs in the school, she was clear about the overriding influences affecting her decision-making:

I am a much better teacher by looking at the underpinning mission statements of the school... I was excited to be able to hang my hat on something when writing the senior program, this school gave the drama program shape, the sense of community connects the boys to the drama... I have (also) allowed Judith McLean's work to underpin my planning and I often go back and read the work again. (Interview 4, 2000, Lines 61-63 & 69)

Vitally important to her is meticulous and contextualised planning which addresses the needs of every student in every changing year group. During my two-year research period with Sal, I was given every document the boys received, every script that they wrote and every drama unit they worked with. These professional and detailed documents seemed significant in Sal's planning to help ensure the boys viewed drama as an integral artistic discipline in the school and one which demanded both their commitment and combined energies throughout their senior years. As Sal told me:

Good planning (is vital) - I document everything - changing assessment year by year to provide success for different classes who struggle... activities in the classroom you know will reach them, not things you have learnt somewhere which won't work for them... challenge is the key. (Interview 2, 2000, Lines 44-46)

I was impressed by her balance of pragmatism and theoretical based learning in the drama classroom. The boys were clearly informed about the form and style of the drama they were working with and did not seem overburdened by too much 'blackboard talk.' Sal delivered information needed by speaking directly to the boys at the beginning of a new unit using a whiteboard sparingly to record more difficult elements of the work. It seemed to me that the boys were certainly more engaged by her conversational style of teaching, responding positively with questions and observation and willing to listen to her relaxed egalitarian approach. Sal elaborates:

I set it (the work) up and I talk about the technique with the important teaching points, if I did that with an OHT (over-head transparency) it would not have the same impact, kids learn by doing, the kids remember by doing, there is no doubt about that... a balance of everything is important, risk taking and the ability to try aesthetic experience - if I can't engage them aesthetically, then I am not doing my job. (Interviews 1 & 2, Lines 13-16, 41-42)

For Sal, a comfortable and communal learning environment is the key to success with the boys:

My classroom is full of laughter. I allow the boys to tell me 'the goss' on a Monday morning - what they have done over the weekend, who won at what sports etc.

I involve myself in their sporting lives and they know/see me outside the classroom. This year in the Ritual/Symbol/Movement task, we incorporated rituals that belonged to the College, e.g. Warcrys (sic) and wrote new ones for the College. They will then be taught to the rest of the school for Interhouse and Interschool functions. Blending the spirit of the whole community with the spirit that comes from the drama space has been one of the keys to the success of drama at the College. (Sal, Personal Reflection, February 2000)

From the beginning, I was curious as to how a female teacher might fare in establishing a firm, structured, but also comfortable and liberating learning environment for boys. Whilst the boys' narratives provide the most insightful perspectives about their female teacher, Sal had strong views on this which were vitally important to the way she worked in the drama classroom.

I think females teach well because we are prepared to take more risks with our teaching... the boys in my first year found me very difficult to deal with because I wanted them to meet challenges that they never had before... I think I have a masculine side as well, I am not stereotyped in any way and my age helps, the mother figure, the sister figure, they know that I am interested in them, I participate fully and they see me in a rounded way. They know that I am interested in their sport and I am not just a drama teacher to them... they know I know what I am talking about. (Interview 2, 2000, Lines 48-55)

When Sal and I discussed contemporary educational philosophy that suggests that boys should only be taught by male teachers she responded:

I disagree with that because I think some of the boys have a feminine side - I think I have a masculine side as well, I think my teaching can address the best of both and really make a difference in helping the boys to see beyond their own perspectives. (Sal, Interview 1, 1999, Lines 20-23)

Sal believes that female teachers can be effective role models for boys if, in their planning and teaching approaches, they attend to the boys' own adolescent culture and juxtapose perceived female elements such as empathy and sensitivity with the masculine aspects of the work. It is a case, Sal comments, of being clever with the way it is done:

By tapping into the physicality of boys' culture, such as the sporting metaphor; well it is a bit deceiving but it allows me to work in other ways to branch off into other areas that they would not normally go... (drama) allows them to become less 'boyo' - even though I give them that too in the classroom, it really lets them see that the boys' culture is not the only one... even in style they were prepared to play around with style, like 18th century dance, they made up some wonderful movements. (Interview 2, 2000, Lines 2-4 & 12-14)

Achieving Co-Artistry and Creative Partnerships

One of the aspects of Sal's work which significantly impressed me was her ability to structure learning experiences in the classroom that encouraged the boys to work collaboratively with her and each other as artists. My observations are rich with descriptions of her strong efforts to reveal the creative within each boy, to nurture and develop the artistic spirits of the boys as a drama community and as

individuals. One of my earlier field notes reflects of the importance of the drama teacher as:

The facilitator, the artist, the observer, listening to the students in a fluid and changing reciprocal relationship, allowing them to feel empowered in their decision making with their artistic integrity supported and respected. (Field Log, March 4, 1999, Lines 71-73)

Sal's approach to teaching drama is egalitarian and honest and I believe this worked particularly well with the boys who responded to her ability to 'lay her cards on the table' and work as a team:

She has this morning, deliberately asked the boys to sit in a circle - a useful teaching technique for drama, bonding in a pattern of collaborative participation and inviting strong eye contact and communication from the group. Sal invites them to stop her in the discussion whenever they have questions about the work - this is one of her most valuable teaching traits, her absolute dedication to working co-operatively and artistically with the boys on all levels of making drama. They are never treated as subordinates but rather co-artists exploring and journeying through, in and with the form. (Field Log, August 9, 2000).

and in another instance when the boys had come to an impasse about the direction of the dramatic work:

Sal stops one group working and gives them some strong direction with the words, "What is wrong here with the form?" She urges them to look at the work

they are doing and identify weaknesses in the structure. They start again with new direction and a better focus. Sal affirms the improvement in the work and moves on (Field Log, May 10, 2000, Lines 50-56)

In my interviews with Sal I was interested in her philosophy about allowing the boys so much freedom in contributing to the work that they do in the classroom. She believes emphatically that the basis of any good work in the drama classroom comes down to both her trust in the boys' abilities to succeed and her respect for their adolescent ideas about making drama work. Fundamental to her teaching is the philosophy that if the boys feel 'intimidated, self conscious and shut down by (the teacher)' (Field Log, Feb, 21. 2000) their efforts to make good drama will be seriously hampered.

The kids gain enormous confidence when the work is good and we deconstruct it together. We have talked about producing good work and that there is no reason for failure... we started work in third term and they really rebelled against the task so we sat down and renegotiated the work... we wrote it together... the boys know everything about the work we do, they are informed. I trust them that they can do it and they trust me that I know that they can do it. My classes are very hands on, we just never sit there, we are active. (Interview 2, Lines 23-26, 52-53,70-71)

This approach seemed to work particularly well for those boys considered to be 'problematic and difficult' in other classes. The respect awarded to these boys by Sal even in times of resistance, was I believe, the reason that they improved in all aspects of self-discipline and confidence in the drama classroom. Her continued

insistence on the reciprocal co-artist relationship between her and the boys was the crux for ensuring a harmonious and proactive learning environment in the classroom. It was also crucial in developing what I term a 'community of drama practice.' (adapted from Fitzclarence, Hickey and Matthew's idea of a 'community of practice.' 1998)

It is a co-operative relationship I have seen at work in this classroom so many times, the boys continually invited to contribute on equal terms to the artistic work, all voice honoured. At no time does she impose her ideas on the boys and they respect this by entering into animated discourse about the drama. This is not to suggest that Sal does not tell the boys when she thinks the work lacks quality but rather she takes all ideas on board and then considers each angle.
(Analytic Memo, April 15, 1999)

Part of the reason this appeared to work so well in both research classrooms was the defined mentoring offered by Sal to the boys at every point of their learning, preparation and assessment of drama work.

Mentoring, Modelling and Risk Taking

The influence on Sal of theatre practitioner Viola Spolin of the importance of side coaching and mentoring in theatre work is recognisable in all aspects of her work in the drama classroom. It is the underpinning framework of her practice for allowing the boys to find their own artistic feet whilst still receiving support, encouragement and direction by the teacher. Sal's mantra, 'Support and Respect' is almost a tangible element in the classroom. It is something she says every day to the

boys and something she insists they acknowledge as vital to the communal well-being of the drama classroom. Observing Sal's work over the research period I identified a number of strategies in her approach to establishing a learning environment of understanding and creativity:

- *Energetic encouragement always.*
- *Supportive invitation to 'find' the answers and develop the questions.*
- *Clarity of explanations which always use correct drama terminology.*
- *Constant checking and rechecking for understanding of content and expectations.*
- *Intense focus and refocusing on the questions and the context.*
- *Paraphrasing whenever necessary.*
- *Constant analogising with the boys' real life experiences leading to the 'grounded aesthetic.' A sense of the 'what if' in questions and discussion.*
(Willis 1990)
- *An openness of suggestion, criticism and wonderment from the class.*
- *Step by step descriptions and instructions which acknowledge the boys' intelligence and abilities to make sense of new concepts and challenges.*
- *Clear examples of good practice to allow the boys a springboard into their own grounded aesthetic and dramatic choices.*
- *Clear task setting allowing flexibility and co-artistry at all times.*
- *Positive reinforcement but with this a refusal to accept lazy or thoughtless answers or behaviour.*
- *Pinpointing important keypoints of the learning and extrapolating and reflecting on these often.*

(Field log reflections Feb to Nov 1999 - 2000)

In one of my analytic memos I reflected on the power of strong mentoring and trust from the drama teacher to empower and liberate students:

It is the energy and vision of the drama teacher which is an important catalyst for the students' own commitment and focus. The decision to intervene by Sal as facilitator and decision-maker is essential to the well being of the boys' artistic development - in many cases, they simply cannot make decisions about the direction the drama should take. Her experiences and understanding of the form when shared with the boys enables them to implement the necessary skills and style. (Analytic Memo 6, August 1999, Lines 1-7)

In reflecting on her teaching practice Sal comments:

I never let them "drown". If they have direction through side coaching (Viola Spolin style) they become confident they can "do it"... it is better to coach them through everything when they need it. (Sal's reflections on Field Logs April, 1999)... they are more likely to take risks if they know that if they get into trouble (in the drama process), my side coaching will be there. (Sal's reflections on Field Log, May 17, 2000)

Sal believes that she must be just as prepared to take the same artistic risks she asks the boys to take by offering strong modelling, participating actively in performance if the need arises and being willing to change teaching direction if the work proves to be ineffective for the boys. As she explained:

I look at my role like a traffic cop at the fork of the road and giving the kids the opportunity of making good drama and a lot of it is modelling as well... I am not

frightened of modelling for them, especially in a process drama when the performer comes out of me. I feel incredibly confident about what I am doing. I take risks every year by changing the work, I don't worry about this. The kids know that nothing frightens me in the classroom, nothing shocks me... they know that my persona tells them this. (Sal, Interview 3, Lines 7-9, 40-44)

The capacity for Sal to be open to the boys' suggestions about the artistic directions of the work and the boys' own general acceptance that at times 'Miss knows best', is founded on trust and mutual respect. She accepts the boys for what they are and has an obvious affection for all of them. I believe that this kind of dynamic reciprocal relationship shared by Sal and the boys is not only fundamental to implementing effective 'boyswork' in the classroom but absolutely crucial to making good drama as well. In another verse of her reflective poem based on my interviews with Sal she wrote:

"Take a risk" they hear me side coach

They do

They know I like them

I'm glad to be in their presence

The work is good

They want to know how good!

Drama is cool!

They are cool!

They make me feel cool too!

(Sal 2000, Interview Reflection in Poetry, Lines 21-29)

One of the most important aspects of the drama work in the two classrooms was the freedom Sal awarded the boys to work independently and creatively without censure. I was surprised to find that even those boys who were problematic in other classes were able to respond positively to Sal's invitations to explore the work without her constant interference.

Sal allows the boys to work independently without any interference. She believes in them and trusts their instincts. I love this about her teaching approach... she challenges them to think of ways that they might 'move in' to the theatre piece... she tells them she has no answers that these are with them - they must find their way through the models that she has provided for them. (Field Log March 4, 1999, Lines 46-48 & Field Log, February 9, 1999, Lines 36-40)

Even when one of the more difficult students proclaimed that the group ideas 'sucked', Sal was quick to encourage the boys to look more closely at the work for other possibilities and to point out the positive and tenable aspects of the planning that they had done so far. (Field Log Feb 21, 2000, Lines 66-69) When the boys would reach frustration point, she continued to work with them until they found their way. I observed how extremely difficult this could be at times but also how important it was to maintain high levels of encouragement and advocacy for the work. Sal is adamant that the dramatic form should not be compromised by sloppy and lazy work when the boys feel they are having an 'off day'.

She challenges them to come up with other ways the work could be improved but the boys seem perplexed. She offers examples and urges them to 'Look for the dramatic'... Group three are asked to present their piece but punctuate it with a

'Ours is no good'. Sal reproaches, "Don't say that, believe in the work..." she is not happy with the boys' work on stage - there is a lack of focus and it is spoiling the form. She waits until the work is over and then talks with the whole class about what has happened on stage. (Field Log, Feb 18 1999, Lines 36-46, Field Log, Mar 28 2000, Lines 29-32)

What I found particularly inspiring about Sal's work with the boys was her enduring support for those boys who were considered to be 'misfits', and 'undesirables'. In each research group there were one or two boys who some teachers regularly refused to teach or sent for detention almost every lesson of every day. My observations revealed that drama has the potential to give these boys a space to be themselves and to explore their relationships with other boys in an uncomplicated and comfortable environment. As I so often reflected, it is a question of balance from the teacher in allowing the student to be himself whilst still demanding respect for the dramatic work.

Dan has taken off again and begins playing with something he has found at the back of the room. Sal decides that at this point he has enough private space and calls him back to the group. This helps refocus him and although he still does not contribute energetically, he is still listening to the discussion. This private space, for this more difficult of player seems to be fundamental for ensuring that he is able to participate in the more public work space without growing tension between him and the other boys. (Field Log, May 11, 1999, Lines 51-56)

From observing Sal, I believe that this balance is maintained by her clear acknowledgment of the vital need to challenge as well as nurture those boys who present opposition to her discipline and enthusiasm. In one situation when

'Orlando' was proving obstructive with his group in rehearsal, instead of becoming angry, Sal began to cajole him and encourage his contribution. Her philosophy on dealing with boys of this kind is that they need to know that they are valued by someone and that is worth losing some teaching time to make sure they know that they part of the drama community.

'Come on, you can do this', she urges. Whilst Sal is supportive, she asks him about his dramatic decisions forcing him into some introspective reflection about the drama. He is unwittingly drawn into the dramatic contract as he is invited to explain his choices and his ideas in an encouraging and supportive space. I can practically see him stand taller and more confidently as his contribution is valued by the group. (Field Log, June 7, 2000, Lines 43-47)

Sal clearly acknowledges the capacity and tendency for boys to engage in risk-taking activities and cleverly capitalises on this by offering them constant and changing challenge in the drama work they do. As I believe that risk-taking is an implicit part of creativity and imagination, the boys' willingness to try new things was particularly advantageous for learning in the drama classroom. Sal believes that encouraging high levels of artistic risk-taking flows naturally on to the development of the boys' self esteem and confidence for later life. She reflects on this point:

A kid said to me the other day, 'you told me last year that if I was to take drama, I would have to take some risks, so what is my drama like now?' He was prepared to take a risk about talking about his progress. That is fantastic. (Sal, Interview 2, 2000, Lines 43-44)

Her approach to immersing the boys in situations which demand dramatic risk taking is subtle but effective:

I cajole, never yell or demand and I try to say things like 'come on, we can do this'. You need to draw on their strengths such as the sports they do... boys really like to present drama that is in your face and the work they did with me on masks and slow ritualistic movement was against everything they normally do... it was wonderful. (Sal, Interview 2, 2000, Lines 34-36 & Interview 1, 2000, Lines 11-14)

and:

I believe that drama is an exciting forum for learning. I invite the boys to join me on their journey. Watching them take risks, succeed and have breakthroughs are things that we celebrate as a whole group. Encouraging each class/group to work together as an ensemble and share and celebrate in each other's success is one of them. There is very little friction in the classes - healthy rivalry perhaps but never animosity. (Sal, Personal Reflection, February 2000)

Contextualising the Experience

In Sal's teaching practice she is significantly influenced by McLean's (1996) work on implementing an aesthetic framework in the drama classroom. McLean's argument that for drama to be a transformative and meaningful experience for students, it must be contextualised within their everyday lived experiences, is particularly important to Sal in her planning. The threefold idea that contextualisation must be connected to the student, the community in which the

student lives and the program of study is undoubtedly realised in the school's 'Senior' drama program with its interconnected themes of community, Augustinian values and what Sal calls 'boyo' interests. When I asked Sal about whether the community of the school promoted a healthy supportive environment for boys she replied:

We encourage the boys to touch each other and show support for each other... it is a specific area of the values which underpin the mission of the school, we have bullying like any other school but there is far more overall mateship in this school and the boys are devoted to each other overall. I have kids ring me up and ask me for coffee who I have taught three years ago. (Sal, Interview 2, 2000, Lines 24-30)

In planning each drama unit, Sal structures the work to connect with the Christian philosophy of the school and the values of the boys' adolescent culture. 'Let's Lift Our Game' is one unit for Year 12 drama students which focuses on Brechtian socially critical theatre and social justice. It also connects with the sporting metaphor of improving the game play for a better outcome and this is clearly understood by the boys. This unit actively challenges the boys to critically identify values and social problems in their own lives and then connect them with the ideologies of Brecht's theatre. The rationale of the unit clearly explains to the boys the throughline of the work and the reason why it has been included in their study. It reads:

Through an exploration of looking at drama/theatre in a political sense, the boys will have an opportunity to examine their own values and the society in

which they live. The issues that confront them in the world in which they live will be the focus of the unit. The aim of the unit is to empower the boys with a new critical awareness allowing them to explore issues which affect them and others and make a statement about such issues. Like Thomas of (College name omitted), the boys will look at those who are oppressed in their world. (Sal, 1998, Senior Drama Program, 'Let's Lift Our Game' p.1)

The other units in the Senior program also illustrate the strong contextualisation between school, learning, and the boys' lives:

- 'Packing down in drama' (links between sport and the elements of drama).
 - 'What's the real state of the pitch?' (sport and the theatre style of realism).
 - 'What's our personal heritage?' 'Let's open our own open book and heart' (culture, ritual, symbol and Australian theatre).
 - 'Let's applaud all aussies as they run on the field' (sport and Australian theatre).
 - 'The advice of our founder is to live, share and help each other in our community.' (community theatre and scriptwriting)
 - 'Finding our male voice' (an exploration of the boys' masculinities and links to drama/theatre in an extended study).
 - 'Recollections' (the culmination of their years in drama in a final performance)
- (Sal, 1997, Senior Drama Program)

Sal's teaching approaches to grounding the work in the lives of the boys extend from simple theatre games which 'set the scene', to shared stories, photographs, music and poetry. As an early analytic memo reflects:

Her (Sal's) use of small, carefully planned activities and games is one of Sal's trumpcards in helping boys see the big picture and they work effectively for those boys who are slower to grasp concepts. The boys have been invited to think of stories from their own lives which could be dramatised - a sharing of these stories precedes any dramatic action. (Analytic Memo 8, 1999, Lines 8-12)

I was impressed by the use of drama games to contextualise and link more complex theatrical elements to those of seemingly simple game frameworks. This was significantly beneficial in helping the boys to understand how elements such as tension, focus and space could be manipulated by the players to enhance performances in the drama space:

The interesting thing here is that the group cannot help becoming involved as the game itself is fun and enjoyable as well as instructional about the element 'focus' in the drama to follow. Sal continually intervenes with the 'what if' question pertaining to the action and this helps drive the boys forward. What do the boys notice happens to the focus when the activity changes from one way to another? Her constant links back to the drama, from game to drama, drama to game, makes this clearer and clearer for the boys and you can see them starting to make connections. Their playfulness is also engaged at a level which encourages uninhibited enjoyment. (Field Log, February 21, 2000, Lines 36-42)

In another instance, drama work which was proving a complex task for some of the boys was made relevant and easier by the analogy of one boy:

The play 'Clark in Sarajevo' a practice in Brechtian style was a challenging and provocative piece of work which the boys have needed to think deeply about. One

of the boys offers a suggestion that part of the theatre space where the play was staged reminded him of a Roman coliseum where the Christians were fed to the lions - he explained that we as the audience were invited to 'look' upon the war zone as outside parties. A recent movie 'Gladiator' had evoked this response and it became evident after this that the boys were able to then contextualise the setting and style of the play that they had just seen. (Field Log, Aug 9, 2000, Lines 28-35)

The strength of the work in Sal's classroom comes from allowing the boys to find dramatic stories from their own lives and then adapt them to the classroom. I was heartened to see the way each boy's own experience of masculinity was embraced by Sal as a vital contribution to the classroom drama as a whole. Respect, trust, honesty and acceptance appeared to be the key elements in ensuring the drama classroom community remained collegial and supportive.

Sal begins the unit by sharing stories of her own experiences in community work in her younger days and I notice that the boys are really interested in her anecdotes. When Sal begins to talk about her 'wilder' days as a young woman in community activities, it reels in Steve. She explains to the boys that her story, like many stories we all have to share provides the basis of script writing... The constant contextualisation of her own life and those of the boys in the dramatic work they do, ensures the experience is meaningful and effective for the whole class. (Field Log, July 13, 1999, Lines 10-20)

On the importance of honesty, Sal elaborates:

I tell the kids what happens with their work at moderation panels, they are informed... the kids trust me and I think that they would be upset if I did not tell them when things weren't right with me or the learning... the culture of the school helps... they know they can trust me always. (Sal, Interview 2, 2000, Lines 55-58 & 66)

Boundaries, Signposts and Expectations

The line between providing a comfortable and liberated learning space whilst maintaining appropriate degrees of discipline and behavioural expectations is a fragile one. For these boys with their high levels of energy and physicality, it took a talented teacher to strike a harmonious balance. As Sal told me in an early interview, teaching works best when the kids, trust you, it doesn't work if you are too authoritarian but they need to know where the limits are and then they will work well for you. (Sal, Interview 2, 2000, Lines 18-20). In my early days in the field, I often found myself questioning how Sal could maintain a relaxed and amiable disposition whilst the boys engaged in noisy, at times, seemingly unfocused activity. I was to learn that allowing the boys to have moments of 'academic abandonment' where they are free to engage in boisterous and at times, rough house behaviour, was indeed the key to ensuring the drama work to follow was of a good quality. Sal reflects:

There is only so much you can do to 'hold' them and if I am not flexible and don't allow them to have their 'moments' of physical play, then I feel the REAL learning

will never occur. If they realise that 'focus' time is the majority of the time in the drama space and that they are allowed to have 'play' time, then I think there is a respect that we have for each other. I understand their needs and they understand what has to happen in the drama space so learning happens! It all come back to my theory of 'respect and support' - a two way stretch. (Sal's reflections on Field Log, Aug 9, 2000)

and as I noted,

It is a hard task for Sal to keep them on track but I know that if she can get them through the early 'messy' stage, she will have their attention for the rest of the day - it is necessary with these boys to allow them the freedom of exploring their physical boundaries and interpersonal relationships first before they are able to launch into what Sal calls 'real work' (Field Log, May 1, 1999. Lines 34-40).

On pressing Sal further about her methods of encouraging boys to commit to the work, she admitted that at times she needs to remind herself that her own pursuit of dramatic excellence can bias her perceptions of the boys' efforts:

I try really hard not to appear stressed about anything as I am conscious that this could impinge on the boys' performances. I have to come to grips with times when the boys' energy is at a low ebb and they seem unfocused. It does not necessarily mean that they are not ready - at times this is my perception which may not be the correct reading of the situation. (Sal's reflections on Field Log, April 4, 1999)

The dynamic relationship shared by Sal and the boys was multi-faceted. At times, the mother/son dichotomy seemed the dominant mode for the way the boys looked to Sal for guidance and affirmation. From my observations, this seemed to be the most enduring and important relationship at work in the classroom. I believe that Sal's age, attitudes and personal presence, encouraged and perpetuated this particular 'role' and I felt the boys needed to know that they could turn to her in times of crisis or need. At other times, Sal's roles moved along a changing spectrum that ranged from the more 'hard nosed teacher' to 'director', 'actor', 'confidante' and 'one of the blokes.' In my view, the changing climate of the drama classroom allowed such roles to merge in a way I knew was not always possible in other subject areas. And whilst on the whole they proved to be advantageous in allowing the boys a valuable personal and collective space for learning, there were times when Sal needed to reset boundaries and restate expectations.

Sal is not pleased. She tells the boys that she is not their mother and anyone without their drama journal should now take the responsibility of making sure the entry goes into the right place. I think sometimes the boys see Sal as their mother; certainly they have told me this in interviews. Whilst she allows this relationship to exist, when it interferes with the boys' ability to move forward in their dramatic learning, she is quick to remind them that even their mothers expect them to take responsibility for their work themselves. They watch mindfully knowing a line has been crossed here. (Field Log, June 7, 2000, Lines 53-60)

As I continued to observe Sal's relationship with the boys it became clear that the various roles she adopted were part of a complex sociological framework of teaching and learning. At times, the boys wanted her to be just as much as the 'mother' figure as they did the 'one of the blokes' but they also needed and responded extremely well to her as the 'voice of authority.'

Her obvious annoyance and stern words are enough to signal to the boys that she now expects them to do some work. Her use of a masculine form of discipline, both in the words she uses and the tone of her voice works like magic with these boys and they immediately respond. She becomes the director asking the boys to take the work seriously. She barks out orders now, she is in the director mode and the boys realise that at this moment, she is the director and not just the facilitator of the drama. (Field Log, May 1, 1999, Lines 27-30)

In terms of communicating her feelings about unfocused and disruptive behaviour, Sal predominately managed to do this with patience and calm - to do so in any other way for Sal means a loss of control and community in the classroom. *I always try not to get angry with the boys. Just try to be honest and say things like, "I'm sick of you today" or "Your learning is being impeded by your attitude" or "I'm seriously unhappy with your behaviour today." This works better and allows the drama to happen. (Sal's reflections of Field Log, June 9, 2000)*

In an early letter to her students about her classroom expectations Sal wrote:

The freedom I allow students to enjoy in my classes is a direct result of the way that I believe drama should be taught. I do this to enable risks to be taken in a fairly informal environment, so that everybody feels comfortable and ready to take on the rigours of this art form. That is the reason that I do adhere to the strict classroom policy of sending students out with yellow slips for write-outs and threaten you with Saturday detentions. (Sal, Letter to Senior Drama Students, 2000)

Whilst it seemed that Sal effortlessly managed the boys' behaviour, I was curious whether she had a definable approach to discipline that guided her in times of trouble in the classroom. In a detailed reflection she wrote for me about her teaching philosophy, she outlined the following discipline methods she found most successful with boys:

The boys know that I am consistent and fair. They know instinctively what's right and what's wrong, what is tolerated and what is not. All I have to say is 'you are this far from the edge' and they know to stop doing what they are doing. Most of the time, I refuse to stop a lesson. It has to be bad for me to stop the lesson and address the boy. Instead, I do the following -

- *I click my fingers*
- *Use non-verbal reactions*
- *Walk up to a boy and invade their space*
- *Tap a boy on the shoulder*
- *Stare at the boy*
- *Kick his foot*
- *Wave my arm in the air* (Sal, Reflection, 2000)

As noted, field notes and analytic memos reflected my changing perceptions about the emerging tensions that existed between Sal as the mother figure and Sal as the disciplinarian. At times, there was also a danger that the dramatic work would be compromised by the 'devil may care' attitudes of the boys at specific times of the school year. It became clear that at times Sal was willing to sacrifice her closer relationship with the boys to ensure the drama work done in the classroom was

treated with commitment and respect. Over time, I was to find that the boys quickly recovered from any dressing down from Sal and the relationship between them was restored anew. It seemed to me that the ability to move on positively, unhampered by moments of conflict and disquiet, was one of the notable strengths of these all boy classrooms.

Jake gives her backchat and Sal uncharacteristically tells him to get out of the classroom. He is stuttering and stammering that he did not do anything to warrant this but Sal demands he leave without another word. As he leaves, the boys go completely quiet, subdued and wary. It is rare that Sal takes such an action but when she does the boys know she means business and the boundaries are redefined for their behaviour in the drama classroom... the atmosphere does not seem to be affected too much by what has happened and the boys seem to understand and accept that Sal is angry because they have pushed the limits. (Field Log, November 6, 2000, Lines 9-18)

During one rehearsal when several of the boys were disruptive and unfocused, Sal handled the situation by halting the action altogether:

'Off the stage' commands Sal. She is not prepared to let this kind of drama continue. The boys are given a necessary time out. She talks to the whole class about the problems here today with the work. She reinforces the class mantra of 'support and respect' and tells the boys that today their work for each other and the dramatic work is sadly lacking. Whilst she is clearly unhappy, her spirit is not broken. (Field Log, Mar 14, 2000, Lines 47-51)

And whilst Sal strives to discipline the boys with calm and control at times, it seemed to work more effectively when she adopted a more masculine and assertive mode of communication:

'OK we really need to focus!' barks Sal to the boys who are in conversation with each other about their hair and other personal bits of information. 'Turn off that bloody music' she yells as the pounding and unrelenting dull boom of the music comes from the other side of the room... could we PLEASE not have that oompah?... Petri continues to play the musical instrument and finally in a state of utter frustration, Sal gives him a swift smack on the arm imploring him to stop. She is literally hissing with anger at this stage and the boys stop and watch her knowing that the line has once more been crossed. (Field Log, May 1, 1999, Lines 9-25)

The latter observation provides an interesting contrast to Sal's usually more 'controlled' demeanour and suggests that at times, these boys needed a more assertive, masculine style of discipline. It also suggests, that in order to restore balance and order to these drama classrooms, unconditional positive reinforcement and an empathetic approach needed to be replaced with teacher communication that was hard hitting and non-negotiable. Certainly in this instance, Sal's outburst worked to bring the boys into line but it was unclear as to whether any quality drama followed in the wake of her wrath.

A Road Less Travelled

I have always believed that those who teach drama are part of a special and unique kind of fraternity different to other teaching communities. They possess what Palmer (1998) calls a 'connectedness' with themselves, their students and the world around them. In their pursuit of aesthetic excellence in the classroom, good drama teachers are ambitious, creative, visionary, relentless and inspirational. Sal is one of the finest drama practitioners I have observed in my work. Her capacity to make drama an exciting and transformative experience for the boys has everything to do with the way they bound into the drama studio with careless abandon. It has everything to do with their capacity to take risks in the classroom and their courage to explore other personae besides their own familiar and safe identity. Her story as represented in this chapter is part of a multi-textured tapestry which typifies her teaching approach, attitudes and values associated with sound drama practice. It is not of course, the whole story. The boys themselves form the largest part of this narrative, enriching and extending it with their stories and their experiences and it is they who ultimately validate my observations of what happened in the drama classroom over the research period. With these points in mind, it is to these most important players that discussion now turns.

HEAVEY!

Heavey!

Oi! Oi! Oi!

Heavey!

Oi! Oi! Oi!

See us run out to the sunset, in our shirts full of green
Out for all that we can get, if you know what I mean
Red and blue to the left of us and yellow to the right
W're public enemy number one, don't you pick no fight

Cause we're

Heavey!

We're dynamic!

Heavey!

We'll win the fight!

Heavey!

We're the power load!

Heavey!

Watch us explode

(The Cast fall down in random, different positions and directions)

(from 'Recollections' script, 2000)

CHAPTER FIVE

'DRAMA IS...

GOOD SHIT'

(from the poem 'Drama is Good Shit', Senior Drama Students, October 2000)

A release

Expressing our feelings

Risk taking

Bonding with mates

Learning to be creative

Meeting and Greeting

Sal

Hey Miss

G'Day Love

'Morning'

And warm ups

The Mars Bar game, creates tension

The sock, it's just gotta happen

Drama's not drama without the sock

Drama is...

Filling Sal in on the weekend news

Who, What, Where, How?

What's her name?

The glorification of the weekend sport

The non-stop pay outs

Drama is...

Trying to understand Mr. Brecht

Learning to be REAL like old Stanislavski

Get REAL

Drama is...

A home away from home

Feeling safe

Feeling comfortable

Feeling at ease amongst our peers

Wanting to be our best

Drama is...

Keeping Sal calm when assessment comes round

A polarity of opposites, hard but fun

Drama is, 'Jesus Sal'

Good quotes from good texts

Good years

Good times

Good friends

GOOD SHIT!

The former prose, written by Sal's graduating senior drama students, suitably opens this important chapter on the experiences of all the boys in the drama classroom. It is undoubtedly one of my favourite pieces of data, full of candour, humour and truth. It is a joyous piece, a testimony to the empowering and nurturing effect educational drama and an effective practitioner can have on adolescent boys. It resonates with feeling, intimacy, confidence, friendship and affection, not only for

their teacher Sal but indeed between the boys themselves. It formed part of a scripted performance in what is known in the Queensland drama syllabus as the 'Extended Study', a unit of work for senior students which attempts to fuse all they have learned in the drama classroom from the junior through to the senior school. It invites students to be creative, innovative and artistically courageous and offers a significant chance for them to experiment with dramatic forms from a wide range of genres and approaches.

Whilst my interviews and discussions with the boys provided rich insight into how they felt about their teacher and their time in the drama classroom, it was this piece of work which ultimately revealed to me the intense emotions, empathy, intimacy and introspection that these boys experienced. It was a powerful summary in the boys' own words of why drama was so important to them and how their teacher Sal helped to make it so. It was an uncensored and I think, brave and moving attempt to embrace and articulate all that drama meant to them at an important endpoint in their schooling.

This chapter seeks to transform all that I learnt from the boys into a comprehensive narrative which respectfully honours their voices and portrays as authentically as possible their experiences in the drama classroom, their thoughts about themselves, Sal, and drama as a learning medium. For clarity, data collected has been analysed in two sections. The first, the focus of this specific chapter, explores the interviews, discussions and any written data (such as questionnaires) the boys provided for me. The second, the next chapter 'Understanding Mr Brecht' will look more closely at the field notes and observations which document the boys' interpersonal relationships, classroom behaviour, communication and drama

practice. Discussion in both chapters relates directly to the research questions posed in Chapter One.

Good Times, Good Friends, Good Shit.

One of the most fundamental questions in my research plan was what exactly motivates adolescent boys to select drama as a school subject? Why indeed do they sometimes abandon other subjects often perceived as being more ‘academic’ for one which has traditionally been viewed as a ‘girly’ subject or a ‘soft option’? At the research school drama numbers are extremely respectable both at the junior and the senior levels. Sal always has double figure populations in her drama classes and boys told me that word of mouth about the benefits of doing drama with Sal was largely responsible for the healthy numbers of boys wanting to do the subject. Far from being considered a subject only for the girls, drama under the capable authority of Sal has a solid reputation for being an enjoyable, challenging and unique experience. Put more simply, at this school, boys want to do drama.

In the interviews and questionnaires, I pursued my interest in what makes drama so attractive to these adolescent boys. The same themes emerged time and time again. For the majority of them drama represents:

- Fun
- A place to bond with your ‘mates’
- A challenging and interesting subject
- Confidence building
- A safe space to be yourself
- A relaxed liberating environment

As the boys' own voices explain:

It is fun. Drama is completely different to every other subject. The fun we have is far more than I have ever had in maths... Drama has different challenges that can be met with teamwork and personal effort in a comfortable and enthusiastic learning environment... it makes you concentrate and absorb instead of thinking just two-dimensionally... it lets your body and your imagination run riot in a relaxed, intimate and fun place with no wooden tables... I can offer my own views... it is the one period of the day where I can act all silly and just be myself, I can express myself through the role plays and performances... I can expel pent up energy and frustration and work through emotions I normally can't.
(Questionnaires Group 1&2, Jan-Aug 1999, Jan-October 2000)

Matt, one of the natural drama leaders in the group of 1999 explained it to me in this way:

Drama provides a stark contrast to my other subjects which are based primarily on maths and science. Drama provides a great release from the highly methodical and rationality of my other subjects, instead allowing me to be more instinctive and creative. In that sense, drama is rather personal to me as a subject - in order to do well and get anything out of it, you have to put a lot of energy into it. It is almost a sacred place where you can let out whatever it is you are feeling and model it into something creative and useful. I also just get a huge buzz out of performing. (Matt, Questionnaire 1, 1999)

In my interviews with the boys, there was a general consensus across both groups that drama was definitely one of the most enjoyable subjects they could have chosen. The subject itself was highly popular for its free and empowering nature but it also became obvious that the teacher had much to do with the boys' choices. Ab told me that *drama is the only good arts thing we have at this school* and also he chose drama because Sal was teaching it. Pierre explained further, *Yeah, the teacher... it's something to look forward to, like I go to maths and I think, oh that's boring but you go to drama and you think, yeah, good whilst Austin added, Mrs S is just a really fine teacher. Ab was strong in his conviction that You can really let loose, yeah, pretend to be someone else in the performing tasks, it gets you away from the hustle and bustle of school and it doesn't matter what you say or do, it's OK. (Interview 2, 2000, from Lines 1-28)* Paul insisted it gave him a rare opportunity to *think and focus about things when you are just cruising along, you can think more carefully about life and stuff.* Dan explained that for him, drama really expanded his overall general knowledge and awareness about wider world issues. *It gives me a good background knowledge to adapt to other things. For example, I look at some film and really think about political issues we might have done in drama. (Interview 2, 1999, from Lines 5-12)*

In another wonderful candid statement, part of a script for a unit known as 'Recollections', Lewis mused about the importance of drama in his life in the following way:

Abh, becoming a good drama student. It was a meaningful part of my school day in fact. Leaving the everyday stress and rigidity of schooling life and walking into a haven for comfort where I can be myself, take risks and explore the various

elements and conventions that belong to a good drama. And I get to take my shoes off, slap on a pair of Santa slippers and kick back... (Lewis, 'Recollections' October 2000)

Dan, who had been one of Sal's greatest challenges in terms of his negative attitude and behaviour and who constantly tried to sabotage quality moments, finished his senior drama years with this uplifting comment:

When I finally leave school and have no more periods to attend, thank God for that, but I will miss my drama teacher and my peers for the laughs, trials and tribulations. (Dan, 'Recollections' October 2000)

Orlando, also a player who problematically struggled through to the final drama year, remarked that *drama has given me the funniest, most memorable times in my schooling life*. For Orlando, drama had been the only subject where he was not asked to leave class at least once a day. Sal had never given up on him and his reflection is testimony to the healing power that exists when someone believes in what you can do. Matt, in a final reflection on all that drama meant to him touched me deeply with his sensitive comment that *the memories of fun and joy from my senior life have been a result from the drama room and I will never forget it*. (Orlando and Matt, 'Recollections' October 2000)

It seemed to me that for these three boys alone drama had been in some way, life-changing for them. It became clear that the underlying value of drama in the boys' lives was essentially linked to friendship and enjoyment as well as an improvement in confidence, self esteem and self discipline. Although they did

acknowledge they learnt about the art form itself and enjoyed going to the theatre, it was more the personal by-products which drama provided that made the experiences in the classroom so valuable. The questionnaires provided a further insightful array of benefits that the boys felt they gained from participating in drama:

It certainly helps me de-stress at the moment and really helps stretch my mind... it gives young people confidence and the ability to get up and say a joke and make people laugh or just simply entertain people... it is a refreshing subject that makes me want to continue school... it has given me greater self esteem and social skills... we can put our differences aside and feel comfortable about giving opinions. It helps you grow not just socially, but it also helps you be more analytical about things. (Questionnaires Group 1&2, Jan-Aug 1999, Jan-October 2000)

I was particularly interested in whether the value of doing drama at this school might be linked to the fact that it was an all-boys' college. I was curious whether the absence of girls affected the way the boys' perceived their classroom experiences and also if the overall ethos of the school affected their perceptions. It became evident to me that many of the documented problems associated with adolescent boys were seemingly lessened and improved by the supportive safe environment that Sal's drama classroom provided. When I asked the boys about how they felt about having no girls in the classroom, there was a general agreement that on the whole it was easier to work with 'mates' than in front of girls but it would also be advantageous to occasionally co-work and perform with girls on a dramatic piece of work. For some, it made no difference at all.

My real concern would be the extent to which it would affect us. Guys might feel less likely to 'perform' and function as freely as they would normally in an all boys' class. It doesn't bother me in the slightest. I believe drama is a subject to be enjoyed whoever is in the class... I believe working with girls sometimes would give us other points of view... I think no girls makes doing drama a more masculine thing to do and that's good... by being in an all boys' classroom there is no hesitation to air personal opinions, thoughts or feelings without insulting anyone. We are not always trying to impress or compete with girls... with all boys we can relax more rather than constantly thinking about the girls... but working with girls would allow new perspectives and from new perspectives, you can build... it would inhibit my learning, I don't find girls imaginative or spontaneous enough... boys will take more risks and that makes it great... I don't really care, people are people (Questionnaires Group 1&2, Jan-Aug 1999, Jan-October 2000)

According to these boys, drama is a great equalising experience bringing all kinds of boys together in a creative collaborative way. The presence of girls could possibly affect this dynamic. Pierre explained it this way:

Yeah, you know with guys and girls you always have the burden to kinda of put on a face, yeah you know, play it cool. In this class there is no room for ridicule, you can be yourself. We are not afraid to embarrass ourselves, it is very relaxed. There are segregations you know, the sporties, the individuals, the smart guys but not so much in this class because drama helps everyone express themselves, there are the odd men out but other than that, it's OK. (Pierre, Interview 2, 1999, from Lines 58-70)

Paul added,

It's good to be with your mates - when you have someone standing beside you in a performance that really helps, you can call on your friends, it gives you a sense of freedom. (Paul, Interview 2, 1999, Lines 9-12)

However, in a journal entry, Mitch was to tell me that at the beginning of the year before the boys had the chance to work together in Sal's class, there had been a degree of notable division between them all. *The worst moment of the year for me was when we first started together and everyone was uncomfortable and highly segregated into their own groups. Everyone seemed reluctant about being together.* (Mitch, Year 12 Recollection Journal, October 1999) I was to find that there were definite masculine typographies in the classes such as the jocks (the sporting lad), smarts (the intellects) and the individuals (those who stood out by their refusal to conform) and whilst there was some identifiable power conflicts from time to time, it seemed that the strong collaborative nature of drama helped fuse these disparate groups. Certainly Sal's conviction not to favour any one boy over another, treating them all equally with respect, had much to do with the overall social climate of the drama classroom. The divisions of these typographies would sometimes reappear and it was in these times that Sal needed to work hard to bring the boys together again. Whilst she did not always succeed, I believe that on the whole the boys were able to overcome the difficulties and work successfully and productively within their group structures.

In interviews I spoke in more detail about the different groups of boys in the classes and whilst some of the boys believed that 'on the outside' friends tended to drift

back into 'type' groups, drama did bring them altogether relatively successfully for five sessions a week. As Spencer told me, *It brings people together, there are the geeks (the alternatives) and the jocks in this class but doing drama really helps with this.* Dan concurred, *Everyone works together in the classroom but outside we don't necessarily mix but there is an understanding.* (Interview 2, 1999, from Lines 12-16) Nick explained that the way drama can work through process to a final performance piece is one of the reasons it effectively brings about collaborative change. *I think everyone knows that to get to the end product we have to work together and that is good. There's a job to be done.* (Interview 3, 1999, Lines 4-6) One anonymous boy's questionnaire was touching in his belief that *we are very united in this class, a lot of love surrounds the room.* (Questionnaire 1, 2000) Almost all the questionnaires indicated that the boys considered their class groups as united and that despite different 'type' groups they were able to come together as 'mates' and work effectively.

When I pressed the boys further about what they thought about traditional notions of drama being more suited to girls, they were strong in their convictions that at this school, drama was considered an academic and challenging subject where boys could work pro-actively together. Whilst they did acknowledge the occasion barb about doing drama from boys outside of the college, they felt that drama was a subject as important to boys as it was to girls. As one interview illustrates:

TRACEY: Do you ever get labelled for doing drama, for example, that drama is a 'girly' subject?

AB: Not in this school, some of my friends in state schools think that though.

PIERRE: Yeah, other schools but not this one?

TRACEY: Why do you think this is so?

AUSTIN: This school is cool.

PIERRE: Yeah, I agree with you, there was a time when doing drama would have been considered sissy, but I don't know... there's jocks who do it here. It's good for everyone.

AB: You know I did not even know that drama could be considered sissy but some guys in state schools said it is for fags.

TRACEY: I wonder why do you think?

PIERRE: I think that guys who won't do it are afraid of taking risks, of expressing their emotions in front of other guys.

AB: At this school, you don't have to impress anybody.

TRACEY: Why do you think this is so?

AB: Because there are no girls here.

(Interview2, 2, 1999, Lines 40-58)

Paul explained that in this school and more specifically the drama classroom, he felt very little pressure to live up to stereotypical male expectations commenting that there may be pressure 'outside' but not in here. *I think that perhaps if we were 'outside' we would not feel so comfortable about some things.* (Interview 3, 2000, Lines 79-80) Paul was convinced that in mixed schools (both girls and boys) where often girls outnumber boys in drama classes, the experience would be different. *I think a co-ed school would make you feel so insecure, the group would give you some crap cause less guys do it. In this school no one gives a stuff because the Arts are an accepted thing.* (Interview 2, 1999, Lines 20-22)

For most of the boys the emphasis on group work in many of the assessment tasks made the learning experience all the more beneficial. It certainly seemed to tap into

their need for mateship and competitiveness in ways which were positive and affirming. They considered working together gave them a chance to mix with other boys of different dispositions and opinions and allowed a greater sense of artistic variety and satisfaction.

I prefer group work to individual work. It provides a good balance of artistic autonomy and creative scope... working as an ensemble makes it more creative and artistic as people with different ideas are working together.. there is no doubt that group work is easier and more creative in terms of a wider variety of thought, insight and opinion... everyone's talent is rolled into one. It gives a sense of brotherhood - to be able to work coherently and successfully with a common purpose and determination gives me a sense of confidence.
(Questionnaires Group 1&2, Jan-Aug 1999, Jan-October 2000)

In much of the contemporary literature about adolescent boys, notable attention is given to the competitive and often aggressive nature of males. The idea of 'oneupmanship', the need for boys to battle for higher masculine status over each other is an area I was interested in. I noted that Sal addressed the notions of male competition and risk taking by actively encouraging excellence in the boys' own artistic work but I was curious as to whether the boys themselves felt there was an undesirable element of competition in their drama classes. The way I approached this was to talk with them about the idea of leadership and followers inside the artistic process and whether these kinds of relationships manifested in unhealthy competition.

Many of their comments confirmed that in general, drama allows a meshing of ideas without anyone necessarily trying to 'upstage' or 'dominate' others in a negative way. There were also some boys who felt threatened by those who

excelled in drama and who took on natural leadership roles in the forming and rehearsing of dramatic group work. However, I found that on the whole, the majority of the boys enjoyed having someone with vision lead the process and who would effectively act as muse when difficult moments in the drama process would arise. Competition between groups was evident but this was a more positive than destructive element that drove the boys to try and do better each time.

Yes, there are natural born leaders in this class who have help guide the drama or keep it on track. Usually this area is dominated by a small few who in fact are great participants in forming the drama... often when guidance is needed, leaders can give us a 'shove' in the right direction but the negative side is if they don't get their own way they can 'sulk' and this pulls the whole class down... some boys can take the initiative and make decisions about the drama and give it a direction and focus. There are guys who stand out as natural leaders -as far as I am concerned I am happy with the position I take as listener and contributor, I don't want to change that. (Questionnaires Group 1&2, Jan-Aug 1999, Jan-October 2000)

In one interview, Paul explained that he often felt the need to take on a leadership role in order for the drama to get done. *Yeah, well in my group I also take a leadership role because a lot of people aren't really interested in getting it together but I have to do well so I take charge.* When I pressed about whether other boys minded this he replied, *Nah, as long as we get things done, noone cares.* (Interview 3, 2000, Lines 43-47) When I asked all the boys in the interview about tensions inside the groups, they indicated that whilst problems do occur, they were generally sorted quickly by the boys themselves. As part of one interview reveals:

Tracey: Are there times when drama is destroyed by others?

Paul: Oh yeah, some people just aren't serious about the drama and others just don't care.

Tracey: How do you deal with this?

Paul: Guys will generally say something to each other and then it is all over.

John: Yeah, the next day, it's all gone. (Interview 3, 2000, Lines 65-71)

In an earlier interview, Matt explained, *we all generally want to do well, if something goes wrong, we will burn the guy who isn't working until he does, it's about respect for all.* (Interview 4, 1999, Lines 20-22) This particular interview was a full class experience and included Sal. After Matt made this comment, Sal felt a need to respond. For clarity and authenticity, I have included Sal's words here:

There's an underlying trust here not to let the other boy down in a performance. The boys just know this. Our classes are informal and relaxed and the boys are not afraid to speak out. They will tell me something is shit without any worries at all. They just get in there and do it and there is an innate commitment that this school espouses. Matt's comment about them burning the other guy is so natural - they will do it and then move on for the good of all. They are not afraid to tell each other how it is. (Interview 4, 1999, Lines 32-37)

Mothers and Sons

In 1999, as part of their extended study unit, 'Finding Our Male Voice' the first group of boys scripted and performed a public ensemble piece called 'M & S' or 'Mothers and Sons'. Sal set the boys two tasks, one a written task which explored father/son

relationships in contemporary plays and the second a performance focusing on mother/son relationships. I remember how easily the boys entered into the planning and rehearsing of this piece of youth theatre about their relationships with their mothers. When I asked them if they would rather do a performance which focused on fathers rather than mothers, they told me it really did not matter and they were eager to explore the wider dimensions of the complexities that mother/son relationships can have. For some, it meant a notable change in their relationships with their mothers. For others, it was a unique and worthwhile aesthetic experience.

Mothers and Sons was a great success overall. Artistically, it was very good. We kept things simple yet still brought it to the heartwarming climax at the end... what made it so special was that we did it on a topic that was close and central to us... the artistic success of the play owes much to the concept of 'student devised' drama - we are sons talking about our mothers and so can take a far more realistic approach to the topic, the highs and lows of the mother/son relationship was presented in a light, refreshing manner... my mum cried all the way home after the show cause she was so happy, my relationship with her since then has changed. (from responses Questionnaire 2, August 1999)

The power that drama can hold to change the attitudes and behaviour of students was most evident to me in a statement made by Dan about 'M & S'. He told me:

Believe or not M & S was the start of something new for me. The relationship between mum and I has been a difficult one. To me, mum has always been just mum, it was from M & S that I realised mum can also be a good friend to me.

I've also decided to quit smoking cause now I feel I have the confidence to do that. It is wonderful to think that I am capable of such a feat. I blame this sudden motivation on the Mothers and Sons production - a fantastic natural high. (Dan, informal discussion, August 1999)

For another boy, this experience in drama helped affirm that he was a 'normal' boy just as he perceived everyone else to be:

I gained much just bearing the stories of others and their relationships with their mothers. I was reassured in that I wasn't the only one with a strange mother! (Questionnaire 2, August 1999)

As a piece of artistic work, the boys considered the final performances some of their best, most satisfying work. The performances performed in the Metro Theatre in Brisbane city played to a packed house over two nights. Whilst Sal acted as facilitator and director, the performance, an assessment piece, was the responsibility of the boys. I was amazed and deeply moved by what I saw on the opening night. The performance was polished, sensitive and honest and as a piece of drama the form was exemplary. When I asked the boys to write about their responses to the experience, they affirmed my observations that the experience had been significantly worthwhile.

As a group, we worked together to devise our own piece. Whilst grasping the elements of drama, we were able to make our audience laugh and cry - what a triumph!... I felt so proud to be part of this group as we performed it... I think it was successful on several levels - as a tribute to our mothers personally, as an

exploration into what exactly a mother is and as a public performance piece that struck a chord not only with the primary target audience but also the greater community... considering we used the black blocks as our only set and stuck to very simple ideas, I think it's one of the very few times I could congratulate myself and the rest of Year 12 drama... it was outstanding, priceless, I gained so much self-confidence... (from responses to Questionnaire 2, August 1999)

Whilst 'M & S' was a triumph for the boys in the first group, a unit called 'Recollections' became the second group's extraordinary reflective performance on their two year senior drama experience. Once more, its candid and introspective exploration into how the boys felt about drama and their teacher allowed me a clear and insightful understanding of what drama meant to these adolescent boys. In Scene 6 of the script, simply called 'Patrick's Monologue', a heartfelt conversation took place with the audience.

I remember the day that I chose the subject of drama at the Year 10 subject selection night. Ms Sal pulled me aside into her drama station and convinced me that I was a good enough writer to do well. Obviously that's only one part of drama, the performance side of things was my big burdle and wasn't that performance production with the girls a great thing, very nervous! But nevertheless a memorable and enjoyable time. I think it's a pretty well known fact that we (College name withheld) were better than the girls but we still got a few formal invites out of it. I matured in a lot of ways that night, I became a drama student, I became a man. ('Recollections script, October 2000)

and as 'Dan's Monologue' elaborated,

When I first walked into the drama room, I knew that this place would be a comfortable chill-zone. I knew that I would have some of my best experiences in that room and with the teacher that came with it, Ms Sal. Even to this day I look forward to walking through the door cause all my worries will float away for the next fifty minutes. Many weird things happen in this place. ('Recollections script, October 2000)

In 'John's Monologue', Sal's importance to him is beautifully captured:

I remember my first drama lesson. I was in Grade 8 and I recall thinking to myself of Ms Sal, "Gee, this drama teacher is a bit of a wack job". But now knowing her for five years, I know she's a wack job. But in the most loveable way of course. Miss has assisted me a great deal in my drama pursuits. She's allowed me to express my true self up on stage and has been supportive of everything I've done. I've got a lot of fond memories of drama. Yep, I can honestly tell you that school wouldn't be school without drama. And drama wouldn't be drama without Miss. ('Recollections script, October 2000)

A Bit of a 'Wack' Job

John's description of Sal as 'a bit of a wack job' is an affectionate portrayal of his energetic, visionary and sometimes unconventional teacher. Sal is not afraid to take risks and it shows. She will often delve into areas other teachers of more traditional subjects will not and she is not afraid of setting the boys challenges that could daunt someone less confident and capable. Cognisant of current literature which

espouses the advantages of males teaching boys, I was curious about what the boys truthfully thought about being taught by a female. From my observations it seemed the relationship shared by Sal and the boys was strong and proactive and she appeared to be able to maintain a balance between nurturing the boys in a mothering way and metaphorically 'slapping them a good one' when the need arose. The boys tell the story:

I have a good relationship with my teacher, she is like a good friend and like a mother because she really cares about what happens to us... she is willing to help me whenever I need it, she is the best teacher in the school... she is the reason I am doing drama and you can tell that she really loves her students... she allows for a great deal of freedom but can draw the line, it is a great working relationship... she treats each and every one of us like a big happy family and she's a motherly figure. She is passionate and enthusiastic when it comes to teaching and it rubs off on us. (Questionnaires Groups 1 and 2, January-August 1999, January-October 2000)

In both the questionnaires and the interviews, I specifically explored the idea of whether the boys felt they would prefer a male drama teacher. They were united in their responses.

In my experiences, I found female teachers are able to express themselves more easily as well as get the best out of their students... females appear to be more open about their own feelings and emotions which encourages us to do the same whilst staying within our comfort zone... she is extremely in touch with the way today's youth feel about themselves and each other... female teachers are more helpful, concerned, not only with our school studies but are understanding,

interested and friendly about everything...females seem more easy going, artistic and fun, I enjoy drama more with a female. (Questionnaires Group 1&2, Jan-Aug 1999, Jan-October 2000)

Austin explained *Ms Sal is a great teacher, we really respect her. She has great energy.* Pierre added, *she really comes down to our level and is not like other textbook teachers, like it just frustrates me when they speak to the board all the time, she is just like one of us.* Ab concurred with Pierre, *yeah, it is just like she is one of us and she knows what is going on in this school. She is honest. She looks after every kid individually - she is not like at teacher, she is like our mum, you can tell her anything.* (from Interview 2, 2000, Lines 37-39, 92-95. 102-105, 117-118)

Paul loved the easy way that Sal related to them all, *she's not like other teachers, she is easy going and caring, she doesn't get stressed out like the others* whilst John appreciated the way she doesn't *always tell us what to do and gives us lots of encouragement to do things.* In response to whether female teachers are better than males, John commented, *aw male teachers are harder and try to fit in with boys like jocks and you know football and stuff, not everyone here is into sports you know.* Paul was strong in his conviction, *male teachers are too macho and try to impress you.* (from Interview 3, 2000, Lines 53-55, 61-63, 90-92)

Jake enjoyed the close relationship he was able to have with Sal telling me *you can't get close to a male teacher the way you can to a female* because as Dan added, *females know where you are coming from, in some ways it is good and some ways bad, cause Ms S is just like a second mother to me. When she tells us to settle down in class we know we have gone too far with her... I don't like it*

when she is unhappy, it really brings us all down. (from Interview 1, 2000, Lines 28-29, 30-31, 49-50)

In a journal entry, one boy wrote *Ms S has been very honest with us in helping us form our drama and encouraging the maturity of the work. She is a supportive and professionally critical teacher and has allowed us to grow in our talents and enthusiasm for drama whilst still encouraging a freedom and responsibility. She really is concerned that we do the very best in the most comfortable of circumstances.* (Anonymous journal entry, 1999)

Of particular importance to me was the idea of co-artistry in the drama classroom and how this affected the boys' perception of their artistic learning. I knew that this was one of Sal's most important trumpcards, her absolute belief in the idea of a reciprocal artistic relationship between her and the boys and her energetic endeavours to make every experience and decision in the drama classroom shared ones. I felt that the egalitarian open approach to making drama in the classroom was a particularly attractive teaching philosophy for working with boys because of the freedom and variety it offered them. When I spoke to the boys about this, they outlined that effective teaching style was paramount for both effective learning and enjoyment of the subject. They loved the way Sal 'invited them into the drama space' by allowing them input into the decision making, criticism and ultimate planning of many of the drama units and associated productions. Matt provided a particularly mature and comprehensive insight into how many of them felt about this:

I cannot stress how important teaching style in drama is, not just to me but to many others I have spoken to as well. I have had so many friends from other schools say 'If Ms S taught at our school, I'd do drama.' Given the fragile nature

of many students creativity in drama, approaching it from an authoritarian position is going to crush most of the energy and passion the students have for the subject. What works for me is the teacher as co-artist and facilitator, someone on your level that you can spar with and bounce ideas off. I find that I learn best being able to talk through the information with a teacher and in some cases play the devil's advocate just to get them to go into more detail. The artistic integrity of our drama is kept intact by the teacher-student relationship, a relationship that actually enhances our artistic outcomes. (Guided Journal Task 1, 1999)

Questionnaires that explored the importance of the teacher's role as co-artist revealed:

The teacher's input in this way helps us to get closer to our vision, to get as good as it gets... it is essential to ensure a healthy relationship between teacher and student with an effect of greater participation and comfort, greater freedom is produced allowing for a higher level of artistic input... it really puts me at ease and allows everyone to work to their 'better' potential... this method allows the class to work at an artistic level rather than being restricted by the personal criteria of the teacher... it allows us to maintain an element of control with help... the unobstrusive yet helpful role of Ms S ensures our work is truly 'student devised' work and not something she wanted to see. I think that having such a big responsibility for our own work is important. Having a personal relationship with a piece is integral to its success on both artistic and personal levels. It allows you to form and perform the piece better because you are dealing with the piece in light of your own experiences, allowing you to draw upon your own real emotions. (Questionnaires Group 1&2, Jan-Aug 1999, Jan-October 2000)

The attributes the boys listed as most ‘wanted’ in a drama teacher were those I had observed in Sal’s own teaching practice and it seemed to me that it was vitally important for the boys’ well-being that any teacher they had needed to possess at least some of these attributes:

- A sense of humour
- Experience in the teaching area
- A relaxed sense of fun
- Enthusiasm
- Understanding and patience
- The ability to sincerely encourage the student
- A sense of respect
- Able to allow freedom but still be able to discipline
- Organised and well-prepared
- A genuine interest in the students
- Up-to-date
- Positive outlook

On this Stage Our Lines Flow Free

Whilst it became evident to me that the relationship between Sal and the boys was an empowering and positive one, I wanted to know more about how the boys actually approached the ‘making’ of drama and whether or not they actively utilised the theory and experiences they received in Sal’s classroom. It was one thing for them to tell me that the teacher was ‘great’ but another to actually understand how the learning from this important relationship with Sal translated into the dramatic form. The idea of co-artistry lay at the very heart of all I had observed in Sal’s

classroom. It categorically underpinned all her planning and the way each lesson was structured. Everything she did was founded on a throughline which honoured the dramatic form and the integrity of the artist. Part of what Sal asks the boys to do with each performance is to write reflective journal pieces which clearly outline some of the thoughts and methods they work with to form an effective dramatic piece. I found some of these entries enlightening and useful in evaluating the way process-based teaching can lead to powerful dramatic product.

In this first reflection, Patrick shares one of his favourite moments where a dramatic game which explored the elements of drama was both enjoyable and effective for his overall understanding of the foundations of theatre and drama:

The 'Mars Bar' game was my favourite. Within this game, the tension was built on the grounds that no one really knew who had the corresponding number to match the chocolate bar. The mystery of 'not knowing' created the tension between one another as each time the chocolate was passed on another layer of tension would build upon the last. Therefore this shaped the drama to follow and heightened the tension of surprise, secrecy and mystery. This also set up the tension of relationship thus absorbing the jealousy felt by my friends by the fact that I won the chocolate and would not share it with anyone. (Reflective journal entry, 2000)

And in another instance Patrick mused on the events of past days,

Upon reflecting on the last couple of days work, it is evident that by thoughtfully arranging your props, it can 'frame the action' and subsequently make the drama much stronger. It acts as an excellent vehicle for conveying your message

to the audience without using words. I also found that when considering our designs 'place and space' the choice of setting heightens the meaning and the dramatic tension. (Reflective journal entry 2000)

In a reflection on a piece of work based on 'youth party culture' Dan wrote of the vision of his group's performance by examining their philosophical framework:

There is a part of society that condemns many of the modern mindsets that accompany much of society's youth culture in today's higher developed countries. The didactic play that our group will present shall deal with supporting the issues associated with the youth party culture. It shall push for acceptance of the idea of experimentation with drugs, alcohol and sex. This is a view judged harshly in particular by the older generation and those in authority. We want the audience to rethink their lives and so called moral codes. (Reflective journal entry, 1999)

Working with the issue of 'mateship' Jake's group wrote of the process of shaping a meaningful and effective performance for an audience through the use of collaboration and co-operation:

Rather than hammering the opinions of the group members into the skulls of the audience, we have decided instead to present a more 'down the line' interpretation of the issue, presenting both sides and letting the audience form their own opinion. We have decided to use a variety of formats from student devised scenes to poems. The decision making process in the group was not necessarily driven or directed, rather it was based on spontaneous discussion and brain storming. From this we defined the ideas we had and structured them into a form appropriate to present. Scenes were then designated to group

members to work on with rehearsing and workshopping beginning as soon as someone had a concrete version of what they wanted for 'their' scene. (Reflective journal entry, 1999)

Looking back over the experience of 'Mothers and Sons' Naf, despite some reservations about such a challenging performance, felt a great deal of satisfaction that the process had been successful and enjoyable:

Because of so many boys from different interests forming together, I expected lots of fights, but it just fitted together so perfectly with minimal upset. We all knew what had to be done and fixed ourselves to the task. The weekend rehearsal was the toughest eight hours of rehearsing and re-rehearsing and it became tiring and blatantly annoying. But we pulled through well with few complaints. Just before performance, it became so exciting and just felt 'together'. The audience's reactions were a total rush and I am sure we all enjoyed it. The best parts were when something went wrong, we automatically fixed it up and nobody knew, it was great FUN. (Reflective journal entry, 1999)

Naf's statement is representative of many of the boys' attitudes towards their experiences with Sal throughout their drama years. The camaraderie and support that they shared was evident in every aspect of the drama work that they formed and presented. This is not to say that they were always united, but rather that they were able to overcome difference and diversity for the good of the artistic outcome. Their solid grounding in drama practice enabled them to transcend individual problems and to work towards dramatic work which as Naf so aptly puts it, gave them a real 'rush'.

Conclusion

The boys' responses at times have surprised, delighted and challenged me. I have found them to be evocative, insightful and sensitive and it is their voices which made the journey so worthwhile. The next chapter privileges my own voice in a narrative which explores and documents what I observed in the drama classrooms over the two year period. It serves to complement all that I have learnt through the discussions, interviews and questionnaires that provided so much of the rich and varied data. Although written from the reasearcher's stance, it is the boys and Sal who take centre stage. I conclude here with one more adolescent male voice, John's introspective final reflection to me about drama:

If I can make people feel and think compassionately or in anger towards a situation only made real through the actor's portrayal, then I have achieved the greatest goal. (Journal entry Group 1, 1999)

THE RECIPE

(from the performance 'Mothers and Sons',
Year 12 Drama, May 1999, Metro Arts Theatre, Brisbane.)

When shall we meet again?

In thunder, lightning or in rain.

When the hurley burley's done,

When the battle's lost and won

With our smart arsed little sons!

That will be ere the set of sun

Where's the place?

Down the Coast,

There to meet with friends

We come our sons

Duty calls anon

Fair is foul and foul is fair.

Do not get into trouble down there!

DOUBLE DOUBLE BOIL AND BUBBLE

A MOTHER'S CHARM SHALL STOP TROUBLE.

Cool them with a mother's love

Then the charm is firm and good

Round about the cauldron go

In the motherly trust we throw

Into the cauldron good fun will go

A good cook does a mother make

Selfless means to give not take

Pinch of loving, dash of caring

A sense of humour we love sharing

DOUBLE DOUBLE BOIL AND BUBBLE

A MOTHER'S CHARM SHALL STOP TROUBLE.

With intuition is a mother's sage

And cynicism comes with age

Although our life is always strenuous

A mother's love is always generous

Add these to a mother's burden

For the ingredients of our cauldron

DOUBLE DOUBLE BOIL AND BUBBLE

A MOTHER'S CHARM SHALL STOP TROUBLE.

CHAPTER SIX
‘UNDERSTANDING
MR. BRECHT’

(title from ‘Recollections’ Senior Students, 2000)

*This space is ever comfortable,
no desks, few chairs, fans whirring,
a grey wash of shirts, ties and pants
ruffled hair, shoes fly off*

I duck!

cheeky greetings and back slapping yabooing

fills the air

as drama begins

in this ‘chill zone’

(Analytic Memo 12, October 2000)

This chapter marks the end of the ethnographic journey. Through the use of field notes and analytic memos, it explores the day-to-day experiences of the adolescent male participants in their drama classroom. In many ways, it is the final portrait of two extraordinary groups of boys and their relationship with their inspirational drama teacher. For clarity, discussion has been divided into three thematic categories (as earlier outlined in the methodology chapter) as follows:

1. Classroom Behaviour
2. Relationships and Interpersonal Communication
3. Drama Practice

Whilst all three categories share common threads, I felt discussion would be best served by defining specific behaviours and communication patterns in terms of how the boys related and worked as classroom students, with each other as peers and lastly with the dramatic work itself.

In the Chill Zone: Classroom Behaviour

It became increasingly clear to me that whilst drama had a significantly positive effect on the boys' behaviour and personal attitudes, they were after all real boys who experienced difficult and indifferent days alongside the good. In many ways, the drama classroom, with its absence of desks and egalitarian atmosphere, actually allowed for many kinds of negative or problematic behaviour to be exposed and then, through the processes of the dramatic form, often altered and understood. I embraced the 'realness' of the boys and the way the drama studio allowed me to see the many hues of their masculine behaviour. It was heartening to see how their sometimes unfocused and unruly behaviour could be turned around by the positive encouragement and support of their drama teacher and peers. At times, their seemingly rude and uncaring attitude was par for the course, a necessary part of their journey before they moved on to quality and meaningful drama work. My observations and memos are scattered with moments of tension and conflict which would often disappear when the boys were reminded by Sal (or at times, by each other) about the boundaries of appropriate behaviour and mutual respect. As one reflection reveals:

It constantly surprises me how the boys can act so foolish and out of control in one moment and produce such sensitive quality dramatic work the next. I often watch nonplussed, as they engage in rough behaviour, fitfully laughing rolling

about the room. The occasional verbal explosion from one of them in class reminds me that they are only teenagers who can reach frustration point quickly. At times, the way one can sabotage quiet and focused moments inside the drama, seems so incongruent with the other times when they are serious, committed and focused. Whilst I became frustrated by this, Sal seems to take it in her stride. Constantly reminding the boys about the expectations of her class and their need to respect and support each other, she allows them time to 'blow out the cobwebs' before they are asked to focus on the work at hand. This seems to work. (Analytic Memo 11, Lines 8-12, September 1999)

There were numerous occasions when Sal needed to intervene and bring the boys back on task. What appeared to work best was an honest, down the line approach which prompted the boys to reassess their behaviour. Sal firmly believes that humiliating or embarrassing the boys is counterproductive to shaping positive behaviour.

One group is staring out of the window making comments and signs at the people down below the drama room but when Sal firmly urges them to reassess their behaviour, they return quickly to the task. (Field Log 10, September 2000, Lines 36-38) Someone suddenly burps loudly and the boys begin to laugh and wait for a reaction from either Sal or I. I can see they are feeling cheeky today... they begin to lose focus and their attention span is shaky. Sal recognises this and refocuses with energy and encouragement. She tries to regroup with a warm down game but this takes every ounce of energy she has left. The boys are watching me watching them and some of them are passing a glue stick backwards and forwards totally unfocused on the task at hand. (Field Log, May 17, 2000, Lines 5-7, 31-35)

Frequently, the boys, unfocused and frustrated, experienced days where despite Sal's efforts, they simply could not adjust to the work. On these occasions Sal 'cut the boys more slack' in order not to lose them altogether:

I realise that some of the boys near me are having a laugh at another's expense, what is causing this I am not sure but I suspect it has something to do with the effeminate voice of one of the new boys. There will need to be some work here on bringing this group together as a team. As this is the first week of term, I wonder how Sal will go about this. For the moment she turns to the offenders with a mock "I'll slap you" gesture and they stop. Orlando is being destructive near me trying to sabotage the work with his negative comments all the time. His offside joins in and I can see the momentum that Sal has gained now slipping away. One of the boys swears during an improv exercise and everyone breaks up laughing. Sal senses the need to change focus herself and does this quickly and efficiently but the game sends the boys into a mock fight and they think this is hilarious. Sal defuses the situation by telling the culprits about all the positive work they can do when they are not 'mucking' around and they sheepishly pull themselves into line. (Field Log 1, Feb 2000, Lines 52-62)

Those boys considered 'school problems' often gravitated towards drama because of the support Sal offered and the fact that they felt less restricted and 'uptight' in these classes. At times, it was the very nature of the subject which revealed deeper problems in the boys' lives allowing a space for them to work them through or to turn to Sal for help. Sometimes, drama simply provided a time where a troubled boy could escape the more traditional rigours of classroom discipline:

Nathan stands with his hands on his hips and begins to make movements towards the door - his non-verbal communication is signalling he has had enough of the lesson and is going to leave a few minutes before the bell rings. As he moves towards the door, Sal asks if he is OK but lets him go. She has watched him throughout the lesson and knows that he needs some personal space. He has been unhappy and sullen the whole time and has not contributed to the lesson at all. Nor has he spoken to me at all which is highly unusual. He and I usually share a joke and a laugh at some point in the work each day. It seems most appropriate to me not to add to whatever problems he has today by disciplining or nagging him. Sal senses this and I believe it is the wise choice. (Field Log, July 18, 2000, Lines 46-54)

What seemed to be most important in Sal's teaching approach was the ability to ignore off-task behaviour by actively refocusing the boys through encouragement, support and structured challenging drama activities. Allowing them 'down times' when they clearly exhibited an overriding need to show off, make rude noises and engage in other inappropriate behaviour was crucial in ensuring quality dramatic work would eventually emerge. Maintaining a sense of balance between high expectations and the boys' needs for the occasional indiscretion in the classroom was the key to Sal's teaching success with the boys:

As we begin to watch the video, we see a bit of nakedness on screen and the boys break up laughing and begin to pass quiet comments. Sal allows the moment to pass and does not censure the boys. This brings them quickly back to the focus of the work and they begin to obviously enjoy the messages the video brings to their

drama preparation. (Field Log, April 29, 1999, Lines 37-39) An administration loud speaker interrupts the lesson and the boys greet it with grumbles. They chuckle and guffaw and begin to talk loudly amongst themselves ignoring Sal's request for quiet. Their focus is lost and they begin kicking and slapping each other as they roll about the floor. They are completely ignoring the message and begin instead to talk about the upcoming swimming carnival. Sal firmly stops the carry-on and asks the boys to show some respect and in this way manages to bring the class under control. (Field Log, Feb 18, 1999, Lines 50-56)

Sal's philosophy of letting the boys be themselves and having unstructured moments of physicality was one of the reasons the boys told me they loved being in this class. They did not feel 'nagged' or 'restricted' but still knew the fundamental boundaries of what was expected of them:

Sal tells me that this group is highly capable of good work and although some of the group has lapsed into 'play' time with push-ups and rolling on the floor, she is not concerned. I am to learn that they are not just showing off for me, this behaviour is quite a common ritual for the boys, part of the 'blowing off steam' process I have seen here so many times before. It seems a necessary part of the boys' communication with each other in conveying friendship, affection and understanding. (Field Log, May 6, 1999, Lines 22-28)

On one occasion when several of my university drama major students joined me to observe Sal's students at work, the boys could not resist trying to impress them with what is often termed in Australia as 'larrikin' behaviour:

The boys begin to show off, punching and hitting each other and making rude comments to each other - I feel this is all for my benefit. Orlando confirms this by saying the boys are playing up to us. They are laughing and falling about the room. I note that the boys seem quite excited by the presence of a few different faces today and I am surprised by their silly behaviour. Sal has the good sense to let them get this out of their system before launching into the lesson. She does this by using positive and strong encouraging comments and a refined sense of good humour. This works without making any one boy feel as if they have taken the brunt of the group's indiscretions... (Field Log, Feb 29, 2000, Lines 10-16)

I noted that there was at times a strong tendency for the boys to be influenced by the actions of others - the power of the 'group' was instrumental both in terms of acceptance, and I believe, in affirming a silent code of classroom mateship. This would often have implications for maintaining harmonious classroom behaviour:

Orlando lies down on the floor and seems to have decided he will do nothing today. One of the boys near him sits on top of him pushing and prodding him. They are laughing quietly and look at me waiting for a reaction... Someone else is now trying to pull off Orlando's pants and several of the boys think this is hilarious and join in. (Field Log, June 7, 2000, Lines 60-69) *The boys are working well until 'Mattie' saunters into the room - he has been thrown out of his classroom for bad behaviour and wants to know if Sal will allow him in the room. The boys think his expulsion from his class only five minutes into the lesson is really funny. They greet him with "Hey Mattie" and welcome him in. They seem happy to have him come in if Sal allows it. Yet I know this would never be allowed to happen in their own drama class. Is he suddenly their hero I wonder?* (Field Log, May 11, 1999, Lines 14-19)

The power of the group was instrumental in maintaining group cohesion and worked fundamentally both as a disciplinary and supportive element in the boys' interpersonal relationships. The presence of strong leadership by a number of highly capable and confident drama individuals was evident in both research groups and it was generally these key figures who provided direction and vision for the other boys. In many cases, it also enforced the need for co-operation and co-artistry within the performance groups and motivated the boys to often take off-task behaviour into their own hands:

The theme here is mateship and once again Matt dominates the first group acting as a natural leader. They are reshaping the work from scratch and the work is good. There appears to be no real difficulty with the group being lead by such a strong character as Matt. They seem to allow this and indeed, at times, invite this to happen. Group two is not so stable, there is an overall lack of confidence here as the boys grapple with the form. They are grabbing scripts and arguing about who should be on stage at what time and I wait to see what will happen. All of a sudden one of them decides to take the reins and tells Dan to stop whining about the work and contribute something positive. Dan, although unhappy, seems suitably put in his place as the others agree and this seems to redirect and reenergise the energies in this group. (Field Log, March 4, 1999, Lines 34-45)

There were other episodes when despite the boys' general respect for each other, they could not help but partake in what has been traditionally and characteristically interpreted as 'macho' or 'boyo' behaviour. Here, the power of the group had a less than positive effect and it appeared to me that the old macho motto 'cool to be a fool' applied on such occasions.

The boys near me begin to irritate me with their lack of respect for their peers - Sal too has had enough and moves the offending pair over to her. Orlando just laughs but the boys on stage forge on. On the other side of the room three of the boys are playing with a piece of wire they have found somewhere and one of them is trying to model a fake penis. I know this because of the explicit actions and tittering which is going on in the corner. (Field Log, Mar 28, 2000, Lines 13-17) All goes well with the drama until Dan throws in a comment about an anorexic dog and begins to fall about on the floor laughing at his own joke. The others begin to make faces trying hard not to laugh also. They know this is not acceptable. (Field Log, April 4, 1999, Lines 37-39)

There were also times when the boys, despite their comfortable physical relationships with each other, found it difficult to partake in certain kinds of drama activities which required close contact with each other. Sal was never discouraged by this but instead would forge on in an attempt to break down barriers of 'homophobia' and 'fear of male intimacy':

Sal decides it is time for the boys to get into some practical work and plays a Boalian game with the boys where they have to feel for each other's hands. All of a sudden, the boys seem thrown off balance and seem totally confronted by this game. 'Pretend you a female!' urges one of the boys with a grin. Everyone bursts out laughing but this seems to release some tension but is obvious to Sal how awkward they are feeling. They drop their heads in embarrassment laughing quietly amongst themselves but Sal urges them to keep on with the game. Suddenly someone makes a crude comment about being touched by the other boys and they hoot again and again with laughter at this sexual connotation...

Sal decides to try another game but again it incorporates touching and someone asks Sal, 'Are you serious?' The boys resistance to touching it each other in the way the game demands does not deter Sal. She forges on with the game urging the boys to focus on the elements of drama the game incorporates. They cover much of their discomfort with more laughing and joking but Sal seems to know this is necessary to move them forward in both the work and their personal development. Her continual encouragement and modelling of serious intent helps here to propel them on. As this is early in the semester, I feel the boys have far to go here. (Field Log, Feb 9, 1999, Lines 73-91)

In another example, the boys' discomfort with making close contact with each other turned into 'larrikin' type behaviour which Sal cleverly turned around by changing the way the boys perceived the task. By turning the exercise into a 'competition' between the boys they were more able to apply themselves to the work. By linking the drama game to something they understood more clearly, Sal effectively overcame a difficult hurdle:

The next task requires intimate space proxemics. Some of the boys laugh seemingly embarrassed by the game. It is interesting to watch some of the boys, some shy and unsure, others macho and laughing to cover their true selves. This is not easy for them, some smile at each other, others have their eyes downcast whilst others knock into each other on purpose. Sal continues to side coach, encourage and support when necessary and the group moves on. Despite Sal's efforts she senses the boys are still not working within their comfort zone and she suddenly changes tack - she makes the game into competition between the boys which instantly seems to engage the boys. Suddenly everyone is excited wanting to be involved. (Field Log, August 3, 2000, Lines 16-25)

Over time in the field, specific patterns of communication, both verbal and non-verbal, emerged as important markers for the way the boys related to each other. High degrees of physicality, explicit modes of vocabulary usage and conventional spatial usage of the drama studio were some of the most significant observable elements. As the following discussion illustrates, these masculine forms of communication seemed absolutely essential for forming and maintaining interpersonal relationships inside the drama space.

Codes and Modes: Interpersonal Relationships and Communication

In many ways this classroom is a paradox. At times, the boys exhibit a great deal of empathy and sensitivity in their work, communicating to an audience with feeling and candour. I see moments of intensity and heightened emotion in their preparation and rehearsal process. And then at other times, words are replaced with rough and tumble physical communication, slapping and punching, rolling and jumping. It seems aggressive but is in fact, I believe, affectionate. But it is very male (I know this is a subjective statement but I what I see here is not behaviour I have observed in the majority of girls!). Sometimes the words that come from the mouth of these boys are offensive and provocative. In times of frustration or anxiety, it is not unusual to see explosive outbursts which surprise me because of their suddenness and force. At other times, dramatic poetry comes from the mouth of these babes. It is amazing being here. (Analytic Memo 12, August 2000, Lines 1-10)

This former reflection captures the essence of the changing communication patterns of these boys. I was often surprised by their ability to communicate so articulately

and sensitively through the dramatic form when they could also be explosive and crude at other times. It seemed to me that this most often occurred in times of stress, apathy, anxiety or fatigue and was indicative of a need for Sal to allow the boys a greater space for self expression and individual understanding. In addition to more aggressive styles of language there was a notable high degree of physicality that boys used in order to communicate and relate to each other effectively. I observed that when they felt compelled to 'break free' of the rigours of classroom work, they began to engage in what Sal termed 'boyo' types of behaviour. I characterised this as a combination of 'macho talk' and physical, sometimes aggressive forms of gestures or movement. In discussions with Sal she told me that she allowed a certain amount of physical 'off-task' behaviour to occur in order to 'get to the good work' and give the boys a space to 'blow off steam'. In many cases, unless too extreme, she ignored bad language:

Suddenly I notice a couple of the boys making rude signals to each other, one seems agitated with the other for reasons I can't fathom. The lesson is nearing the end and Sal is beginning to loosen the reins which have kept the boys so tightly centred throughout the session. Once this happens, the boys begin to change behaviour and they begin to engage in very 'male' behaviour I have seen the same pattern in this classroom from time to time. One is trying to do a headstand; others are playing rough, slapping each other and laughing. Sal turns her attention to finishing the lesson unperturbed by the building noise and 'play' going on in the drama classroom. This would appear to me to very important to the boys as a way of letting go, being themselves and releasing tension. (Field Log, August 9 2000, Lines 48-58)

and:

Duf, beside me, hits the boy beside him over the head with a piece of cloth. I ask him why he did this and he replies, 'He is a wanker, he talks all the time and I want to hear the work on stage.' The other boy smiles at me a little embarrassed... the boys settle again but then begin to laugh again. 'Start again' demands Orlando and this time Sal too is annoyed. Duf yells out 'Fuckin bell, come on.' Then Duf falls to the floor laughing. The boys are given a necessary time out. 'You guys are all wankers, I hate yas.' yells Duf. Sal stops and talks to the whole class about the problems here today. (Field Log, Mar 14, 2000, Lines 26-29, 44-50).. In general the boys are listening but some are finding it hard to focus - one is playing with a stick and hits himself on the head accidentally. The others are trying not to laugh. (Field Log, Mar 14, 2000, Lines 13-15) Someone is pulling on another's trousers, Duf is trying to pull someone's hair from behind. It strikes me as a male bonding ritual at work, relaxed and natural, cheeky and bold. (Field Log, August 2, 1999, Lines 29-31)

During one drama game, tensions flared between some of the boys as the focus of the lesson began to slip away:

Petri and Jim are engaged in a slapping game as they stand and wait for instructions and Sal stops as she gives them the eye to behave. Other boys begin to pay out on Jim who is trying to do some role playing in the game circle - he is having trouble getting the words out. He finally tells Dan to shut up as he is the loudest of the critics. Sal chooses to ignore this interchange allowing the boys to sort it out for themselves. This seems to work. Dan is frustrated by what has happened however and begins a fight with Jade accusing him of calling some

other boy outside the class a 'faggot'. Dan is really upset and is yelling that Jade should keep his 'mouth shut'. All the boys seem unhinged at this stage and the game begins to fall apart. (Field Log, April 29, 1999, Lines 41-49)

Sometimes, the overt physicality was simply the result of the boys' great sense of enjoyment for what they were doing in the drama classroom. In particular, drama games were a source of real pleasure for the boys allowing them to burn off excess energy whilst focusing them on the task to follow:

Sal moves into a game called 'Cat and Mouse' which is full of tension. It is a rough and tumble game and there is lots of laughter during it. The boys finish with their shirts hanging out and grins plastered across their faces. We seem to have started well here and the boys' attention is secured. Sal follows with more games from Boal's work and the boys are enthusiastic to try another game where this time the rabbit must escape from the fox. There is lots of laughing and the boys seem very excited, they are really hyped up. The boys play the game with great excitement and there is lots of energy slapping and punching to prevent the fox from catching the rabbit. At the end of the game they collapse onto the floor. (Field Log, Feb 18, 1999, Lines 15-23)

What I noticed about the way the boys communicated with each other was their uncompromising honesty. They were not afraid to say what they thought and seemed able to deal with the consequences of their actions. They exhibited a capacity to 'get on with the job' even after being rebuked and generally did not seem to hold grudges:

The rehearsal has been going relatively well but Matt has clearly had enough of Petri's unfocused behaviour today and yells, 'Look out for your bloody line!' Petri goes quiet immediately admonished but does not seem overly concerned about it. The boys seem to settle down and Petri tries again... (Field Log, May 8, 1999, Lines 47-49) Group One suddenly has a flare up. They tell me they hate the performance they have put together. Matt looks at the others and says sternly, 'We need more energy. This is disgusting. Take it by the balls and squeeze it.' The others nod, downhearted but seemingly unresentful. They try the scene again and this time seem happier with the effort. (Field Log, March 18, 1999, Lines 37-41)

Patterns of more difficult styles of behaviour were offset by the overall comfortable environment that Sal's classes offered. Occasions when I observed more aggressive communication modes were outweighed by those where there was evidence of friendly supportive relationships between the boys and an obvious ease at being themselves inside the drama space. The way they acted in the drama studio most days with their carefree attitude, often loosening ties and shirts, singing or joking freely, was indicative of how they felt about their time there:

The boys lie all over the floor in various positions talking amongst themselves - parties, sports training are the main topics of conversations I pick up on. Orlando is humming a song and slowly others join in... Orlando is massaging another boy's back as he lies on the floor. They seem very relaxed with each other. I have seen this kind of relaxed relationship before... (Field Log, Mar 28, 2000, Lines 5-8 and 21-22) The boys are spreading their bodies around the drama room in various positions, some on physical education mats, some against the walls, others sitting on the floor or the stage area. They seem comfortable. (Field Log,

April 4 , 2000, Lines 5-7) *The boys are more relaxed this morning with lots of noise and they seem happy to see me. Sal is late coming to the class so a number of them talk to me in a relaxed and friendly way.* (Field Log, Feb 29, 2000, Lines 1-3) *The boys saunter into the classroom in varying degrees of undress - ties off, shirts hanging out of shorts. They are talking, singing and yelling out Monty Python types of "Good Morning" to no one in particular.* (Field Log, Feb 21, 2000, Lines 1-4)

What most interested me however about the boys' interactions in the drama classroom over the two year research period was documenting solid evidence of meaningful artistic relationships that may have formed as a consequence of being exposed to drama, and indeed, whether a 'practice of drama community' was evident in any way. Whilst it became clear that the boys on the whole enjoyed each other's company, genuinely liked to be in the drama classroom and seemed liberated by the experience, I wanted to know how and if these elements contributed to the development of effective and creative artistic partnerships. What I found was that despite differing masculine dispositions and ideals, the boys were able to transcend differences and conflicts in order to form, present and respond effectively to sophisticated and diverse drama experiences and presentations. The following discussion highlights some of my more insightful observations.

Making Mr. Stanislavski 'Real': Drama Practice

It became evident over time that continued exposure to drama for both research groups had positive effects on the way they worked and related overall. Whilst inappropriate behaviour was a regular challenge for Sal, I noticed that the boys'

ability to work collaboratively in supportive and unconflictual modes notably increased and in many ways, problematic behaviour significantly lessened as the year progressed. They were able to focus and commit to the work more quickly than in the beginning and were able to think more creatively and laterally as each new unit demanded different and increasingly more complex tasks and ideas. As I noted on one occasion:

Sal asks the boys to repeat some work for me on forming that they have been working this week. They all initially groan but agree to do the work which entails taking one-line sentences and shaping them into an improvisation which will be further shaped into scene work together. I note how they move purposefully and meaningfully into the work with confidence and self assurance. I also notice with great interest that compared to the earlier part of the research, the boys are now working -

- *with greater focus and speed than before.*
- *co-operatively with each other in a generally supportive and egalitarian way.*
- *communicating through physical action, wrestling, punching and teasing but still very much engaged with the drama.* (Field Log, June 7, 2000, Lines 14-24)

Through analysis of the field notes and memos, I identified a number of fundamental elements in the way the boys worked both with Sal and each other and it seemed that for quality work to be achieved, all of these elements needed to be present in the drama classroom:

- A sense of humour from both the teacher and students
- Tolerance and understanding from all.
- A sense of adventure and risk taking
- A degree of freedom and acceptance
- Respect and support of opinions and ideas
- An open approach to co-artistry and student input

I was curious to know whether these boys with their different masculine typographies, ideals and perceptions of life could come together into a 'community of drama practice' through the careful facilitation of an experienced and passionate drama practitioner. As many of my past observations have revealed, these boys were capable of moments of great focus in the drama classroom as well as difficult, often infuriating behaviour. But I observed that on the whole, the relationships in these classrooms were egalitarian, honest and valued by most of the boys. Many of the disagreements I observed between them were more often about decisions made in relation to their drama preparation and rehearsal processes and were ultimately resolved by the group themselves rather than through Sal's intervention. What I noted and was particularly impressed by, was that the boys were open and candid about what they liked and did not like both personally and artistically.

I am convinced that the high quality of the work I observed in these drama classrooms was intrinsically linked with the boys' refined abilities to offer critical artistic appraisal not only of their own work but also Sal's directorial approach in many of the performances they worked on together. Over time the boys' commitment to drama notably deepened with a far greater focus and intent evident

in all their efforts. As I reflected one morning, *the boys seem to hang on every word today and appear to be genuinely interested in all Sal has to say. I note with interest and pleasure that they are slowly changing in their learning patterns, listening, thinking and responding far more intensely than when I first arrived here. This is a wonderful thing to witness, almost a tangible thing and a result I believe of an excellent drama program and a committed, passionate teacher.*

(Field Log, May 17, 2000, Lines 11-14)

Of particular importance to the artistic and personal development of these boys was the provision of a space where their self-confidence and independence could grow and be fostered. The high level of encouragement from Sal to 'take risks' and 'have a go' was instrumental in ensuring that every boy felt he had a voice and a place in the drama classroom. I was impressed by the way that even the most reticent and negative of students discovered new-born confidence in the work that they did and felt comfortable enough to try new ideas and explore uncharted territory (such as dance and movement) in their drama performances:

What is becoming obvious is this group of boys is highly independent, have strong skills of self-direction, have reasonably established ideas of what they want from the drama they do. Whilst they still exhibit some stereotypical characteristics of traditional male roles such as aggressive speech and high physical levels of communication, they manage to balance this with risk taking into non-traditional areas such as movement using symbol, poetry and prose and do so with sensitivity and empathy. (Field Log, April 20, 1999, Lines 3-8) These boys are prepared to take risks with the dramatic form - this is my first impression. They are prepared to trust their own instincts even when it appears

their confidence is a little shaken by some new task... what I have seen today is the ability of the boys to immerse themselves in the work with focus and commitment, with confidence to create or to retry when necessary, to try without fear of censure or failure. (Field Log, March 4, 1999, Lines 7-9 and 50-61)

Even when the boys faced situations within performance where their self-confidence was shaken, they were able to get themselves back on track quickly and with little detriment. The tremendous support Sal provided alongside her unyielding belief that they were capable of great dramatic work was instrumental in helping the boys believe in themselves:

They have done their pieces on mateship but in the third frame of the work, their confidence seems to unfold with Jacob and Jim losing focus suddenly. They seemed unbinged for a moment affected by the audience's response but to their credit, they regroup and refocus and finish the performance with finesse. Group two then takes the stage - they have had trouble with this piece previously but this time swing quickly into the work with minimum fuss. They know that Sal is there willing them on. (Field Log, March 18, 1999, Lines 31-36)

The freedom awarded the boys inside the drama classroom allowed them to explore and test safely their own masculine capacities inside the dramatic form. Over time, their abilities to be both a supportive audience and committed artists increased significantly and they were able to more carefully balance some of their needs to 'let off steam' with Sal's rigorous expectations for serious commitment to Senior drama. In order to find their feet dramatically, quite often they worked with issues and ideas that were closest and most familiar to them:

The boys are currently working on the elements of drama as their introductory unit and today they continue on with the elements of space and place. The first group chooses a urinal in a football change room toilet to display a battle of words (and a physical challenge) to establish the element of 'place' inside the role play. It is very male in its orientation and the others watching clearly appreciate the intent here. They handle the focus surprisingly well and I am impressed by their control of the dramatic form here. The role play they have chosen is one they clearly feel comfortable with and the presentation is well controlled and realistic - there is no showing off here. The audience is at times a little unruly spurred on by the connotations at work here. I know this is how the boys work best and Sal's mantra 'Support and Respect' is well heeded by the boys and they pull themselves back into line. (Field Log, Feb 29, 2000, Lines 18-26)

At times, possibly because of my own pre-conceived notions about the nature of boys and their capacity for emotional expression, the intense sensitivity of the work surprised me. It also was, I came to understand, a testimony to the value of drama in boys' classrooms and how a visionary and brave teacher can make a difference to young boys' lives:

The boys are starting a wonderful new unit on their mothers which will culminate in a final performance. I am really excited by this and am thrilled to see them use a forming piece using one phrase their mother always uses. They select movement and dialogue in creative, sensitive and interesting ways dispelling any traditional idea that boys are not capable of doing quality movement work. One group does a particularly moving piece with commitment,

focus and dedication to the form. It is wonderful and heartening to see.
(Field Log, April 4, 1999, Lines 14-20)

Part of the script writing task for 'Mothers and Sons' was to write concluding statements about mothers which every boy would present in the final moments of the performance. I was curious as to whether the boys would feel threatened by such as public expression of emotions about their own mothers but they embraced the task with enjoyment and sensitivity. On the performance night, the statements were presented with such commitment and meaning, many of the mothers were brought to tears:

Mum, you're such a darl! You truly are my strength and inspiration, for God knows we've been through a hell of a lot. Thank you for giving me the courage to be who I am, no matter what anyone says and sticking by me all those times. Thank you for loving me every day of my life. I love you mum. (Jake, May 1999)

Mum, thank you for being there for me and understanding whatever has happened and will happen. I love you. (Petri, May 1999)

Mum, I would like to thank you for watching over me for the past seventeen years and giving comfort when it was needed. You've always talked and listened, shared good times and bad times, but more importantly, you've been determined to know me as well as one human can ever know another. (Jacob, May 1999)

You're the strongest person I know! You are so selfless. Your bad sense of humour has been the subject of many a laugh and it has and always will cheer me up. Love ya always. (Marcus, May 1999)

Mum, 4 (sic) all those times that you've been cool about my ideas. I know I can be hell to live with and that most of the time, I'm subject to Irish stubbornness. But what I am trying to say is... Thanks 4 (sic) coping with me for so long. I love U (sic) mum. (Dan, May 1999)

The boys' abilities to express such heartfelt emotion through the medium of drama was heartening and moving. On one particularly sad day when the boys were told of the suicide of another male student in a partner school, their sense of disbelief and loss actually heightened the emotional quality in the drama work I was to see:

The boys are sullen standing on the blocks with their arms crossed and their faces down. They seem contemplative and sad... Sal urges the boys to try to find some energy in their work despite the circumstances and she gives them a pep talk which is warm, encouraging and uplifting. I am absolutely blown away by what I see follow. The performance they give is moving and beautiful, touched by moments of great poignancy and sensitivity and I believe that what has happened here today has somehow enabled the boys to move to an emotional aesthetic ground in their dramatic work that I have not seen here before - the work is astoundingly good. (Field Log, June 11, 1999, Lines 12-13 & 17-23)

Whilst the boys were capable of deep and meaningful expressions of emotion, there were also occasions when they grappled with emotional issues which were more universal in nature (such as war or racial oppression). At times, it appeared easier for them to deal with issues contextualised to fit their own lives (such as sports or parties) and which they felt were more inside their control. Sal was careful in linking the familiar with the abstract but at times, I know the boys found this a

struggle. In one instance, I directly asked them during a class why their commitment to the work at hand was not as strong as usual:

I ask Matt and Steve in a moment of rehearsal why they and others are making a joke out of serious issues inside the drama. This surprises me as they are usually so committed to the work and are two of Sal's most reliable students. In discussion with me they tell me they think the issues are too 'heavy' and difficult for them to relate to. They say that there are issues arising out of the drama that they have never had experience with and this is proving too hard for them. I know they are capable of great sensitivity but today it seems they are not able to immerse themselves in the work and are distancing themselves from the issues at hand. It seems they cope by simply 'acting the fool.' (Field Log, August 10, 1999, Lines 20-27)

The former incident was the exception rather than the rule however, and most times, Sal was able to capture their attention immediately and provide them with challenge which they were able to connect to their own lives and then extend further into the lives of others. During rehearsal for the extended unit, 'Mothers and Sons' there was a memorable occasion where the boys' attention to the artistry of the work and their absolute immersion and surrendering to the form was exemplary. It was also indicative of the kind of work these boys became capable of under Sal's guidance and a challenging drama program:

There is no laughter here - the boys are doing work which is artistically and emotionally beautiful, their mothers honoured in every movement and piece of dialogue they deliver. I am blown away by this and cannot believe such wonderful work is coming from these boys about the subject which I really did

not think they would be interested in. They experiment with difficult levels with hands in pockets and shuffling feet but work is so good. The boys are working carefully and with wonderful expression. (Field Log, May 11, 1999, Lines 27-32)

Sal's continued faith in the boys' abilities to make important decisions about the dramatic performances was evident in the easy and co-operative relationships they shared:

The boys nearest me begin to fiddle around with the audio visual system to listen to different songs about their mothers. They seem to be enjoying this until Sal asks them to listen to a script she would like them to consider for part of the performance. Sal reads them a wonderful monologue about the day in the life of a housewife and suggests they use it somewhere in the performance. They agree but seem to digest this with deep thought trying to sort out how it might best be used. Sal gives them the task sheets for this new unit. As always she discusses the expectations for the performances and the possible ways the boys might explore the parent/child relationship. As she speaks she asks the boys if they think any of this will work. The boys listen lying around the room in various positions in definite distance groups but everyone is listening attentively. (Field Log, April 20, 1999, Lines 18-26)

The boys responded well to Sal's egalitarian style of teaching appearing to work more effectively when they knew their opinions were valued in the dramatic process. My observations revealed that this approach helped keep the relationships in the class on an even keel and provided the boys with strong clear directorial assistance:

The boys decide to take on the style of the 'Macbeth' witches to deliver an important piece of the performance. They work with Sal earnestly, some more vocal than others, Dan is quiet, watching and listening. Jim listens too as does Steve and Petri. The boys seem happy to let Matt, our natural leader, help direct the action alongside Sal. The others listen in and offer suggestions when they feel the need arise. Everyone contributes at some stage - everyone getting a say in what they would like to do in this particular section of the performance. The boys seem happy with the way this process is unwinding. (Field Log, April 20, 1999, Lines 39-45)

and,

Group two present 'at the supermarket checkout' piece which is clever and slick. Sal plays the joker (or side coach) and freezing the action asking the boys for ways the action might go to improve and enrich the form. The boys now understand what is required and take up the directorial challenge with more confidence than before. Sal's side coaching has been vital for their 'moving on' in the drama. (Field Log, February 18, Lines 41-45)

Implicit in the way the boys worked was an acceptance of natural drama leaders. This is not to suggest that there were no personality clashes or tensions in classroom relationships but an understanding seemed to develop between the boys that quality performances were born out of good leadership and collaborative partnership. I observed this many times in both groups and as I mused in 1999:

It is not so say that the boys are always happy with each other and that some jealousy is not sometimes detectable but this classroom is very cohesive. It is obvious that there are stronger and more creative personalities, (some very

much caught up with masculine traits of toughness and bravado) than others but I believe this is necessary for the enrichment of the community at work here in this classroom. (Field Log, August 17, 1999, Lines 13-19)

Sal's heightened emphasis on the importance of co-artistry in the classroom allowed personal differences to be put aside when the boys were in performance mode and I consider that it also significantly improved the social health of the classrooms:

Our Matt is the leading voice once more here but the others in the group don't seem intimidated or afraid to voice their approval or disapproval in the developing performance. This is a lengthy but effective and valuable artistic experience for all concerned. They move from what Sal calls the 'caring circle' to work in smaller groups. (Field Log, May 11, 1999, Lines 22-26) It is interesting for me to see Dan taking a leadership role in the discussion however but whereas the other day it was relatively direct, today he is encouraging and the boys do not seem to resent his contribution. The boys are wholly responsible for the directing of the work themselves today and they work together well - there is good-natured laughing and lots of talking but they are working on a serious level. On their second run through of the chorus work, they do beautiful work with strong commitment and focus. The lesson ends on a positive note. (Field Log, April 16, 2000, Lines 18-24)

In a final analytic memo, I reflected on the complexity of relationships in the drama classroom where boys could come together as an 'artistic community' for one hour a day and then often go their separate ways in the playground environment or in other classrooms:

I am more convinced than ever of the rich value of students experiencing some drama in their schooling years. For boys, this seems particularly vital. In my time

here in Sal's drama classroom, I have seen these boys travel along a varied and diverse road of learning curves - for many, drama has given them the self-confidence and self-esteem needed to overcome personal burdens both inside and outside the classroom. But more than this, I have seen them express their thoughts and feelings in the most extraordinary ways - sensitively, empathetically and insightfully, often with a maturity that has surprised me. I have seen boys who tell me they do not socialise with each other outside the drama classroom come together inside this space and work with joy, camaraderie and support, often expressing shades of friendship which I think they find quite unexpected. I can't help but think that this extends beyond the confines of the classroom walls in ways they might not yet be aware of. I have also seen the way they respond to their female teacher in a relationship which is strong, nurturing and creative - I have seen and heard them express their fondness and admiration for a woman who has been in many ways, a second mother. This they have told me so many times and it is evident in everything they do and say in their interactions with Sal. For those boys who have struggled with inner demons, their behaviour often the bane of many a teacher's life, drama has given them one of the most positive and empowering experiences of their adolescent lives. It has, for some of these boys, been life changing. What more could a teacher ever ask for? (Analytic memo, October 12, 2000, Lines 1-21)

The strongest evidence about how the boys felt about working together in the drama classroom came in the way of a final performance script for the extended study 'Recollections'. The boys performed this piece, arms around shoulders in a united collective group, recalling their time in the drama classroom. I believe it says everything about the power of drama for young men:

When the sons of (College name) drama gather in the drama room

When the stinky grade eights leave, Oh the Ambi Pur

Loyal sons of Sal I sing a hymn of praise

To our dear old drama teacher and our drama days

Didit - diddid - diddid

Brother past you warmly game us, on this stage our lines flow free

Brechtly vision held before us - knowledge from the past

(College name) drama truth will conquer but in all things 'sock'

Didit - diddid - diddid

When the final mark is given, when the last task has been set

When the Ambi Pur has died, when the snappers stench is back

We shall come to (College name) drama in our blacks again

With a sigh for (College name) drama and a last "Well Done!"

Da-Da-Da-DAAAA (Senior Drama, 'Recollections' script, October 2000)

A Final Word

It was a rare privilege to work with such a creative and interesting group of young men. Their generosity of spirit in allowing me to work so freely in their drama classroom over such a long period of time continues to strengthen my faith in the goodness and substance of adolescent males today and the continued need for teachers to provide learning experiences which are liberating, challenging, and evocative. Many of the stories the boys shared with me resonated with the ordinary needs of young men everywhere today - respect, friendship, support, encouragement and understanding. Some of their stories, such as those of Orlando, Dan and Duf, were those of boys in conflict, the 'problem students' that could push

the most patient of teachers to their absolute limit of endurance. These students, despite their occasional resistance and aggressive outbursts, were often the most engaging and endearing of all.

All of their stories revealed that drama was important to them. It gave them a safe space to 'blow off steam', to take 'off the mask' and be themselves. It gave them an opportunity to find out a little more about their own masculinities, to reassess, accept, or if necessary reshape old perceptions and ideals. It opened 'windows of learning' which allowed them to see there are many ways of knowing, seeing and discoursing, and most importantly, many ways of being a man.

My own journey with these boys became important in terms of how they treated me both as a researcher and a female and how my own perceptions and feelings about them and Sal changed and evolved over time. I was taught a great many things by the boys about what it means to be male that I had not known before. As I analysed and interpreted data along the way, my own stereotypical and encultured expectations provided hurdles for me to overcome. My own fatigue and low days, just like the boys, could sometimes affect the way I saw their world and how I related to them and Sal on a day to day basis. Chapter Seven 'Waiting in the Wings' documents this journey, highlighting both the difficult and the wonderful moments of being a female researcher in a unique and multi-faceted male environment. It is a journey I will long remember.

CHAPTER SEVEN

WAITING IN THE WINGS

There is something vaguely discomfoting in walking into a classroom you don't know for the first time. Unfamiliar eyes meet your gaze as you awkwardly edge into the space, smiling tentatively, thinking, Where the hell do I sit here? Why are they looking at me like that? Did I do up that button in front?

And so it was for my first day in the field with a group of senior drama students; those boys in men's bodies, staring unabashedly at me as they saunter around the room finding their own 'familiar space'. Already I feel swamped by perceptions which are completely unfounded. I know that I must wait, watch, and allow the story to be told, unencumbered by my own worldly views. I feel a little disorientated. My feelings are akin to times when I have stood off stage waiting for my cue in some theatre performance. Eager to move, excited by the rush of what was about to happen, anxious down to my very toes, breathless, anticipatory, gazing upon the action on stage, I stand frozen 'waiting in the wings.' (Analytic Memo 1, February, 1999, Lines 1-8)

This chapter forms part of the final narrative of the journey, my own ethnographic experience inside the drama classrooms. Whilst this thesis is devoted to the experiences of Sal and the boys, I believe that the whole story cannot be told without considering the complex and ever-changing associations I shared with the participants along the way. Their reactions to me, their attitudes to my presence in their classrooms contribute richly to the understanding of my observations and

musings about their everyday behaviour, attitudes and interpersonal relationships. This chapter is predominately devoted to my changing relationship with the boys. Whilst Sal was undoubtedly an important part of the research, she and I shared a comfortable and easy association that was without tension or confrontation. She understood explicitly from the beginning what my role in the classroom would be and gave me unyielding co-operation and support. At no time did I feel that I was an intruder into her classroom world or need to remind her of her commitment to the research. We had an uncomplicated collegial relationship which made my time in her classrooms an enriching and informative experience.

I believe that the role of an ethnographic researcher in the drama classroom is a special one. Indeed, I believe that it calls for a reassessment and realignment of traditional notions of the 'detached' researcher. In my two research experiences, I have found that what happens in the everyday drama classroom significantly affects the role of the participant observer in a way that renders it difficult to remain a 'disengaged' member of the classroom community. This is not to suggest that the qualitative researcher in the drama classroom should not strive for impartiality and disconnectedness in their research stance but rather it means that the challenge for objectivity is greater than in more traditional educational settings.

In view of this, I considered the inclusion of this chapter a necessary part of validating and assessing the research experience for both myself as researcher and those participants who generously travelled the road with me. I heed Agar's (1980) warning that the qualitative researcher must take care to bring their biases to consciousness, understand them as part of the research methodology and acknowledge them when drawing conclusions. For Agar, this process is most

effectively addressed when the researcher notes the importance of documenting their own feelings and allows the reader to share in the journey with them.

Drama is an humanising experience for students. It can expose, unravel and challenge the downside of our human nature whilst still celebrating and affirming the good, the spiritual, the joyful. In such a liberated learning space, students often display strong empathetic behaviour and feel comfortable to disclose feelings that they may not ordinarily do in other classrooms. I have often found maintaining an appropriate researcher distance from the participants in the field a difficult task, where moments of closeness, identification, sympathy and warmth, (Friedman, 1991) can happen quite spontaneously and with surprising veracity. Lofland's and Lofland's (1984) assertion that at the end of the research 'you are not the person you were when you began' (pp.119-120) aptly describes how I felt at the end of my journey of two years. The need to constantly check and recheck my own perceptions and understandings of my observations, interviews and informal discussions with the participants resulted in a significant seachange for me about what I had always believed to be true about adolescent boys and their approach to drama in the classroom.

As stated in an earlier chapter, my research journey spanned two years with two groups of adolescent boys. This was a matter of circumstance rather than a conscious decision to observe two separate drama communities. It was never meant to be a comparative case study between the two groups but rather a portrait of Sal and the thirty-two boys in both drama classes. Surprisingly the two groups displayed very similar behaviour and attitudes and I feel that this discussion is best served by combining many of the common attributes of the groups into one holistic

overview. The fact that both groups were also taught by Sal alone brought a cohesive element to the enormous amount of data collected over the two-year period. In turn, parts of this narrative may privilege the experiences of each group in an effort to provide a comprehensive and honest interpretation of all experiences.

Preparing the Ground

My first days in the drama classroom resembled a wonderful tapestry of colour and hue. For all of us, it was a time of first impressions, of taking tentative steps towards a relationship which would be paradoxically both close and distant. Sal and I knew each other as colleagues but not as research partners and although confident, she was understandably nervous about what she thought I might expect from her and how she would 'perform' in front of my scrutinizing eyes. The boys, all strangers to me, were relatively at ease but I sensed rather than saw them watching me carefully in those first early lessons. To add to the initial 'settling' process, I was pregnant and constantly unwell and I felt the confidence I had always carried with me in the classroom had been replaced by a more vulnerable persona, one unsure of how this would all unwind before me. My fears would soon be allayed however by the open and carefree way that the boys welcomed me into the classroom. As I reflected on the first day:

A rainy day. I arrive at the school, young boys scurrying between the raindrops, lop-sided grins, stripe ties askew, a regulation sea of grey before me. I have met the boys in my research group only once before - a seemingly friendly enthusiastic and interested bunch. I wonder how they will react today when I enter the classroom for the first time. Will they see mine as prying eyes in a

classroom which is already built on a strong foundation of familiarity? As always Sal is welcoming but seems a little anxious at the thought of the journey we will be taking together. Knowing she is such an important part of the research, she is understandably unsure of what is about to unravel. (Field Log, Feb 9, 1999, Lines 1-9)

My previous research (1997) had taught me the importance of gaining trust from the participants without overstepping the line between total familiarity and maintaining an objective research stance. Whilst this had been relatively difficult with the girls in earlier research (see Lee, 1997) the boys' initial acceptance of me in the classroom seemed uncomplicated. In particular, Sal's easy manner with me and her unconditional support of the research made the transition from stranger to class member a smooth one.

'Say hi to Tracey' Sal urges the group checking with me if they call me by my Christian name. I am not the teacher here so I feel it will work to my advantage if the boys feel comfortable with me right from the start, so I agree that they should call me 'Tracey'. Their eyes are excited and interested and as I look at their youth and energy, I suddenly feel ancient. I fervently hope I can in some tap into their culture with some insight and truth and do justice to their obvious willingness to make this experience an enriching one for me. My worries are lessened by the group's warm smiles and greetings all round... I note that they seem co-operative and interested and their eyes are on me watching every move I make. They do not seem disturbed by my presence in the classroom and some smile with cheeky grins. (Field Log, Feb 9, Lines 19-25, 29-32)

In the first few days, the boys in both groups treated me like they had always known me and somehow immediately reduced my researcher status to 'one of the boys' with surprising ease:

This is my first day with this group and whilst they eye with curiosity they do not seem to be perturbed by my presence in any way. Sal makes a comment that they should greet me and they all join in a chorus of ‘Helllooooo Tracey’. I greet them warmly (how could I not with their cheeky grins) and when one bright spark quips, ‘I thought we are not supposed to notice Tracey in the classroom’, I almost laugh out loud. They begin asking me how my baby daughter is and I am taken aback by their familiar stance. I am not sure how much I should say given my role as observer here but then ask myself – is it not possible to learn more about the boys by talking earnestly with them about matters they want to discuss?
(Field Log, February 21, 2000, Lines 3-14)

The boys regarded the research as exciting and novel and I suspected that for some of them, the whole experience was a little like a game. They seemed to have no real anxiety about what I was going to be doing in the classroom and approached the process with a great deal of fun. They were relaxed about me being there taking notes at the back of the classroom and the entire process appeared to be taken in their stride:

When I arrive in the classroom, I give out permission letters for the research which they must give to their parents for signing. They seem ‘very up’ and pleased to see me this morning. I discuss the confidentiality of the research with them and they all seem excited about using pseudonyms and ask if they can pick the names themselves. I am amused by the fact that they spend at least five minutes trying to pick names for themselves – the names they are suggesting come straight out of soap operas and I am surprised by their ‘silliness’. The boys are laughing and falling about as they listen to each other’s suggestions. I finally have to hurry them on as the lesson time is being compromised by their frivolity.
(Field Log, February 18, Lines 7-14)

Throughout the research period, there were periods when I needed to discuss with the boys procedures for interviews, questionnaires and class reflections. I was often nonplussed by the maturity of the boys in the way they questioned me about the work I was doing with them and the role they would play as participants. Whilst there were moments when I felt they may have been anxious about what was happening at different stages of the process, they were not afraid to seek clarification or ask questions about what was to unfold. I found it rather disconcerting that it was me who was unsure at times how to speak to them:

As I am sensing that the boys are not sure what I expect of them, I try to assure them that there are no expectations here, just an unfurling of learning for all of us. Once they know the 'layout of the field' so to speak, they accept the process without complication. At times, it is me who feels the communication is a little stilted because I am uncertain how I should talk to them whilst maintaining the researcher stance. Most of these boys seem very mature and I feel that I need to be careful not to speak down to them in these early days. I want them to trust me. (Analytic Memo 5, April 1999, Lines 11-16)

My concerns about trust and researcher stance, particularly in the early part of the research, were a notable part of my early reflections, and Sal, who acted as my significant 'voice of validation' in all my field notes, would often frantically scribble notes about this for me to read. She wrote that I should 'not underestimate the boys' in terms of their commitment to the research nor doubt their trust and respect for me as part of the classroom community. She believed firmly that the way I treated the boys as equals was the key for them to trust me 'implicitly.' I also believed that my being a female and pregnant in the first part of the research was in many ways

an advantage. It revealed a side of empathy and sensitivity that I had not seen in adolescent boys before:

They treat me as an equal and are not afraid of my questions or observations. I wonder now if my femaleness and indeed my pregnancy may not prove an advantage to me working with these boys. They certainly appear to be treating me with great gentleness and attention. This is not an act. I had not expected this. They treat me as if I have always been part of the classroom and I am surprised how much they seem to trust me after only a few weeks with them. (Field Log, March 4, 1999, Lines 17-22)

and,

I am not sure about showing them anything to do with my pregnancy but decide that they have shared this journey with me from the beginning and so should be part of the continuing mystery and excitement - many of them want to know how I am feeling the minute I walk into the classroom and so my researcher stance is sometimes far from being 'distant.' (Field Log, May 11, 1999, Lines 5-9)

The emerging roles that I was to play, and the ever-present difficulties of fieldwork in a school situation with its perpetual calendar of extra-curricular events, were to impact on my observations and my relationship with the boys in a variety of ways. I was to find that the hats that I would wear ranged from the more detached researcher, to sister, mother, teacher and artist and it would be impossible not to become immersed in the culture of the classroom without becoming in some way emotionally attached to the boys.

Changing Places, Changing Faces

*As I struggle for objectivity,
You run to me with a chair,
Grinning widely, cheeky,
'How are ya Tracey, how's bub today?'
I am floored momentarily,
But cocooned in the warmth of being there,
Of being part of,
Of knowing you.*

(Reflection in verse, August 1999, Lines 1-8)

My journey into ethnographic research has been one of the most profoundly enjoyable and transformative experiences of my academic life. In taking the research journey alongside my participants, I have learnt much about myself, my drama practice and the energy and wonderment of adolescence. I have discovered that the role of the qualitative researcher is a complex and multi-layered one which can change and reshape throughout the research process. In some ways, my relationship with the boys and Sal was similar to that I shared with the female participants in previous research (1997). Whilst it began with a distinct distance which comes from unfamiliarity and newness, it evolved into an association akin to that which grows from being part of a large family. A previous research reflection captures this feeling well:

The strongest feelings are beginning to emerge in me about my relationship with the girls - I am feeling more and more a part of their culture and see them

treating me somewhere between a friend and a teacher. Their trust in me is now more than obvious and they confide in me at times like a sister.. I wonder if other ethnographers have reached this moment of realisation? (Lee, 1997, p.168)

In general, the boys accepted me into the classroom culture much quicker than the girls had done. I believe that perhaps because I was a female, they felt no sense of competition or threat from me and were able to quickly move into familiar territory without difficulty. The fact that they had a female drama teacher may also have helped. In many ways, this allowed me to observe their classroom male culture at a deeper, more enriching level but it also caused me to question how this might affect my ability to gather unprejudiced 'thick description' of what was happening around me:

I am drawn into their discussion in a far less formal way than I was initially with the girls. The boys continually ask my opinion, joke lightheartedly with me and seemingly accept me unconditionally into their world. I ask myself if I should remain more formal but realise that this might be impossible with the community Sal has developed here - the boys almost demand my involvement as an active part of what they do and never for one moment do they treat me as if I am simply the 'researcher' at the back of the classroom. (Field Log, July 13, 1999, Lines 22-27)

My analytic memos enable me to oversee the process more objectively and as the research progressed, I realised that the good relationship I shared with the boys was a combination of maintaining a reasonable detachment whilst still allowing them to relate more closely to me when they felt they needed to. Certainly it gave me a

greater insight into how their minds worked and why they did the things they did in the classroom. On one all day Sunday rehearsal when the boys appeared relaxed and carefree out of school uniform, I became a natural part of the group giving both directorial feedback for Sal about the boys' performances and talking informally with them about different aspects of the day. My initial stance to observe quietly at the back of the drama studio was overridden by a request from Sal and the boys to act as a 'critical voice' for their extended performance 'Mothers and Sons.' My reservations that any criticism I might have for the boys' work could compromise my growing relationship with them were swept away by the boys' intense interest in what I had to say and their desire to better the performance where possible. They seemed to be able to jump from rather childlike behaviour to a mature and thoughtful artistic group willing to take on board any criticism I might have. I always found this surprising but uplifting:

On arrival the boys seem relaxed and there are lollies scattered all over the room. They offer me some sincere smiles and a warm invitation to share the lollies with them. They seem pleased to see me and there appears to be very little tension today... Petri is making conversation with me about the lollies which are now being thrown around the room - he is telling me which are the best and I feel this conversation is rather surreal considering Petri is usually incredibly grounded and focussed on the drama work. I feel I should be discouraging the discussion but am eager to learn more about him. I feel that today has allowed me to see a different side of the boys and it is a refreshing portrait of them being 'young and carefree'. I know that they will be able to move quickly into the rehearsal when asked and I know Sal is deliberately allowing them the space and time to unwind their ample energies. (Field Log, May 1, 1999, Lines 5-8 & 30-37)

As time progressed the boys allocated more and more respect to me as both a drama researcher and academic. They were not content for me to disappear into the shadows of the stage where I tried to do most of my observation work. Rather, they wanted me to become part of the drama process, to merge somehow into the same kind of role Sal fulfilled as critic, facilitator and friend. At times, I felt I had no choice but to partake in the activities in the classroom:

'What do we have to do?' they ask me. I am forced momentarily to take on the role of the teacher. Sal is in the other rehearsal room and it is clear they are not sure which direction to take. 'Do your rap piece introduction', I urge. They hesitate. 'You do that so well, come on, do it..' They agree to do it but are unhappy with the piece and look to me discouraged. I am unsure if I should intervene at this point. They look at me guardedly but I decide but I decide to risk some feedback. I feel my whole body relax with an outgoing breath as I realise they appreciate and embrace the feedback... they are so used to Sal's co-artist relationship with them that they accept my words as positive artistic feedback and this is good to see. You can just about touch their growing confidence as they look at me. (Field Log, March 18 1999, Lines 22-24, 40-43, 45-51)

In another instance, in a moment of good humour and cheeky abandon, one of the boys teased me about a pen I was using as I made notes walking around the classroom:

As I move on to the next group, Duf yells, "Hey, Tracey, did you steal that pen from me?" This is not an attack but a good-humored attempt to point out we both have the same pens. I love the way the boys balance cheeky bravado with good humour with the ability to also do what they are told when necessary. I love their cheekiness and courage! (Field Log, May 10, 2000, Lines 38-42)

I embraced the boys' refined sense of humour and their ability to have a good time whilst still being able to 'get down to the job.' I believe that the way they were able to laugh freely in the classroom contributed significantly to the quality drama I saw happening in the classroom. It certainly added dimension to the research when we were all able to share in moments of lightheartedness:

The boys, back on track enjoy a bit of off task behaviour immensely and there is lots of laughter. I join in laughing despite self-warnings about staying relatively detached as the researcher. Not possible I decide. As the class ends, a group of boys jump on top of each other trying to pull at each other's body parts. Several more of them join in until it is a full on rugby type activity. Sal hurries them out as I pack up and they seem to scurry like small boys on to the next class. The amazing thing is they have just managed to do some really knockout drama...
(Field Log, May 17, 2000, Lines 36-43)

As I've previously noted, one of the most distinct characteristics of the boys in both groups was the natural and unconditional way they accepted me into the classroom. There was no contrivance about the way they communicated with me and their interest in the research was, I believe, both honest and genuine. They seemed to take me at face value and were interested in many aspects of my life outside the classroom:

As I move around the class, one of the boys asks how my young daughter is. I am suddenly thrown out of my research kilter although I do appreciate his interest. Do I allow the pace and focus of the work to be compromised by answering a personal question? I take a risk and decide to answer his query. He seems to

really interested in what I have to say. The others around him listen to me intensely and I realise they are interested in me in a way I did not expect. I am accepted, I am trusted. This is good. (Field Log, June 7, 2000, Lines 35-39)

and in another reflection,

I have been impressed with the way the boys have welcomed me into the classroom and allowed me to be part of the work they do. I am so much more than a researcher here but a co-worker, a friend, a teacher and at times, a mother to be. They do not seem threatened in any way by my presence and are not afraid to ask me questions or offer opinions when the opportunities arise. (Field Log, August 17, 1999, Lines 10-13)

In the odd tense moment when the boys became uncharacteristically self-conscious about my research presence (most often when I moved about the room observing groups in rehearsal), I was able to put them quickly at ease with re-assuring comments. The prevailing spirit of trust so strong in the drama classroom between themselves and Sal seemed easily transferred to their growing relationships with me:

I move away to look at one rehearsing group and return to find the others in a relaxed state and talking about something private. On seeing me they became more serious and I beg them not to go 'all serious on my behalf' - I am not naïve enough to expect them to share the intimate conversation with me but I hope they can feel natural and uninhibited when I am around them. I can see them relax as they laughingly tell me they won't go 'all serious on me and that it's OK'. I really need them to relax around me as they do with Sal and I think they are beginning to feel that they can do just that. (Field Log, March 11, 1999, Lines 42-46)

But as I was to find, my co-operative, relaxed and carefree players, could at times, prove to be difficult and unfocused, and in turn, this made the challenge of remaining objective even harder:

The group is rowdy and it is hard to really capture their attention - they certainly mean well but I have discovered that sometimes their energy is so high, it takes them some time to calm down. Some of them listen to what I have to say about the next stage of the research but others continue to talk whilst I struggle to give them instruction. In my usual teaching mode, I would pull them into line but this is not my role here and I am careful not to overstep my mark as researcher and guest. I am reticent to lose any trust I may have built up at this stage by setting up a negative relationship. (Field Log, March 14, 2000, Lines 3-10)

Situations like this were not uncommon and I grappled with my natural instinct to discipline and guide in the drama classroom with the need to maintain the reserved stance of the ethnographic researcher. Despite the comfortable and amiable relationship we all shared inside the drama space, I found there were moments where I was exhausted and frustrated by what I perceived as 'time standing still' where the data seemed stagnant and the boys were preoccupied with their own performance anxieties and tensions. There were also periods when the boys themselves were 'out of sync', stressed or exhausted from extra-curricular demands or end-of-term exam preparation and this could cause some problems in the classroom in terms of co-operation and focus. These times are well documented in my field notes and memos and serve as useful reminders of the 'ethnographic fatigue' (Wolcott 1988) and associated difficulties a researcher can experience during long periods in the field.

Tempers, Tensions and Timetables

With prolonged work in any research field comes the inevitable challenges of burnout and frustration. I was faced with three main hurdles to overcome. The first was the frustration I faced when the research was hampered by interruptions to the everyday class activities. Not only did this interfere with the flow of the research process but also affected the intimacy of the relationships I had developed with the boys in the classroom. Second, my status as observer participant meant that my natural instincts as a drama teacher needed to be suppressed when the boys' behaviour was problematic or difficult. My immediate response to 'jump in' and help Sal by answering questions or dealing with a behaviour that sometimes only I was privy to was oppressed by the understanding that I must remain objective and reserved. Thirdly, the long period of time I spent in the classrooms could sometimes result in an overwhelming fatigue which threatened my ability to see clearly all that was unwinding in front of me. Atkinson's (1990) term 'ethnographic tension' suitably describes the dilemma which can face the qualitative researcher as they encounter the emerging contrast between the 'self' and the 'other' of the observed. Many of my reflections are testimony to the fact:

I am tired, not in the mood for talking or observing the boys today and their noisy and uncontrolled entrances uncharacteristically annoy me. Even given the early stages of the research, I am finding searching for links in the observations is not easy given some of the boys' difficult behaviour at times. This is a time for patience and slow observations allowing the important themes to emerge over time in the actions and behaviours of the boys... The room is smelly and unpleasant as I try to get the boys' attention to ask them about consent forms for the research - they are too busy yelling to listen so I call out 'Hello!' rather gruffly.

It is obvious that I am annoyed and they sense this and stop and look at me questioningly. (Field Log, Mar 7, 1999, Lines 1-6 & 9-12)

In one of my analytic memos I reflected further on my growing close relationship with the boys and its effect on my ability to remain objective:

I feel that perhaps the familiarity with the class has become a problem for me here because I wonder if I have stopped 'seeing' the little things which are so important to the ethnographer. The boys have been so co-operative but I think in some ways this has meant a compliance in me which I have begun to address. My research status has never been challenged and I have enjoyed a remarkably comfortable relationship with the boys - I suspect my pregnancy has also impacted on the way the boys have treated me, running with chairs when I walk in, asking how I am and at times, asking to see scans of the baby. (Analytic Memo 9, July 1999, Lines 1-8)

As I read over these memos, I constantly reminded myself that rich knowledge can come unexpectedly from the ordinary and the simple. It is a case of looking carefully and of not taking anything in the field for granted. It is also a case of recognising what research fatigue and burn-out can do to a researcher's ability to 'look inside the data.' As Bateson (1994) muses, 'When I let myself abandon the effort of learning - finding patterns, putting the small details in context - I became easily bored, and at the same time, I felt unauthentic, cut off from these lives I had wanted to know.' (in O'Mara 1999, p.98). In one instance the importance of Bateson's words became clear to me and allowed me to move forward positively in my work:

Observation does not seem to be revealing anything new or extraordinary but I am cognisant that often in ethnographic work, the ordinary is where the researcher can find the most extraordinary things. I have become too relaxed in my work here and I feel blinded by a sudden malaise in my research rigour. The relationship with Sal and her boys works so well that perhaps I am now taking what I see for granted. I must be aware that it is very easy in this state to miss important and unique information about the boys. Perhaps those surprising and unexpected moments when the boys talk to me about all things familiar and private should be embraced as important windows of learning opportunity rather than seen as threat to my researcher detachment. (Analytic Memo 10, August 1999, Lines 1-10)

In retrospect, I now believe that those moments of intense familiarity and closeness enriched the overall process and contributed significantly to the depth of insight I gathered about the boys' attitudes and behaviour. In many ways it mirrored the honest and open connection they shared with Sal and I am convinced it is the reason their drama work was so meaningful and multi-dimensional. It certainly helped in extending my understanding of the growing data, particularly in weeks when I did not see the boys as regularly as I would have hoped. I felt that these absences did affect the dynamic flow of my fieldwork and I would often have to reestablish the focus and pace of the process:

Today we are back from an extended Easter break. Energy is low, I note this as soon as I walk into the classroom - it is not just me, I sense it in the boys as well. They don't greet me as usual and are all standing around, hands in pockets, quietly talking amongst themselves. Sal has to work hard to rally them to discuss

the upcoming plays they have been invited to see. Whilst I see interest in their eyes, I feel today will be hard work. I ask to speak to them about their journal entries. They gather around me and listen politely and ask a few questions about the writing - they don't particularly like this task and are unsure of what to do. They seem 'all at sea' about the process and I need to refocus them. (Field Log, April 4, 1999, Lines 1-10)

and again,

I have not seen the boys for a week due to work experience and I am feeling detached. Frozen, unresponsive. I always chastise myself when I feel like this. I am fatigued, this I know and I have reached a path in the research when I feel the challenges in the boys' attitudes and classroom behaviour could defeat me. I know that once I see the boys again, this feeling of malaise will undoubtedly lift. I feel as if Spradley may be looking over my shoulder whispering to me about 'ethnographic fatigue' - I tell myself to rally - not to be outdone by this momentary lapse of energy, direction and vision. I enter the classroom where some of the boys are punching each other until Sal asks them to stop. In their usual fashion they take their seats against the wall and smile at me. Ah, I am back! I sink into the comforting confines of the drama room which somehow invites me to relax, watch and listen. (Field Log, June 7, 2000, Lines 2-13)

At times I believe it was very hard for the boys to continually readjust to the demands of the research and the constant interruptions to the work but they always seemed to overcome this hurdle:

I walk in first, one boy follows me but says nothing. This is unusual. The other boys saunter in slowly. I have missed a week in the field and the boys eye me like they have never seen me before. I don't quite know whether to address them as I sense the relationship with them has weakened slightly since I saw them last. They eye my notebook and I am not sure if I should just fade into the background. I am finally relieved to see them relax and begin smiling at me once more when the drama lesson begins. It is as if the barriers that they can bring into the classrooms are immediately lifted by the relaxed and open safe space that drama gives them. Certainly it seems to help them reestablish their connections with me quickly. (Field Log, Mar 28, 1999, Lines 1-7)

Not knowing if I would see the boys for a constant flow of drama lessons from one week to the next did hamper efforts to keep the research process running smoothly and cohesively. Despite my efforts to encourage the boys to record their ongoing feelings about drama in their research journals, this proved a frustrating task:

The boys are still tardy in bringing in their journals and the quality of what they are writing is extremely poor, often rushed and scribbled. They apologise to me smiling in their usual cheeky way but I have decided that as a means of collecting rich data, this has not been successful. I feel I cannot force the boys to write feelings when they don't want to and knowing that they also have a journal for Sal, I think it is unfair to push this issue. I am disappointed but feel I am gaining more information from the interviews and informal discussions I have with the boys. (Field Log, August 10, 1999, Lines 1-7)

I don't believe that this was a case of noncompliance on the boys' behalf but rather a result of unrealistic expectations of them within tight semester timelines. In the

end, aware of my problems in securing the journal data, Sal shared any entries they made for her in their personal drama journals and this addressed the dilemma for me more successfully:

I arrive in the classroom and the boys seem to be in better form today than I saw them last. They are friendly, happy and welcoming. They were supposed to write some reflections of the last drama lesson in their journals for me today but I can tell by their sheepish faces that quite a few of them have forgotten to do it. It is not the first time this has happened and I don't think the journal is a successful method for getting to know these boys well. It is hard to keep 'on their backs about it' when some weeks are interrupted by school extra-curricular demands. I growl at them and tell them that I want it tomorrow but I have some doubts if I will ever see anything. I stay positive and don't let this affect my relationship with them for the remainder of the lesson. (Field Log, May 6, 1999, Lines 12-21)

My disappointment with the journals was lessened by the more positive way the boys reacted to the small group interviews. They all wanted to be involved in these and were eager to come along at lunch times to participate:

I have been away for two weeks from the boys and am a little anxious about their responses to the interviews I am about to begin with them. I am heartened to find that they are relaxed and welcoming and seemingly unperturbed by the break in the research. I greet them and tell them that I need to do some more interviews and I am excited by the number of boys who say they want to contribute first. They promise me they will turn up at the agreed time. (Field Log, May 10, 2000, Lines 2-7)

Surprisingly, despite the overall good will and commitment to the interview process, there were some boys who were reluctant to communicate once the video camera was activated. I don't believe that this was a deliberate attempt to be difficult but rather possibly linked to the boys' cultural influences. The boys in question were predominately from European backgrounds and I believe they felt uncomfortable disclosing personal information to me. I was, after all, a stranger in their classroom and one that they were slowly beginning to trust. I was also a female and wondered if perhaps some of the boys considered it imprudent to disclose too much to me about their personal feelings and attitudes. The following memo captures the overall feeling of some of these more difficult moments:

Whilst the interview began well, Naf's failure to answer the questions in anything but monosyllabic responses is affecting the enthusiasm of the others. I feel he is almost distrustful of me and he is looking really uncomfortable to be here. The others look at him almost willing him to offer some kind of comment but he is literally squirming in this seat. I am strangely at a loss to make the situation any better. We are all beginning to feel disconcerted. Naf seems suspicious and uneasy with me and I can't seem to get him on side the way I can the others. I don't want to press him for information but feel I need to ask him quietly why he would not contribute. He tells me that answering such questions makes him uneasy and I wonder if it is to do with his strong cultural background - perhaps I need to talk to him on his own and allow him to deal with the questions in his own way. When I ask Sal what she thinks happened she tells me he is always very private and she has had to work hard to bring him out of himself. His cultural beliefs seem to set him apart from the others in some way. I have found that Naf is not alone in his reactions. Jake, another boy with a

strong cultural Middle Eastern background is always friendly but is notably guarded about what he is prepared to share with me. (Analytic Memo 7, July 1999, Lines 1-15)

Even for Sal, who seemed to have endless energy and focus, the time constraints of a busy school duly tested her endurance and commitment to the research and there were moments when I felt I needed to pull back on the demands I set in the classroom:

Sal is assessing today and is extremely stressed trying to juggle my research requests and needs, the boys' constant demands and other curriculum matters. At times, I feel her generosity in allowing me in the classroom is another burden for her in these busy days - she is always gracious and welcoming however and I try not to be too demanding of her limited time. She has allowed me such enormous freedom in the classroom but I am ever aware that it is her classroom after all and I need to check myself at times to ensure I am not taking too much for granted. (Field Log, April 14 2000, Lines 1-7)

Towards the conclusion of the research, I felt that she was beginning to falter from the pressure of attempting to supply me with reflections on field notes, attending interviews and answering questions about her perceptions about teaching drama and the boys' overall responses. Whilst she never complained, it became increasingly more difficult to meet time-lines associated with the research and I needed to put some of the analysis on the backburner until Sal could address the issues involved. At times I felt the burden on both of us was overwhelming:

I have reached a point in the research where I can no longer go forward until Sal and I address a number of areas concerning my time in the classroom. She has been the most cooperative gatekeeper I could have hoped for but the demands on her time from all areas of the school and myself have undoubtedly caused her some anxiety and stress. It is difficult for me to balance the privilege of being a guest in the classroom with the needs of my role as researcher who has a limited time to collect data, analyse and finally synthesise it all into some kind of intelligible narrative. I feel a growing sense of panic and unease as to whether it will all come together. I need to take a breath and remind myself that all will be all right in the end. (Analytic memo 10, October 2000, Lines 1-9)

Other tensions were attributed to my own frustrations of knowing that my role in the classroom was limited fundamentally to that of the participant observer. There were moments when I felt an overwhelming impulse to intervene in classroom matters where either the drama was in jeopardy of being sabotaged by particular individuals or when I wanted to encourage a student to move forward in their work:

Orlando spoils the moment by laughing. I cannot believe he has done this. I could readily reach over and shake him for disturbing the commitment of the group. Am I losing my objectivity as researcher? I can only think as drama teacher willing the group to overcome this obstacle and keep going. I warn myself to be careful and only shake my head... One of the boys is being destructive near me trying to sabotage the drama work with his negative comments all the time. Sal can't bear him but I can and it takes all my control to stop myself from telling him to stop the behaviour. Suddenly his offsider joins in and I can see the focus

Sal has set up slipping away. I find this very hard to watch but keep scribbling notes furiously. I find myself glaring at the boys. (Field Log, March 7, Lines 28-32 & Field Log, Feb 21, 2000, Lines 51-54)

In another instance, one of the boys from a Lebanese background who lacked self-confidence but with his gentleness and academic focus was a wonderful asset to the drama classroom, tried to tell the others he would be perfect for a particular role. The others, caught up in the excitement of the process rather good-naturedly but quite dismissively told him the idea was not a good one. I felt for him. But as I was to learn, my immediate reactions were not always correct:

I am watching one of the groups decide on what they will do for their upcoming performance. I love this group with their energy and good fun. I hear Jim say, 'I think I would make a good Toby.' This is a big step for Jim who is gentle and unobtrusive about putting his opinions across to the group. I want to shout, 'Yes, yes, you would!' but I hold my tongue. The boys are busy working on a lighting scheme and don't give Jim their full attention. He tries again, 'I think in this scene the boys should say "Hi" instead of "Hey".' 'Shut up Jim' one replies. He is howled down by the group who urge him to pay attention to the lighting scheme. Poor Jim. Do I take this on more seriously because I am a woman? I am burdened by my own sense of empathy for him. I later find out that Jim is in trouble with the group for forgetting to bring his journal for the work today. In effect he is being reprimanded by the others and given the punishment they think he deserves. Despite my empathy and concern about him, he seems to have taken it on the chin and shrugs off the reproach from the others. When I asked Sal about this incident she explained that the boys generally 'sort each other out' without her

intervention. This is what boys are about then - very different to the way I observed the girls handle conflict. (Field Log, March 11, 1999, Lines 43-55)

Closing Doors

Leaving the research field is never easy. It is the end of a journey with travellers who at first, you nervously glanced upon, who you moved cautiously and curiously around, who you tentatively edged closer to day by day until they too feel the awkwardness which comes with the unknown, slowly slip away. It is a complex and fascinating passage of discovery and wonderment. The leaving can be surprisingly emotional and at times, almost life changing. The learning can be tremendously and deliciously satisfying. (Analytic Memo, October 2000, Lines 1-6)

And so my two-year journey came to an end. Not once but twice. The first departure was the year of my pregnancy, the initial grounding research year that I had planned as being the only time in the field with the boys and Sal. But as it happened, I unexpectedly left the boys earlier than planned and consequently made the decision to return to the field the next year with another drama group of senior boys. I remember the leaving of the girls in my previous research as being highly emotional for all of us but with the boys, although some sadness prevailed, they appeared positive and generally unperturbed about my moving on to compile the research data into my doctorate. To my surprise however, I was to later learn from Sal that their rather matter of fact 'boyo' 'slap on the arm' goodbyes to me, actually hid their true feelings of regret to see me go and I was moved to hear that as time progressed both groups often asked about me. For me, leaving the field was

textured with a strange mesh of sadness and relief as fatigue lifted from my shoulders and I was able to finally immerse myself in the data without interruption.

In the days before I left the first participants I reflected:

As I sit in the classroom today I know that I will be leaving the boys in a few days. It is more sudden than I anticipated due to illness and I feel a low grade panic knowing I need to extend the data about the boys' drama experiences until the end of the year. The boys have been wonderful throughout my time in the classroom. I have become part of the classroom and they have treated me like a familiar part of their everyday classroom life - at times it has been as if I have become one of them and their casual hellos and cheeky retorts have served to give me an easy and honest relationship with them. Today I must talk with them about my impending departure and tie up some loose ends with the research. I am feeling strangely sad about the prospect wanting to know so much more about these players. The boys eye me carefully as I tell them I am leaving and when some of them express their regret that I am leaving, I am touched by their intimate disclosure. (Field Log, July 13, 1999, Lines 1-13)

Sal was as always exuberant and supportive about the contribution I had made to the classroom and in my leaving, she marked the occasion by openly thanking me with the boys and enthusing about the value of the work which will soon be written up. Her response never faltered and I believe her positive attitude was a contributing factor to the respect and integrity the boys awarded my work since the beginning of the research. It was her affirmative and energetic approach and genuine love of the boys and the teaching of drama which throws a brilliant light on the everyday classroom interactions and relationships she shares with the boys.

It also allowed my research to have depth and dimension as I observed and moved about the classroom over the two-year period without restrictions or negativity. I was also heartened when Sal kept in touch with me throughout the remaining part of the semester sending the boys' greetings and associated comments and also forwarding journal entries which helped enrich my overall analysis.

My last entry of the first part of the journey, an analytic memo, captures the potential drama has to empower, liberate and change the adolescent male on his own journey to adulthood. I saw much evidence of this during my time in the drama classroom with Sal and the boys. Certainly for many of the boys, the passage they made from the beginning of their senior schooling years to their final graduation was both enlightening and life-changing. Their stories and their words are testimony to this fact. From the most problematic of students to the most reticent and shy, the students in Sal's classroom benefited in some way from the exciting and innovative drama they experienced on a daily basis. As a drama researcher, I was moved by the power, vision and creativity I saw unleashed in these young men's ongoing performances. In many ways, I too would never be the same:

During my extended stay in hospital, I know the boys followed my progress through my telephone conversations with Sal and I also know they were keen to know if everything went well with my baby. I was to reflect many times on what I had seen in the classroom and be constantly moved once more by the wonder and power of the dramatic form. The boys were able to become closer to me because of the invitation of freedom the drama classroom offers. This is unique to this way of learning! When my daughter was born safely, I received a beautiful

card signed by all the boys in the first group. The comments were heartwarming and some weeks later I took my daughter up to the classroom to see them. They had notably matured but still had the same warm welcome for me that they had always had. Somehow even Dan had managed to get through to the end of the year and had developed in his confidence. Jake came up to me and wished me all the best and told me quietly that he was thinking of becoming a Catholic priest. I was not surprised by this 'confession' as Jake had always had a presence different to the other boys. Drama had allowed him to 'find' himself in a safe and supportive space. I believe it had allowed him to explore his masculinity, to make a choice about the kind of future he wanted to pursue - certainly it had nurtured the gentle and kind side of Jake which had sometimes borne the brunt of some of the boys' less generous comments from time to time. He now had a clear vision of what kind of man he wanted to be and that I felt, was the perfect example of the power of drama to help boys find their own way! I left the field satisfied that drama is an amazing and liberating learning medium.

(Analytic memo 16, October 1999, Lines 30-47)

The following concluding chapter, 'Discoveries and Signposts' is a synthesis of discourse which seeks to evaluate and analyse the findings of the research in relation to contemporary literature and practice. Additionally, it will provide recommendations for future classroom teaching, not only for those involved in the discipline of educational drama but for all teachers in single sex male classrooms.

CHAPTER EIGHT

DISCOVERIES AND SIGNPOSTS

Introduction

The quintessential value of qualitative research is grounded in what it reveals to us about the participants and their world. Indeed, the researcher's journey is validated by the richness of data collected and the stories which unfold as this information is analysed, synthesised and interpreted. In forming this final chapter, I was reminded of the words of Carol Gilligan (1990) who wrote *what could you possibly learn by studying us? What would happen if what was inside us were to enter the world?* (pgs. 2 & 4) Gilligan's words underpin one of my most basic philosophical research tenets - that the work that I have done in the classroom must somehow contribute positively to my discipline and hopefully ultimately, to society as a whole. In some way, what I reveal to others should actively inform, challenge, awaken or evoke an element of change in their thinking and their everyday practice.

This ethnographic research has explored the experiences of adolescent boys and their female teacher in two single sex drama classrooms over a period of two years. It has been a journey shaped not only by the voices of the boys and their teacher but also by our combined experiences and interactions in an everyday drama classroom. The findings presented here and their associated recommendations are the ultimate product of these collaborative and active partnerships and serve I

would trust, as future guidelines and signposts for practitioners and researchers in the fields of educational drama and boys' education.

Philosophically, this research is underpinned by sociological and educational theories which explore the notion of what it means to be masculine in a traditionally patriarchal pluralistic society and how this in turn can affect a boy's educational experience. Contemporary ideological debate about whether 'nature' or 'nurture' is most influential in the way a boy develops his sense of masculine identity provided an important backdrop in considering how a boy's educational experiences can alter his overall perception of what it means to be a man. Biddulph's (1995) and other's (Formani 19990, Farrell 1993, Bly 1996) arguments that a return to the primal masculine self, the 'nature' ideal, will restore what has become an imbalance in the way we bring up our sons provided a useful framework for considering the way teachers approach the implementation of educational drama in boys' schooling. In particular, Biddulph strongly advocates a greater number of male role models in schools and specialist educational programs wholly developed for men and boys. His passionate advocacy for male teachers in boys' classrooms proposed an interesting and challenging perspective for my case study of a female drama teacher, not only responsible for coordinating the drama department in an all boys' college but also for teaching the majority of the drama classes as well.

At the other end of the spectrum, the 'nurture' argument, I was influenced by the work of Lewis (1983), Mac an Ghail (1994), Connell (1995) and Kenway (1997, 1998), who contend that masculinity is a social and cultural construct, both complex and multi-faceted. For these theorists, education serves as a dominant

institutional force in maintaining hegemonic ideologies about masculinity and gender roles. Kenway's (1997) contention that institutionalised masculinities and masculine identities lie at the very heart of many of the problems men face today, is pertinent to studies of specific communities such as all-boy classrooms in terms of how well educational doctrine and curriculum planning actively and comprehensively address the concept of masculinity and the needs of individual boys. The idea of multiple and multi-layered masculinities (Connell 1995) was especially useful in observing the effectiveness of the drama program in meeting the needs of a variety of adolescent males on a day-to-day basis. Of vital importance to the research was the writings of Pollack (1999), Fletcher (1999), Hartman (1999), and Hawkes (2001) whose specialist work with boys, teachers and education alerts us to the need for learning environments for boys that are liberating, nurturing and empowering and where masculinity of all typographies is celebrated and embraced. Crucial is Pollack's (1999) view that in single-sex classrooms, without the presence of female peers, boys are more able to support each other, voice their opinions from the heart more freely and are less inhibited to try new things. (specific to Sub-questions 1, 2 and 3) Hartman's (1999) research, exploring the advantages of having female teachers in all-boy classrooms, was useful in analysing and positioning the data in relation to the participants' relationship with their female teacher and how valuable this proved in their overall experience in the drama classroom. (specific to Sub-question 4)

Greene's (1978) work was also paramount in providing an aesthetic perspective of the value of the arts, specifically drama, in the lives of all students. Her argument that teachers need to provide a creative space where inspirations of unprecedented kinds can occur in the thoughts and lives of those we teach, helped me

contextualise and make sense of data which was primarily focused on the work of Sal in the drama classroom. (specific to Sub-question 5) Additionally, McLean's (1995) detailed research on formulating a workable aesthetic framework for teachers of drama was influential in providing me with a discernible blueprint for observing and understanding Sal's planning and practice in the classroom and how these impacted on the experiences of the boys. (specific to Sub-question 4) McLean's assertion that drama gives students the opportunity to 'investigate how the world is constructed rather than continually replicating the philosophies of the dominant paradigms such as patriarchy and capitalism' (McLean, pg.46) was essential in determining how boys perceived their experiences and relationships in the drama classroom and what benefits they felt drama held for them. (specific to Sub-question 1 and 4)

I was also strongly guided by Fletcher (1999) who identifies five essential elements boys need to learn in order to live more fulfilling lives. What is most significant about Fletcher's list I believe is that every one of these elements is intrinsic to learning in the drama classroom, not as incidental learning experiences but as pertinent components of the core of every drama program and curriculum document:

1. Self awareness and self assessment.
2. Self regulation using emotions to facilitate being conscientious, persevering and resilient.
3. Motivation and self guidance towards goals, taking the initiative in tasks, striving to improve and persevering in the face of setbacks and frustrations.
4. Empathy, the ability to take others' perspective, cultivating rapport.
5. Social skills, handling emotions well in situations, reading social situation

accurately, interacting smoothly and effectively and using these skills to persuade, lead and negotiate in teamwork.

Whilst the research was guided by the base question, 'What are the experiences of adolescent boys and their female teacher in two single sex drama classrooms' a further set of sub-questions provided the defining framework.

1. What benefits do boys perceive they gain from participating in drama?
2. How do they perceive their own experiences and relationships in a single -sex drama classroom?
3. What behaviours are apparent in the daily interactions of these boys in the drama classrooms?
4. How do adolescent boys communicate with each other in the drama classroom?
5. How do adolescent boys approach drama work in their classroom?
6. What effect did a female drama teacher have on an all boys' classroom?

In this final chapter of findings and recommendations, these questions provide the impetus and direction of the discussion and render a clear and workable framework for the overall analysis and synthesis of data. Whilst the questions address specific concerns and issues related to the research, they are inextricably interwoven, bound by elements of masculinity, identity and teacher practice. For clarity however, discussion will attempt to explore each finding in relation to the questions outlined, identifying and analysing common threads where appropriate.

Learning to be Real: Benefits of Drama for Adolescent Boys

EMERGENT FINDING: Drama is an attractive subject for boys because it offers a learning space where friends can come together in a safe, supportive, enjoyable and liberating environment. For all of these boys, drama had some notable influence on their social, personal, emotional and intellectual development.

The boys' delightful poem 'Drama is Good Shit', written as part of their final study unit in Year 12, describes drama as 'a release', 'learning to be creative', 'expressing our feelings', 'a home away from home', 'feeling safe' and 'learning to be real.' (see Chapter Five) Indeed, such responses suggest that Bidduph's and Bly's idea of the 'primal sacred place' where men can find and reclaim their male spirit may well be realised in learning spaces such as the drama classroom. Certainly 'Matt's' description of the drama room as *a sacred place where you can let out whatever it is you are feeling and model it into something creative and useful* suggests that learning in drama can be transformative and liberating in ways boys may not have been exposed to in more traditional modes of schooling. (Matt, Questionnaire 1, 1999) Other comments such as *drama is different to any other subject where we let our bodies and imaginations run riot in a relaxed intimate place... here I can offer my own views* indicate that drama serves far greater purposes than simply providing boys with another academic score. (Questionnaires Group 1&2, Jan-Aug 1999, Jan-October 2000) In the Year 12 Extended Study unit, 'Recollections', Dan reflected on his experience in drama, *Even to this day, I look forward to walking through the door (of the drama room) cause all my worries will float away for the next fifty minutes.* (October 2000) Additionally Duf wrote, *Drama is a blast cause I can just be myself you know and that's OK.* (September 1999, Questionnaire 2)

Biddulph (1995) and Pollack (1999) write that boys need more classrooms which can foster healthy development of young males not only academically but emotionally as well. In recent times traditional notions that males are the 'tougher', less emotional breed who can look after themselves have been challenged by contemporary sociological and educational debate that argues that adolescent males need nurturing just as much as their female counterparts and indeed, possibly more so. Bly (1990) and Biddulph's (1995) contention that in order to live more productive and fulfilled lives males need to be shown how to get 'in touch' with their innermost feelings through more meaningful interaction with other males, certainly seemed validated by the boys' overall responses as to why they do drama and what they gain from it.

The boys emphasised that one of the benefits of drama was it allowed them to think more creatively in an environment that encourages a freedom of both mind and body. Certainly it would seem that the body/kinesthetic, verbal/linguistic and interpersonal dimensions of intelligences evident in so many drama experiences, (Gardner's multiple intelligences 1995) proved particularly advantageous for many of the boys in this case study. Comments such as *(the drama room) is a haven where I can be myself, take risks and explore the various elements and conventions that belong to a good drama in ways different to other classes,* (Lewis, 'Recollections' October 2000) confirmed that the drama space may well be one where inspirations of unprecedented kinds can occur (Greene's emphasis 1978) through immersion in experiential and diverse learning modes.

The concept of 'being themselves' in the drama classroom was significantly important to both groups of boys. Most of them considered drama a space when they could be themselves without fear of being criticised or censured and where their own creative contribution, however small, was celebrated and supported. They perceived drama as one of the few subjects that offered some kind of success to all boys rather than just those with particular sporting talents or high intellect. Hawke's (2001) belief that in order for boys to develop on all levels of personal competency, (particularly in their emotional lives) they need to be offered alternative modes of learning such as those in the Arts, resonated in many of the boys' own responses. They considered that *drama really stretches (the) mind... it gives young people confidence and the ability to get up and say a joke and make people laugh... it makes me want to continue school... it helps you grow up socially and be more analytical about things.* (Questionnaires Groups 1&2, Jan-Aug 1999, Jan-October 2000) For one boy in conflict, Orlando, drama brought fun and joy into his life and he would *never forget his senior days in drama.* (from 'Recollections', October 2000) Another student explained that participation in drama gave him *a good knowledge to adapt to other things in life.* (Interview 2, 1999, from Lines 5-12)

The boys in both groups agreed that drama gave them all a unique opportunity to excel at some level using a variety of thinking skills often not utilised in other more scientific subjects. Contrary to the findings of the 1994 'Inquiry into Boys' Education', the boys did not fear ridicule for participating in a non-traditional academic area such as drama. Indeed, the questionnaires revealed that the majority of them felt that *whilst drama improved self confidence, self esteem and social skills and they could put their differences aside and offer opinions comfortably*

it was still a challenging subject which needed team work and academic commitment. (Questionnaires, Groups 1&2, Jan-Aug 1999, Jan-October 2000).

O'Neill's (1995) assertion that drama permits the student to slip the bonds of their identities and participate in other forms of existence echoed in the boys' own beliefs that in drama you can *really let loose, pretend to be someone else in the performing tasks and it doesn't matter what you say or do cause it's OK.* (Interview 2, 2000, from Lines 1-28. As I noted in Chapter Seven 'Understanding Mr. Brecht', boys often chose to do drama with Sal because they *felt less restricted and uptight in the drama classroom and were able to work through problems or stressful times through participation in the form itself.* Even on days when the boys grappled both with the dramatic form and their own personal demons and difficulties, they were still able to *express (themselves) through the role-plays and performances and expel pent-up energy and frustration by working through emotions (they) normally could not.* (from Questionnaires Groups 1&2, Jan-Aug 1999, Jan-October 2000) The *huge buzz* (Matt, Questionnaire 1, 1999) they got from performing on stage worked as a powerful catalyst in motivating and gaining commitment from the boys to give their best in the drama classroom.

All of the boys interviewed agreed that drama is as much a subject for boys as it is for girls. Comments such as *drama is a subject to be enjoyed because of its very nature of everyone being able to perform whether male or female. In this school it is considered 'cool' to do drama and a lot of boys want to be part of Mrs. S's classes.* (Questionnaires, Groups 1&2, Jan-Aug 1999, Jan-October 2000). Certainly, for many of these boys, masculinity was not measured by whether or not a boy did drama. The benefits of friendship, fun and freedom far outweighed any traditional

perceptions of drama as a 'girly' or 'feminine' subject and provided these boys with a unique opportunity to make decisions intelligently and authentically for themselves in a diverse learning environment. As later findings will reveal more comprehensively, this was in no small part due to the positive influence and attitude of the teacher, the ethos in the school itself and a drama program that was meaningfully contextualised in the lives and interests of the boys.

The boys in this case study expressed that participation in educational drama heightened both their self-esteem and self-confidence and enabled them *to be (their) true selves up on stage whilst being supported at every level.* (from 'Recollections', Senior Drama Students, October 2000) As Dan confirmed in the last weeks of his senior schooling years, *(drama) has been one of the most convincing choices I have ever made and I have enjoyed it in every way possible.* ('Recollections', Senior Drama Students, October 2000). Other responses included, *drama has given me greater self esteem and social skills, I can feel comfortable to air my opinions and release any emotions within me during the day... it helps me keep a positive outlook on my school life... it helps with confidence in speaking in public.* (Questionnaires, Groups 1&2, Jan-Aug 1999, Jan-October 2000). Over the research period, I witnessed many of the boys grow in confidence and understanding not only about drama as an art form but also about themselves as individuals in an everchanging complex world. For some boys, the change was subtle but for others, it was significant and lifechanging. As Kokori (1995) also noted of male students in her research of one drama classroom, the boys' confidence and self-esteem developed through a new found responsibility - that of belonging to a group in a professional capacity. In one of my final analytic memos, I reflected:

I am more convinced then ever of the rich value of students experiencing some drama in their schooling years... in my time here in Sal's drama classroom, I have seen these boys travel along a varied diverse road of learning curves - for many, drama has given them the self-confidence and self-esteem needed to overcome personal burdles both inside and outside the classroom... for some, drama has given them one of the most positive and empowering experiences of their adolescent lives. (Analytic Memo, October 12, 2000. adapted from Lines 1-21)

Recommendations

It is evident from the findings that the boys in this case study found educational drama advantageous in their academic lives for a variety of reasons. Not only did they gain a high level of enjoyment from participating in the subject but also considered it valuable in developing skills associated with interpersonal, intrapersonal, existential and linguistic forms of intelligence. The drama classroom became an established 'safe, chill out' zone where boys felt they could come to relax and learn without the more bounded structures of the everyday classroom environment. In the words of Palmer (1995) it represented a vital space which invited and valued the voices of the individual (boy) whilst still affirming the combined voices of the group.

For many of these boys, drama class was the only time in their day where they felt valued, supported and encouraged to do their personal best. West's (1994) call for the return to the 'renaissance man', one who is encouraged to excel in the Arts as well as areas such as sport, is well supported by the boys' positive attitudes towards drama and the desire from all kinds of boys, many of them the 'jocks' (sportsmen) of the school, to get into Mrs. S's class. **A major recommendation of this research is that all boys should be urged to participate in some form of drama throughout their school years. Drama should be promoted by educational authorities as a masculine and challenging academic subject that awards boys opportunities to excel as scholars as well as develop personally, socially, spiritually and morally.** Educators need be cognisant that without some participation in Arts subjects, the ability of boys to communicate with themselves as individuals and with others can be hampered and that indeed many boys pay a high price because of the vocational nature of boys' subjects.

If we are to assist boys to become more selective and critical about the world around them, they must be exposed to learning which is multifarious and stimulating and which invites them to identify and explore unconditionally their own brands of masculinity. Raising the status of educational drama in boys' schools, advocating West's (1996) idea of the return to the 'renaissance' man and actively acknowledging that boys are different and have unique individual learning styles (Pollack 1999) are powerful ways we can begin to address difficulties associated with masculinity and adolescent boys such as homophobia, violence, bullying, depression and suicide.

Diverging Masculinities - The Power of the Single Sex Drama Classroom

Emergent Finding: The single sex drama classroom was considered advantageous by the majority of the boys because of its strong ethos of mateship, camaraderie and equity. Drama can assist in empowering and uniting boys of all masculine typographies and improve the social health of the classroom.

One of the key considerations for this research was the influence the single sex learning environment had on the participants. Of particular interest was the possibility that an all boys' classroom might perpetuate masculine 'hegemonic type' groups and would actively maintain specific expectations and perceptions of acceptable masculine traits and behaviour. Whilst the boys in this case study expressed an awareness of distinct groups in the classroom (distinguished as the 'jocks', the 'intellects' and the 'nerds'), many of them expressed a belief that it was the positive force of drama that fundamentally allowed the class to overcome group distinctions and work more collaboratively.

Many of the boys believed that as they worked together towards ensemble performances with common goals, these distinct groups became less obvious and defined. It appeared that the genuine love of drama shared by the majority of boys in both groups worked to unite many of them in communicative ways that under other academic circumstances, may not have happened quite so harmoniously. However, whilst they agreed that drama was a uniting factor in their learning lives, many of them pointed out that outside the classroom, boys would still often drift back into 'type' groups. When I asked them to elaborate on this point many of them

stressed that without participating in drama, they would possibly never get the opportunity to mix with others they perceived they had 'nothing in common with'. As Spencer, one of the boys in the first group explained, *It (drama) brings people together; there are the geeks (the nerds), the intellects and the jocks in this class but drama really helps with this. It brings guys together that may never talk to each other normally for a short time.* Pierre added, that whilst some segregations existed, drama did help to develop a collaborative classroom ethos. *There are some segregations you know, the sporties (jocks), the individuals (the nerds), the smart guys (the intellects), but not so much in class because drama helps everyone express themselves together.* (Interview 2, 1999, from Lines 58-70)

In discussing the advantages of single sex male classrooms, Biddulph (1995) describes them as significant environments for fostering healthy academic and emotional development in boys. Pollack (1999), also a strong advocate for exclusive learning spaces for boys, specifies them as important and necessary safe zones that allow the unique voices of boys to be heard and celebrated. Pollack's research into boys' classrooms revealed that without the presence of girls, boys are more able to support each other freely, can voice their opinions more honestly and naturally and generally feel less inhibited to try new things and take greater learning risks. Additional research by Hulse (1997) and Hawley (1991) concur that boys in single sex classrooms appear less defensive and less susceptible to peer pressure than their coeducational counterparts, are generally more comfortable with their own 'aggression' and are more confident in their own abilities to do well.

Conversely, other literature (Willis 1977, Walker 1988, Mac an Ghail 1996, McDonald 1999) suggests that single sex classrooms are more likely to foster and maintain masculine 'typographies' that align themselves according to intellect,

sporting ability, musical taste and innumerable other type criteria. These discernible 'type' groups are instrumental in defining boundaries of power and authority (Connell 1995) as well as managing collective public perceptions of what it means to be a man. As former data suggests, whilst 'type' groups appeared to exist outside the classroom, in this case study, drama was helpful in breaking down such divisions inside the classroom.

There was also evidence of strong male physical communication in both classrooms in this case study. Whilst Connell (1995) describes such behaviour as typical examples of male power and authority, observations and interviews in this research suggest any emergent hegemonic masculinity in the group was diluted by a much stronger sense of community and dramatic intent. The most dominant group of boys, evident in both research classes, the 'drama intellects', were best described as those who excelled at sport, were popular with their teachers, were fit and healthy and who generally exerted a creative physical force in the drama classroom. For many of the other boys, the 'drama intellects' represented a heightened form of masculinity which could be at times, intimidating, but also inspirational and supportive particularly during performance times. In many ways, drama allowed these kinds of boys to lead others in a manner which was empowering and positive rather than superior.

Therefore, whilst it could be argued that the 'intellects' represented a specific form of hegemonic power inside the drama classroom, data also suggests, that for many of the boys, their status was an affirmative rather than negative influence on the others. Their attention to artistic detail, their drive and focus to 'get on with the job' and their ability to take more risks, was often

more connected with a desire for artistic excellence than it was about being superior males. As some of the boys confirmed *there are natural born leaders in this class, the smart ones, who help guide the drama and keep it on track... usually this area is dominated by a group who are in fact, great participants in forming the drama... often when guidance is needed, these guys can give us a 'shove' in the right direction... some boys can take the initiative and make decisions about the drama and give it direction and focus... I am happy to be a listener.* (Questionnaires, 1&2, Jan-Aug, Jan-October 2000) There were a minority of boys however (some who were often negative influences in the classroom), who described these leaders as *pains in the arse, up themselves and shits.* (Questionnaires 1 and 2, Groups 1 and 2, 1999-2000)

From my observations and discussions with the boys, it would appear that the artistic communal focus of performance and the processes involved in reaching the dramatic endpoint, can work to alter more traditional alignments of hegemonic masculinities that are most evident when boys are grouped together replacing them with a greater sense of masculine equality and like-mindedness. In these particular drama classrooms, the boys did not seem overly compelled to act, as Gilbert (1998) suggests, 'appropriately masculine' in the learning experiences they encountered. Instead, they seemed more able to transform the more masculine aspects of their personalities, such as high energy, risk taking and competition into creative driving forces fuelled by camaraderie, co-operation and a sense of artistic achievement. Indeed, McDonald's observation (1999) that drama may well be the only space in a boys' school where all 'types' can communicate together was confirmed by the boys' belief that *inside the drama space the group was relatively united where alot of love surrounds the*

room. (Questionnaire 1, 2000) Despite *the stronger and more creative personalities at work in the classroom*, (Field Log, August 17, 1999, Lines 13-19) I can conclude that there was no substantial evidence of the presence of a hegemonic 'inside' group that worked to marginalise and silence those considered less masculine (Spender's emphasis 1982). It was the enduring sense of community and friendship in the drama classroom which boys held in high esteem as *working as an ensemble with your mates makes it more creative and artistic... as so many different ideas are working together*. (Questionnaires, Group 1&2, Jan-Aug, 1999, Jan-October 2000)

When I discussed whether the boys felt they were disadvantaged by the absence of girls in their classroom, they were unanimous in their responses. They preferred it that way. They told me, *by being in an all boys' classroom, there is no hesitation to air personal opinions, thoughts or feelings... we are not always trying to impress or compete with girls... we can relax rather than constantly thinking about girls... boys take more risks and that makes the learning great... we free less (pressure) to 'perform' and we can function as freely as possible*. (Questionnaires, 1&2, Jan-Aug, Jan-October 2000). Indeed, some of the boys felt that not having girls in the classroom actually elevated the 'masculine' status of the subject because so many kinds of boys wanted to do drama and viewed it as a desirable Arts subject. As one boy described it, *(in a) co-educational school, (we) would feel less secure because the group would give you some crap cause less guys do it. In this school, noone gives a stuff because the Arts are an accepted thing for guys... this is a cool school*. (Interview 2, 1999, Lines 20-22) What was interesting here was that the boys felt that male students in 'other' (State Education System) schools may consider them 'fags' (Interview 2, 1999, Lines 40-58) for doing drama because it was

traditionally considered a female subject. The boys did not consider this the case at their own school because of the high level of interest and support for drama as a subject. What was clear from my discussions with them is that they did not feel pressured to choose only subjects considered to be traditionally most suitable for males such as Science or Maths nor exhibited any hesitation in crossing what has been perceived as educational gender boundaries by choosing subjects such as drama in their final year of schooling. (Collins' emphasis 1996)

The boys felt that, in the absence of girls, they were more able to deal with interpersonal difficulties in the classroom in more 'effective' ways or as Hulse (1997) describes it, they were 'more comfortable with their own forms of aggression'. I observed that the more aggressive types of behaviours between the boys were most evident in the way they dealt with conflicts arising from classroom behaviour or laziness in performance preparation. In dealing with problems between themselves they told me, *guys will generally say something to each other openly and then it is all over... we will burn the guy who is not working until he does, it's about respect for all. We would rather deal with it ourselves than Mrs. S. jump in.* (Interviews 3 & 4, 1999 & 2000. Lines 65-71, 20-22) In discussions with Sal, she confirmed, *there's an underlying trust not to let the other boys down in a performance. The comment about 'burning a guy' is so natural - they will just do it, sometimes with forceful words, but then they just move on for the good of all. They are not afraid of telling each other how it is, honestly and precisely.* (Sal, Interview 4, 1999, Lines 32-37) This would suggest that this was one of the more effective ways that the boys maintained the status quo of mateship and everyday working relationships in the classroom and was closely connected with a growing understanding of the importance of co-artistry and creative respect.

Recommendations

These findings revealed that boys in this case study believed that being part of a single sex drama classroom was highly advantageous for the following reasons:

- It gave them the opportunity to work with their mates in a liberating environment.
- It gave them the freedom and comfort of being ‘themselves’ without the pressure of feeling they need to ‘perform’ for girls.
- It allowed a ‘fusing’ of masculine ‘type’ groups with a greater acceptance of individual differences as all worked towards a common artistic goal.
- It effectively helped ‘masculinise’ drama as an enriching academic subject for both boys and girls.

My time in the all-male drama classroom has made me a strong advocate for single sex schooling. Whilst Connell’s (1995) and Kenway’s (1997) warnings about the dangers of perpetuating patterns of hegemonic masculinity through institutions such as boys’ schools are well heeded, there is every reason to believe that single sex classrooms can serve boys well if they are given the opportunity to work collectively and productively towards a common goal. Single sex classrooms can teach boys about alternative visions of masculine relationships (Doyle 1993) and the equality and respect that each one of them deserves. The real power in educational drama lies in its potential to foster ‘a sense of a masculine community’ (McDonald 1999) akin I believe to Bly’s (1990) idea of a ‘tribal or primal’ community of men. Whilst it is acknowledged many of the boys felt that outside the drama classroom, boys tended to drift back into ‘type’ groups, they agreed that inside the

drama space, group boundaries were less rigid and at times, absent altogether. The development of the boys' self confidence and self esteems were important by-products of their experiences in the drama classroom and, for some of them, were the most important benefits of all. A defined sense of belonging and the knowing that they could actively succeed through an expressive mode of learning were the incentives for these boys to follow drama from the junior to the senior level of their schooling.

After my time in the research field I propose that single sex boys' classrooms are important but single sex boys' drama classrooms are even more so. They provide an essential space for dealing with the problems of masculinity in an expressive and experiential mode that is different to any other curriculum subject. Significantly, without the complications of female students, **the all-male classroom can work as an important agency for change in gender perceptions in the hearts and minds of students and enable boys' voices to be heard freely and without censure.** Additionally, all male classrooms can allow adolescent boys to explore different dimensions of friendship and camaraderie in a potentially supportive and collaborative environment.

As I previously argued, every boy should be positively encouraged to partake in some kind of drama learning in their schooling years and that there needs to be a strong and public advocacy for them doing so. More precisely, schools for boys need to acknowledge and address traditional patriarchal infrastructures which support and perpetuate what Best (1983) terms the 'third curriculum' - the pressure for boys to select curriculum subjects traditionally deemed to be more 'academically masculine' such as the Sciences and Mathematics. As Gilbert (1998) argues, this has led to a fractured education for boys that is limiting and in many ways potentially

damaging for their wholistic development. In this case study, evidence has shown that the focused support for the Arts in the research school and the elevated status it has received as a viable academic subject have resulted in a huge surge in the popularity of drama at all levels and boys who are satisfied, fulfilled and empowered by their experiences in the subject. Undoubtedly, the perception of drama as ‘a cool subject for boys’ in this school has been a major contributing factor in ensuring hundreds of boys have and continue to receive a positive and powerful aesthetic influence in their educational lives.

Physicalising the Classroom: Boys’ Communication, Behaviour and Use of Space

Emergent Finding: Boys need learning environments which can award them opportunities to engage in high levels of physicality in liberated and unbounded learning space. Boys’ communication modes are often highly physical in nature.

Many years of observation in schools taught me that boys do like and apparently need to be physical with each other but I suspected it was not always a case of simple aggression or oneupmanship. Indeed, I was interested in Pollack’s (1999) argument that boys’ friendships are built through high levels of physicality such as rowdy play and rough and tumble competition and that these forms of interaction are necessary in order for boys to connect on deeper emotional levels. Such displays are not always a case of aggression. As Pollack points out, boys simply communicate differently but not less meaningfully than girls. It seems that boys do indeed follow their own formula for friendship: action, energy, laughter, doing together and this all works to consolidate their relationships.

One of the most significant observations of this research was the high level of physical communication evident in the drama classroom. In concurrence with Pollack (1999), I would suggest that far from being just simple acts of aggression or hostility, many times, physical communication served to:

- Signal and consolidate friendship between boys.
- Allow boys to ‘blow off steam’ pent up from other subjects or outside influences.
- Demonstrate approval, support and joy amongst the boys. [Levant’s (1992) idea of ‘action empathy’]
- Gain acceptance from others.
- Act as a show of disapproval (Analytic memos Feb-Sept 1999-2000).

What was most insightful was Sal’s support of the highly physical behaviour that punctuated the beginning and ending of every drama class. My initial response to their behaviour was that they were ‘acting the fool’ and needed to be reprimanded. But as Sal explained, *there is only so much you can do to hold them and if I am not flexible and don’t allow them to have their moments of physical play, then I feel the REAL learning will never occur. You must give them this freedom.* Sal had recognised that the physical style of learning offered in drama meshed well with the boys’ needs to physicalise their feelings and this ultimately became her management trumpcard. She believed that acknowledging the boys’ needs and genuine enjoyment of physical activity was an essential element in planning all their drama experiences. *By tapping into the physicality of boys’ culture, such as the sporting metaphor, well it is a bit deceiving but it allows me to work in other ways to branch off into areas that they would not normally go.* (Sal, Interview 2, 2000, Lines 7-9)

In this case study, this approach seemed to work effectively in settling and relaxing the boys before the drama work began. Hawley (1991) writes that many boys do respond less well to more traditional methods of teaching and better to more active styles. Sal's philosophy to 'let them get it out of their systems' so they can begin to really learn, supports research that argues that behavioural problems in boys can be minimised by allowing them time out of desks to engage in action-orientated learning. (Van Derhorst in Pollack 1999)

What I initially interpreted as a lack of control and mayhem amongst the boys, was in fact a complex array of signals from the boys to each other about friendship, freedom, acceptance, support and at times, censure and power. The use of physical signals such as *pulling off another's trousers, pulling each other's shirts, ties and hair, jumping on each other's backs*, (Field Log 2, August 2, 1999, Lines 29-31) represented, rituals of male bonding and friendship affirmation. (Hawkes 2001) When I asked the boys about this they told me that drama allowed them the freedom to show their physical side with each other and it was just *a male bonding thing that was fun and made us want to do drama more*. (Group Interview, October 2000, Lines 56-58)

In the final performance 'Recollections', the boys addressed this idea of 'the physical ritual' themselves in a slick script:

Then the classic ritual of every class

Smithy would storm in and try to pinch some arse

Kane would go about his regular beatings

While AJ would suck up to Miss and tell everyone his feelings

Orlando each morning would burst in late

Then in comes 'Eggo' "What the F.. are you doing mate?"

Robbo would sit in the corner pretending to jam on a guitar

And look there's Rat, boy, that kid goes too far. ('Recollections' Year 12, 2000)

Whilst much of the behaviour was rough and tumble, there were notable displays of more intimate behaviour which I had not expected to see. *Orlando is massaging another's back as he lies on the floor... the boys are spreading their bodies around the drama room... they are all so relaxed with each other.* (Field Log, March 28, 2000, Lines 5-8, 21-22)... *the boys bounce into the drama room, talking, singing and yelling out 'Monty Python' types of Good Morning. They seem happy with each other.* (Field Log, Feb 21, 2000, Lines 1-4)

However, my observations did reveal that in times of frustration, fatigue, or low self-esteem such forms of behaviour could indeed have aggressive overtones and were used, it appeared, to intimidate, control, or as Browne (1995) has suggested, to show off to a masculine audience. As I reflected, *In times of frustration and anxiety, it is not unusual to see explosive physical or verbal outbursts which surprised me. This often served to change the entire dynamic of the boys' relationships.* (Analytic Memo, August 12, 2000, Lines 1-10) *Dan is frustrated by what has happened and begins a fight with Jade... Dan is really upset and is yelling that Jade should keep his mouth shut. The others boys watch silently, some recoiling from the tension. Others laugh.* (Field Log, April 29, 1999, Lines 41-49) *Duf hits the boy beside him over the head with a piece of cloth and when I ask him why, he replies, 'He is a wanker, he talks all the time and I want to hear the work on stage. Duf is obviously in some kind of negative mood today and is physically defensive. It serves to shut the other boy down.* (from Field Log, Mar 14, 2000, Lines 26-29)

Duf's use of obscene language was not unusual in the class when the boys were angry and frustrated. Aggressive in nature, the words such as 'fuckin' and 'wanker' were used it seemed as physical tools to intimidate and humiliate and were effective at times in gaining a degree of power in the classroom.

Observations suggest that this type of behaviour was most effectively defused by the way their teacher approached the situation. The key for turning less desirable aggressive styles of behaviour around in these classrooms seemed to be in good classroom management and a positive teacher attitude. Clark (1989) writes that most of boys' communicative interactions with each other appears to be what he calls, a collective understanding of boyness. In turn, Davies and Banks (1993) characterise such interactions as acts of hardness and invulnerability, a preparation for pitting masculine strength against each other. Browne (1995) speaks of the 'power of the audience', a compulsion for males to display hostility and aggression when placed in group situations.

Observations of Sal at work with the boys in both classrooms showed that if problematic students were not awarded an appropriate audience to 'show off' their aggressive or rude behaviour to, the situation did not get out of hand. By refusing to enter into a war of words between herself and the boy/s in question, Sal often prevented a spectacle for others to watch. Rather than personally reprimanding the boy or boys involved (unless the behaviour was totally offensive) Sal worked to establish the status quo by addressing the needs of the group, reminding them of acceptable modes of communication inside the drama space and trying to identify the problems causing the frustration. By not privileging the behaviour with a heated response or allowing the offender to gain 'audience attention' by acknowledging

the infringement, Sal managed to turn such situations into moments for learning and change. Her constant attention to helping the boys communicate effectively and respectfully with each other did much to transform both the 'restrictive' patterns of masculine language (Maccoby 1990) they used in times of confrontation or stress and the accompanying negative behaviour most often associated with bullying, violence and segregation in male communities. Sal's strategy in dealing with issues such as homophobia was not to 'get fired up and start screaming' at the boys (when incidents occurred in class) but to discuss their feelings with them in more proactive ways. *I try to approach it in a rational communicative way rather than losing my temper and tell them I don't like their comments. In this class, there are a couple of boys who don't fit the mould of the others but I know the boys really like them and are beginning to respect their individuality - they are all working together and I think that is a real breakthrough. I think you need to role model appropriate and alternative modes of communication.* (Sal, Interview 2, 2000, Lines 18-25)

I observed that what was most vital in this learning community was the teacher's continuing acknowledgment of Australian society's historical ideas about 'acceptable' masculine behaviour and her commitment to showing the boys alternative ways of communicating and expressing feeling as males other than the more traditional aggressive 'boyo' (Sal's term) behaviour and tough talk. An interesting point is made by Davies (1993) who argues that 'body performance' (weak versus strong) of boys is pertinent in establishing hegemonic masculine spaces. McDonald (1999) concurs adding that in boys' schools in particular, adolescents learn to contextually modify their behaviour using a form of body-kinaesthetic intelligence that in turn is reflected in the masculine culture of the

school. Through the continued promotion of specific activities as 'desirable masculine pursuits', a school can actively support and maintain collective perceptions of the 'sporting hero', 'the good bloke' and other 'essentialist Aussie male types'. (McDonald 1999) The result, argues McDonald, is that boys are coerced to subscribe to a particular brand of masculinity to the exclusion of all others. In this case study, the founding Augustinian emphasis on community and support has been instrumental in breaking down many of the hegemonic masculine behaviours that can exist in all boy institutions. As Sal explained it, *We encourage the boys to touch each other and show support for each other... the boys are devoted to each other overall. This school is grounded in a concern for the individual and everything we do stems from that.* (Sal, Interview 2, 2000, from Lines 24-30)

One of the most successful teaching approaches Sal used to 'connect' the boys with each other was the use of drama games that were active and competitive in form and that required a high element of risk taking. Sal discovered early in her teaching of boys that they were both avid risk takers and intrinsically competitive in nature. She cleverly tapped into this by using games that were energetic, highly structured and challenging and that led directly into the drama work they were exploring. The use of warm up games enabled the boys to **burn off excess energy, to make contact with each other as a drama community, to challenge themselves physically, intellectually and emotionally and to focus quickly on the direction the following drama would take.** Additionally, and I observed most importantly, some of the drama games which required the boys to move into more intimate contact zones than they may be normally used to challenged entrenched ideas about touching other males in ways which are not aggressive or rough. At first, there was resistance from the boys to games such as these where *they*

seemed totally thrown off balance and appeared confronted and discomforted by the game's close contact. (from Field Log, August 3, 2000, Lines 16-25) They would often deal with their discomfort by being disruptive or crude. *Someone makes a crude comment about being touched by the other boys and they boot again with laughter at this sexual connotation, "Are you serious"?* one asks Sal and although she meets resistance, she forges on with the game urging the boys to focus on the elements of drama the game incorporates. (from Field Log, Feb 9, 1999, Lines 73-91) Eventually, Sal's encouraging side coaching and continued links to the drama they were doing helped them overcome many of their fears and insecurities of appearing weak or unmanly.

The fine balance of introducing boys to drama games that encouraged quieter, more intimate expression and focus from the boys and those which allowed them to expel energy and frustration was the key to success in these classrooms. Sal discovered that games that required boys to use the entire drama space and were highly physical in structure worked best in engaging them quickly and totally. As my observations reveal, *there is lots of laughing and the boys seem excited, they are hyped up. They play the game with great excitement... lots of energy, slapping and punching to prevent the fox from catching the rabbit. At the end, they collapse onto the floor.* Pollack (1999) argues that games are particularly effective when working with boys because boys enjoy asserting themselves with other boys, making their presence known and appreciated. Competition among boys is more about competing with another boy rather than against him. If these dominant male traits of competition, risk taking and a love of physical activity can be harnessed successfully in subjects such as drama, to create positive, less aggressive and more empathetic relationships between boys, the lives of boys across all sectors of living and learning can be richly and effectively improved.

Recommendations

This research concurs with the 1994 'Inquiry into Boys' Education' report that boys respond well to a more active style of teaching. Learning spaces such as the drama classroom cater particularly well to the more physical communicative style of boys and award them opportunities to explore kinesthetic and spatial intelligences through a creative medium. Additionally,

- Schools need to acknowledge and support academic subjects such as drama which offer liberated 'unbounded' spaces (i.e. an absence of desks and chairs) to explore their own physical masculinities safely and comfortably.
- Drama games are particularly useful for helping boys explore less aggressive forms of physical communication whilst teaching them skills of persuasion, leadership, teamwork and interpersonal negotiation. Drama games tap into boys' natural tendencies towards competition and risk taking in positive and healthy ways.
- Allowing boys a balanced amount of physical contact with each other ensures for a more relaxed and focused drama lesson. Boys generally experience less frustration and agitation if pent up emotions are vented through physical activity.
- Physical activity such as movement and performance are enjoyable for many boys and can be designed to explore issues of masculinity in a less threatening mode than direct discussion.
- The open egalitarian space of the drama classroom gives boys permission to communicate their feelings and emotions through a uniquely different mode of learning.
- High levels of physicality in the drama classroom allow for a 'charged and energetic learning space which supports risk taking and experimentation.'
(Palmer1998)

The Secret Life of Us: Masculinity, Emotions and the Drama Classroom

Emergent Finding: Exposure to the aesthetic modes of learning such as educational drama can assist boys in connecting to the inner core of their emotional lives as they explore multiple dimensions of their own and others lived masculinities.

Whilst I have long believed in the powerful benefits drama offers all students, I was curious to explore just how effective it could be in an all boys' classroom. From previous research (Lee 1997) I knew that dealing with gender issues needed to be addressed carefully by the classroom teacher. In my experience in the classroom, students did not respond well to direct or didactic treatment of problems associated with gender. Indeed, often they did not believe they were affected by such issues. Rather, the teacher needed to make **subtle shifts in their drama practice which invited students to consider gender issues intrinsically through texts and carefully planned drama experiences such as situational roleplay**. As Sal explained, *you need to be clever about the way you approach masculinity with the boys. I don't see it as deception but I don't always tell the boys directly that we are dealing with their 'boyo' culture and 'other' ways to look at their place in the world.* (Sal, informal discussion, October 2000, Lines 10-15)

Sal's approach invited the boys to consider multiple dimensions of their emotional and social lives without feeling they were compelled to do so. It encouraged them to talk with each other about important issues and to explore their emotional lives through the safety of role-play and characterisation.

Contemporary gender theorists concerned with the development and education of boys, (Bly 1990, Biddulph 1995, Gilbert 1998, Pollack 1999, Hartman 2000, Hawkes 2001) concur that indeed boys need to be shown how to better express their emotions. According to Biddulph (1995) the 'over-masculinisation' of boys has resulted in generations of young men who have learnt that to survive, they need to be tough, aggressive, uncommunicative and heterosexual. As Formaini (1990) adds, men (can) cut off from direct contact with the 'essential self' and this then means that problems arise which inhibit the kind of psychological development that leads to maturity. (p.47) According to McLean (1996), one of the most significant problems affecting men's interpersonal communication is that in an attempt not to appear 'soft' or inadequate, men actively hide their real feelings from others. As previously noted, from an early age, many boys have been taught to communicate and relate to each other in highly physical way that are predominately aggressive in nature. Hawkes (2001) writes of the important role curriculum subjects such as drama and dance can play in promoting a healthy sense of worth and competency in all boys.

My observations and interviews suggest that boys who participate in drama education seem to develop a stronger personal connection between each other and are capable of expressing themselves emotionally in a multitude of creative ways. Furthermore, drama proved to be a powerful invitation for them to:

- Release emotions normally held in check in more traditional subjects in a safe, liberated space.
 - Slip the bonds of their identities and participate in other forms of existence.
- (O'Neill 1995)

- Reflect on their identities and explore ‘new fusions’ of what it means to be (male). [Greene 1978]
- Be physically demonstrative in ways which attend to the aesthetic, emotional, spiritual and moral dimensions of their lives and to verbally communicate on deeper levels than they may have done before.
- Learn to self-regulate their emotions to facilitate being conscientious, persevering and resilient. (Fletcher 1999)

Two years in the drama classroom revealed that these boys were capable of immersing themselves in dramatic performances which required high levels of sensitivity, empathy and emotional introspection. At times, I was surprised by what I saw and heard. I did not expect to find a group of boys who could openly express their love for their mothers in a public arena or who could perform movement pieces which boldly challenged stereotypical notions that dance was for ‘sissies’ and ‘girls.’ I did not expect to find boys who nurtured and ‘watched out’ for me during my pregnancy or who would openly ask questions about what it was like to be an ‘expectant mother.’ I did not expect to find boys full of emotional attachment as they spoke about leaving their beloved drama teacher and moving out into the world and more significantly, could put this all into words and action in a final performance called ‘Recollections.’

What I found most intriguing was the way the boys could swing between more ‘typical’ boyo behaviour of rough and tumble and more openly ‘difficult’ behaviour and non-communication, to moments of emotional intensity and poignancy in their performance work. It seems fair to suggest that it was the influence of an insightful drama teacher, her exemplary planning and a developing ethos of support, freedom

and encouragement inside the drama classroom (and the school itself) that allowed these moments to happen at all. As I reflected, *At times the boys exhibit a great deal of empathy and sensitivity in their work, communicating to an audience with feeling and candour. I see moments of intensity and heightened emotion in their preparation and rehearsal process* (from Analytic Memo 12, August 12 2000, Lines 1-10)... *whilst the boys still exhibit some stereotypical characteristics of traditional male roles such as aggressive speech and highly physical levels of communication, they manage to balance this with risk taking into non-traditional areas such as symbol, poetry, prose and movement and do so with sensitivity and empathy.* (from Field Log April 20, 1999, Lines 3-8)

In the Year 12 extended study unit 'Mothers and Sons', the boys agreed with Sal that they would like to do a performance piece focused on their relationships with their mothers. They felt that whilst their mothers played pivotal roles in their lives, many of them did not know them as well as they wanted to. For many of the boys, the experience was life changing:

My mother cried all the way home after the show cause she was so happy... my relationship with her has changed for the better since then (Questionnaire 2, August 1999)... *Mothers and Sons was the start of something new for me. The relationship between mum and I has been a difficult one... it was from Mothers and Sons that I realised mum can also be a good friend to me.* (Dan, informal discussion August 1999) *I saw mum in a whole different light and I realised she is just the same as other mums. That was important.* (Heath, informal discussion, August 1999)

I was moved by the tributes from the boys to their mothers at the end of the performance. Without hesitation or embarrassment, they declared their love and appreciation for everything their mothers had done for them in front of a packed theatre house. The words used were emotional, honest and appeared heartfelt, and many of the mothers were tearful by the end of the performance. As the boys' words illustrate, *thank you for loving me every day of my life. I love you mum* (Jake)... *mum thank you for being there and understanding. I love you.* (Jacob)... *you're the strongest person I know. Love ya always.* (Marcus)... *thanks 4 (sic) coping with me for so long. I love U (sic) mum.* (Dan). ['Mothers and Sons', May 1999] Whilst the surreal world of a blackened theatre certainly played a part in allowing the boys to express their feelings through the dramatic medium, this was not simply role-play.

The boys had written the script themselves and each one had contributed their own unique personalised offering about the complexity of the relationship they shared with their mother. I felt that in doing this, every one of them took a tremendous risk in allowing what was 'real' about them and their mother to become a quality piece of shared dramatic art. Watching the boys perform this work convinced me that with appropriate support and encouragement from the teacher, they were able to transcend traditional gender expectations that males can't or won't show emotions. Effectively, drama gave them permission to explore their relationships with their mothers in ways they had previously never done in a communal artistic process where they 'learnt about themselves through the potency of engaging in the dramatic moment.' (Bolton 1986) **Their abilities to express deep emotion about their relationships with their mothers was made possible through the safe confines of the dramatic form and the support of the dramatic community of their classroom.**

Dan's (1999) honest admission that through participation in 'Mothers and Sons', his relationship with his mother changed in an unexpected and surprising way is testimony to how drama can help students 'see something differently' or 'disturb the known' in their everyday lives. (Bolton 1992) For Dan, *hell to live with and prone to Irish stubbornness* (Dan, May 1999) 'Mothers and Sons' was a turning point both at home and in the classroom. Another student, Jacob, thanked his mother for *giving comfort when needed and for (being) determined to know him better than any one human could know anyone*. (Jacob, May 1999) It was Jacob who took me into his confidence after the performance and told me he wanted to become a Catholic priest. He felt that his involvement in drama had activated a passion in him for discovering more about humanity and his place in the world. In a journal entry he wrote, *I am fascinated by the ability to portray real emotions and actions through script and performance. Our work in community theatre has made me enthusiastic to attempt acting the role of a real human being, becoming that person in mind, emotion and action... it is so breathtaking... to be able to portray our real humanity and examine issues through drama... if I can make people feel and think compassionately or in anger towards a situation through the actor's portrayal, I have achieved the greatest goal*. (Jacob, Journal Entry, 1999)

My experiences in the field confirmed that drama can provide boys with essential opportunities to 'play' through their emotional difficulties that otherwise may remain hidden and neglected. I would argue that it provides a comfortable learning space for boys where they can share feelings and ideas with other boys as they learn about their own capacity for empathetic communication. (Buddulph's emphasis 1995) Learning in the drama classroom did make a difference.

What is unique about the drama classroom is its capacity to act as an agent of change in boys' gendered lives by inviting them to explore meaning through the dramatic form. **The opportunity for students to reflect on life experiences and associated emotions both inside and outside the dramatic event is one of the powerful educational aesthetic experiences we can offer boys.** Attending to many of the problems boys face through the use of an aesthetic medium such as educational drama, can bring about what Dewey (1934) describes as a conscious adjustment of the new and the old as 'imagination breaks through the inertia of habit'. (p.272) Despite Connell's (1995) argument that all male environments such as boys' colleges can perpetuate patriarchal hegemonic views about gender roles, I concur with Hulse's (1997) view that often boys in single sex schools are more comfortable and less defensive than their co-educational counterparts. I observed that the boys in this case study were generally at ease with each other in the classroom and their amiable relationships enabled them to express their emotions in drama in a far more liberated way than I had imagined. Whilst they were prone to occasional aggressive outbursts and difficult behaviour, they were also just as capable of moments of great emotional intensity and absorbing introspection.

Recommendations

If boys' schools are to implement effective 'boyswork' programs into their everyday curriculum, they need to acknowledge the importance of helping adolescent males become emotionally mature. One way of doing this is to encourage participation in Arts subjects such as drama education. The ultimate power of drama to allow boys to explore emotions through the safe confines of the dramatic form should not be underestimated. The notion of 'indwelling' or the 'act of drawing on what we know

whilst attending to new meanings or concepts' (Polanyi 1974) is particularly significant in considering why drama is so valuable for boys in schools. If as Pollack (1999) argues, boys have been caught in a kind of metaphoric 'emotional gender straitjacket,' I argue it takes a greater force than weekend discussions and team games to release them from such a lifetime of enculturation. In order to give boys a greater insight into their own and others emotional lives, those working with boys in the drama classroom need to:

- Promote drama as a desirable academic subject for boys at all levels of schooling.
- Legitimise feelings and build emotional literacy (Browne 1995) through the implementation of well planned, gender appropriate drama programs.
- Through the use of drama experiences, help boys become aware of gender construction and how this can affect the way they feel and act.
- Be strong role models in showing boys how to express feelings appropriately and meaningfully. Refuse to be complicit with traditional gender notions such as 'Boys don't cry.'
- Provide boys with aesthetic challenges in drama which allow them to explore their emotional lives from many ideological perspectives and dimensions of understanding. Encourage and strongly support risk-taking in this area.
- Insist on a climate of support and respect in the classroom which honours the responses and feelings of all boys both inside and outside the performance space.
- Invite boys to be 'real' in the classroom by implementing a model of masculinity that is broad and inclusive. (Pollack 1999) It is important for boys to be given scripts and role-play situations which promote multiple representations of masculinity and positive alternative ways for dealing with conflict and aggression.

Striking a Balance: Female Teachers in All Boy Classrooms

Emergent Finding: Having a female drama teacher was considered the ideal choice by the boys. They expressed a greater affiliation with a female than male teacher and believed it to advantageous to their overall learning.

Contention that boys are best served by having male teachers in the classroom (Biddulph 1997, Pollack 1999) was of particular interest to this research. The view that boys learn to be successful and proactive men through the positive presence of strong male role models in the classroom has dominated much of the contemporary debate about improving the educational and personal lives of boys. The traditional dominance of females in the teaching profession (hence the lack of male role models) and the success of feminists' demands that the educational needs of girls be met more effectively (Hawkes 2001) are just two factors blamed for the steady decline of boys' academic performance. As Pollack (1999) maintains, the over-representation of females teachers in the classroom has resulted in the absence of male voices in all boy classrooms. Of particular interest to me was McDonald's (1999) research of three boys' colleges that revealed that male drama teachers involved in the research considered that female teachers could not connect meaningfully with the boys because they don't really know what it's like to be male. (p.213) McDonald herself reflected that male teachers did seem to have a greater physical presence in the all boy classroom than women which she suggested may advantage them in terms of discipline and control.

I was most interested in exploring whether the boys themselves perceived that it was a disadvantage for them to be taught by a female teacher. Whilst Biddulph's and

Pollack's claims had merit, I felt that their theories were inherently problematic in their negation of the possible positive influences female teachers could have on boys, particularly in areas of emotional, moral and spiritual development. I wondered if the boys felt the same. For many of them, Sal had been their sole drama teacher for a number of years and in view of this, I considered them 'expert witnesses' in evaluating the value of female versus male teaching. They had experienced a variety of teachers across their other curriculum areas in the twelve years they had been at school and at the time of the research, all of them were taught on a daily basis by a mixture of both male and female teachers.

Gaining an understanding of how they felt about their female drama teacher was an evolving process. Whilst the interviews revealed overwhelming support for her, it was the boys' drama work, ultimately their own products, which provided the most authentic and convincing evidence of Sal's worth to them. It was often through their own scripted work that I gained the deepest insight. John's description of Sal as *a bit of a wack job* ('Recollections' script, October 2000) was an affectionate portrayal of a teacher who had allowed him to *express (his) true self up on stage and who has been supportive in all (his) drama pursuits. Drama wouldn't be drama without Miss*. Her own brand of 'off the wall' humour and determination to try new and unusual things in the drama classroom earned her the title of 'wack job' from John. In another drama monologue, part of a final performance, Dan mused that *the great teacher who came with drama* made it all worthwhile. ('Recollections' script, October 2000) Others expressed that Sal was a teacher of *great energy and honesty... who was able to come down to the level of the kids, she worked hard and was supportive and encouraging... a teacher we all respect...* (Questionnaires Jan-Aug, 1999, Jan-October 2000).

In terms of their preference for a male or female drama teacher, the boys responded, *I have found female teachers are able to express themselves more easily as well as get the best out of their students...female teachers appear to be more open about their own feelings and emotions which encourages us (boys) to do the same whilst staying in our comfort zone...female teachers are more helpful, concerned, not only with our school studies but about everything* (from Questionnaires Jan-Aug 1999, Jan-October 2000).. *you can't get close to a male teacher like you can a female.* (Interview 1, 2000, Line 28)

Hartman's (1999) belief that female teachers can provide models of good female leadership in male/female relationships which are characterised by equality and respect, resonated in the boys' discussions about the mutual respect they shared with Sal. Indeed, it was her high levels of empathy, sensitivity, support and unconditional acceptance of every boy in the classroom which made their learning experiences so rich and comfortable. Her ability to show real affection for the boys coupled with her own strong sense of female identity allowed her a relationship with them that may not have been possible with a male teacher. As Ryan (1996) writes, the ability of female teachers to connect at an emotional level with boys allows them essentially to 'work without any feeling of holding back because (they) are female.' (p.111)

The boys' seemed to embrace the 'emotional' dimension of their learning in a way which initially surprised me. They saw it as one of the main benefits of having a female teacher and were more comfortable with their own emotional lives than I had expected. They felt that the 'mothering' and 'nurturing' traits that Sal brought to the classroom made their experiences richer and more valuable. Dan, a student

often difficult and solitary in the drama classroom, described Sal's influence in this way. *She is very honest with us in helping us with the drama and encourages the maturity of our work. (Her) teaching style, that of a concerned, supportive and professionally critical teacher has allowed us to grow in our talents and enthusiasm for drama.* (Dan, Reflection Journal, June 1999)

At the same time however, the boys loved what they considered the 'blokkier' side of Sal's personality, her interest in their sport, her ability to be firm in class when needed and her occasional need to 'talk tough' with them. Contrary to the male teachers in McDonald's study (1999) who believed that female teachers did not know what it meant to be male, Sal was able to tap into the lives of the boys by genuinely listening and talking to them about all things masculine as well as allowing her own 'femaleness' to balance the learning experiences of the boys. Sal herself found it was the fine balance between male and female traits in her personality which made her teaching so effective, *I think I have a masculine side as well, I am not stereotyped in any way... the mother figure, the sister figure, they know that I am interested in them, I participate fully and see me in a rounded way. They know I am interested in their sport and I am not just the drama teacher to them... they know I know what I am talking about.* (Interview 2, 2000, Lines 48-55). She also believed that boys can be so out of touch with their 'feminine' sides that they need to know that other perspectives exist beyond that of the 'macho'. *I think that many of the boys have a strong feminine side - just as I have a strong masculine side... I think my teaching can address the best of both and really makes a difference in helping boys to see beyond their own gender perspectives.* (Interview 1, Sal, 1999, Lines 20-23)

In in this case study, Sal was considered a strong mum figure to the boys who described her as *not a teacher, (but) like our mum, you can tell her anything.* (from Interview 2, Lines 117-118) and, *she treats each and every one us like a big happy family, she's a motherly figure... she is like a good friend and like a mother because she really cares about us.* (from Questionnaires Jan-Aug 1999, Jan-October 2000) Importantly, part of the strength of the relationship between Sal and the boys was her ability to *come down to (their) level... and be in touch with today's youth, to know what we boys like.* (from Questionnaires Jan-Aug 1999, Jan-October 2000). Sal argues that female teachers need to tap into what she calls *the boyo culture* in order to intrinsically connect with the boys they teach. For Sal specifically, this has allowed her to *branch off into other areas of learning (e.g. emotional dimensions) that the boys would not normally go... drama allows them to become less boyo and to let them see that the macho culture is not the only one.* (Interview 2, Sal, Lines 2-4, 12-14) This suggests that in combining the best of both male and female perspectives, boys have enriched opportunities of exploring many aspects of their relationships with each other and with women that they may not have been previously able to do. For Sal, this meant an approach which combined the boys' outside interests with many of the learning experiences they encountered in the classroom.

Sal's passionate support for the boys' sporting matches on the weekends (many of them which she coached) alongside the mandatory Monday discussions where they spoke of *the glorification of the weekend sport* (from 'Drama is Good Shit', October 2000) easily consolidated her status as the 'good bloke' and 'mate'. Her ability to 'get down and dirty' with them at sporting activities was embraced by the boys as one of the strengths of having Sal as their teacher. But whilst this was an

important factor contributing to her success with the boys, many of them did not see it as the only essential trait for teaching boys. As they pointed out, not every boy is 'into' sport and it was vital for them to have a teacher who could acknowledge this. They argued that male teachers sometimes have trouble separating from their own ideals of masculinity (the need to show physical and sporting prowess) and can often try 'too hard' to maintain a certain male image. As comments reveal, *Aw male teachers are harder and try to fit in with boys like the jocks and you know football and stuff... not everyone here is into sports you know... male teachers are too macho and try to impress you... they have more trouble really allowing feelings to come out... females really know where you are coming from... you can't hide your feelings. Male teachers can be too macho.* (from Interview 3, 2000, Lines 61-63, 90-92, Journal entries, 1999) Heath provided some noteworthy insight when he wrote, *I'm into sport so I love Miss being interested in what I do but some guys in this class don't play any sport at all. She tries to give us all attention and I think that because she is female, she is not hung up with those guys who want to play the violin or learn ballet instead of playing football. She makes them feel that is just as good and that works in this classroom.* (Journal Entry, May 1999)

Furthermore, data revealed that the boys were interested in Sal both as their teacher and as a woman. The boys would often enquire about Sal's well-being, ideas and responses. They wanted to know how she was feeling and seemed to perceive when she was stressed or unhappy, often readjusting their behaviour when necessary. When Sal's father died after a long illness, the boys rallied, giving her much needed support and it appeared, were sincerely saddened by her loss. In 1999, Group one's decision to do a performance about their mothers was a powerful statement of many of the boys' desire to understand the role of their mothers more deeply and to explore the dimensions of femininity they were not

altogether familiar with. As one of the boy's commented *it allowed me to understand mum in a way that I had never done before. I knew a lot about dad.* (Matt, Journal entry, 1999)

Whilst the notion of teacher as 'mum' was desirable for many of the boys, in the past, many would argue that this perception has also worked to strengthen traditional patriarchal ideologies of the female as 'carer and nurturer' rather than the disciplinarian. As Connell (1995) suggests many private boys' schools have perpetuated traditions of patriarchy by implementing hard core discipline approaches predominantly maintained and upheld by male principals or male teachers. The idea that females are 'too soft' to discipline boys has resulted in the idea of 'authority' as an exclusive male trait. For Ryan (1996) however, it is a question of balance in teaching approach rather than simply a case of gender. Strong discipline boundaries and behavioural expectations, complemented by a supportive and encouraging environment and a flexible teaching methodology are considered the keys to successful boys boyswork. (Biddulph 1997, Pollack 1999, Hawkes 2001) This research suggests that female teachers are just as capable of implementing firm classroom discipline as men are, and indeed, more than capable of providing the important emotional infrastructures that Biddulph and others argue are missing in the contemporary schooling of boys.

The participants in this research believed that the ability of the teacher to not always *tell (students) what to do but to give lots of encouragement* (Interview 3, 2000. Lines 53-55) is paramount in drawing the best from boys. But importantly, all also agreed that it was essential to set discernible discipline boundaries so students knew teacher expectations. Sal firmly believed that *teaching works best with boys*

when they trust you, it doesn't work if you are too authoritarian but they need to know where the limits are and then they will work well for you. (Interview 2, Sal, 2000, Lines 18-20) In observing Sal at work, there were numerous occasions when I noted how her combined male/female discipline approach worked effectively with the boys. *Her use of a masculine form of discipline, both in the words she uses and the tone of her voice works like magic with these boys and they immediately respond.* (Field Log, May 1, 1999, Lines 27-30) One of Sal's most positive teaching traits was her capacity to create a nurturing and positive learning environment whilst still guiding the boys towards acceptable, less aggressive and more egalitarian behaviour and interpersonal relationships. When she needed to discipline the boys, they knew they had crossed the acceptable lines of behaviour or attitude. *As they told me when she tells us to settle down we know we have gone too far with her* (from Interview 1, 2000, Lines 49-50)... *if she goes off (her head) it makes us unhappy cause we know we've overdone it* (Journal entry, Pierre 2000)... *she doesn't try to act tough and bully us, she sets the limits again, sometimes she is really angry, that's when we have been really off, I hate that but I understand it...* (Journal entry, Matt, 1999) *She has good control, she let's us be ourselves but we can switch on to the task when she wants us to - we know our limits.* (Interview 3, 2000, Lines 99-100)

Of added interest to me was how the boys might react to me as another female in the classroom. They knew that I was a drama practitioner as well as a researcher and although my role was largely that of the participant observer, there were times when I needed to move about the classroom as they rehearsed for performance. Whilst it became obvious they trusted Sal implicitly, I wasn't sure if my presence would somehow upset the balance of the status quo in the classroom and change

the comfortable relationships they all shared. As time went on, it became obvious that they included me as part of the classroom culture. *They treat me as an equal and are not afraid of my questions or observations... I wonder now if my femaleness and indeed, my pregnancy may not prove an advantage to me working with the boys. They appear to be treating me with great gentleness and attention. This is not an act. I had not expected this. They treat me as if I have always been part of the classroom and I am surprised how much they seem to trust me after only a few weeks with them.* (Field Log, March 4, 1999, Lines 17-22)

I observed that these boys respected their female teachers. They certainly appeared to view Sal and me as equals, capable of contributing to their male lives in positive and interesting ways and able to identify with their male culture on a variety of levels. This might indicate that the presence of female teachers (in a shared capacity if necessary) in all boy classrooms is not just desirable but essential.

In writing about the power of drama to help students access unlimited and unique opportunities to assess their gendered lives, Tait (1992) argues that to bring about social behaviour, it is necessary to interrupt the replication of stereotyped (gendered) behaviours with alternative role models. (p.27) It seems to me that this is not just about exploring gender issues through the use of drama performance and text but also about the gender relationships which exist in the drama classroom. The relationship between teacher and student is a powerful one and in terms of gender education can be potentially empowering or equally destructive. If as Biddulph (1995) and Bly (1996) suggest, for boys to live more productive, happier lives they need to get in touch with their primal feelings, then I would argue they need to be shown how to do so. In a traditionally patriarchal society as Australia is, a society historically entrenched in colonial ideologies which promote and embrace unconditional mateship, toughness and male prowess, surely boys need to learn more about their feelings, not from male role models alone but also from

inspirational female mentors as well. It is, as Ryan (1996) suggests, a question of balance.

Recommendations

This case study has revealed that the research group of adolescent boys felt it was advantageous and most desirable to have a female drama teacher in an all boys' classroom. Female teachers were deemed to have a greater emotional connection with their students, could understand more comprehensively the needs of their students and were able to offer support and nurturance at levels male teachers could not. The boys felt a strong emotional affiliation between themselves and their female teacher and believed that she was able to discipline the class effectively and with justice. They considered her to be, not only their drama teacher but a mother figure as well and for all of these boys, this was a valued benefit of having a female teacher. Indeed, they embraced the security and support that these dual roles offered and were comfortable with her inside the drama space. Other considerations raised by this research include:

- Female teachers should be considered a necessary part of a boy's wholistic education. The presence of a female teacher in an all boys' classroom can be helpful in breaking down and realigning traditional patriarchal notions of masculinity by offering alternative gender perceptions, behaviour and expectations.
- Boys' schools need to acknowledge and promote that female teachers can work collaboratively and positively with male teachers in equal and respectful relationships. Boys need to be shown that women have much to contribute to the male world and can do so with authority and understanding.

- Female teachers need to approach the teaching of boys with flexibility, variety and balance. Boys respond well to a female teacher who can combine both masculine and feminine traits in their management of classroom behaviour and the implementation of curriculum programming. In this case study the boys valued honesty, a sense of humour and a positive approach.
- Female teachers can show boys alternative ways of recognising and exploring their emotional capacities whilst helping them build tolerance and respect for each other's differing forms of masculinity. Female teachers can act as powerful agents for breaking down hegemonic patterns of masculinity and assist boys in exploring alternative ways of being male. This can also be achieved by occasionally working collaboratively with male teachers and all girl drama classes in combined drama performances where all voices and viewpoints can be honoured and considered.

Towards a 'Community of Practice': Contextualisation and Artistic Partnerships

Emergent Findings: A drama program contextualised in the lives of the boys and which offers strong artistic partnerships and freedom of choice is important in establishing an egalitarian male drama community. The teacher's approach and discipline knowledge is crucial for ensuring boys work collaboratively and meaningfully in all aspects of their drama work.

One of the strengths of Sal's teaching practice is her ability to tap into the lives of the boys through the design and structure of her teaching units. In an effort to

engage the immediate interests of many of the boys, she designed a portion of her drama programs around metaphors of sport. Clever unit titles such as ‘What’s the Real State of the Pitch’, ‘Let’s Applaud All Aussies as they Run on the Field’, and ‘Let’s Lift Our Game’, introduce units focused on the elements of drama, Australian drama and Brechtian theatre. (see Appendix B) When I asked Sal why she felt this was an effective way to plan drama for boys, she explained by using one of her units, ‘What’s the Real State of the Pitch’ as an exemplar, *As the boys study this unit immediately after the cricket season, the analogy of the preparation of the cricket pitch in determining the state of play is very relevant for them. The boys can then transfer this metaphor to enhance their understanding of the preparation for the actor so that a meaningful, truthful, realistic performance is realised.* (Lawson, 1999) In another Year 11 unit, ‘Packing down in Drama’, Sal tapped into the idea of the sporting ‘Locker Room’ to help boys consider the element of ‘tension’ in drama. Whilst this encouraged them to investigate the theatrical notion of tension in a variety of situations, it also challenged them to consider male ideals such as loyalty, mateship and image. One useful example follows:

You are both club members and use the locker room almost daily. You know the person who belongs to the opened locker - he is a good friend of yours. However, the locker that adjoins it is always locked - you have never seen it opened. You wonder what is inside? Hidden steroids? Stolen goods. You don’t open it. (‘Packing down in drama’ Year 11 unit, 1999)

Titles of other units derive from the Augustinian values of the school and promote community and acceptance in the boys’ lives. Sal was adamant that linking the

drama program to the underlying values of the school and the boys' lives had impacted both on her teaching and the success of her classroom practice, *I am a much better teacher by looking at the underpinning mission statements of the school... I was excited to be able to hang my hat on something when writing the senior program, this school gave the drama program shape, the sense of community connects the boys to the drama.* (Interview 4, 2000, Lines 61-63 & 69)

In discussing the importance of effective drama practice, Taylor (2000) writes the cultural, social, sexual and physiological make up of a classroom context inevitably impacts on attitudes students reveal in drama and teachers have a responsibility to recognise how understandings are constructed in the process and how they can co-construct the curriculum and its implementation. (p.7) In considering how teachers can best serve boys in single sex classrooms, Taylor's point is pivotal. To implement effective 'boyswork', the teacher needs to have a clear understanding not only, as McLean (1995) suggests, of the wider epistemologies of art, education and culture, but also importantly, of the immediate adolescent culture of the boys. Drama programs need to invite boys to not only explore and assess their own masculine identities through the dramatic form, but also effectively challenge them to critically appraise the forces that have shaped (and continue to shape) the world around them. To ensure this happens, **the drama teacher needs to be well informed of current drama practice and theory, understand intrinsically the needs of their students, plan scrupulously to meet those needs and know how to create and maintain an atmosphere of trust, co-operation and tolerance.**

The notion of community was an extremely important element of the boys' experiences in the drama classroom and I believe worked to unite them on two

levels. Firstly, it allowed a diverse group of boys to collaborate aesthetically towards a common performance goal. The polarity of values and attitudes existing in the classroom worked generally as a positive force in creating unique and diverse dramatic offerings. Individual talents which may have normally remained hidden in other classes were able to be showcased and valued. Secondly, I argue that it worked to establish a more tolerant social classroom structure which may not have existed without the intense levels of teamwork and discussions that characterise much of the work in the drama classroom. The idea of teamwork, something many of the boys were familiar with from their sporting activities, was an ideal approach which the boys embraced. As Fitzclarence, Hickey and Matthew (1997) suggest 'communities of practice' are actively constructed through teamwork situations working to maintain specific behaviour and attitudes amongst participants. Whilst Fitzclarence, Hickey and Matthew are most concerned with the way these 'communities' can perpetuate hegemonic masculine traits of aggression and hardness, I see an application for this notion of community in the drama classroom in ways that are empowering and developmental for boys. The way the boys in this research worked proactively together despite individual differences, convinced me that a 'community of drama practice' was possible given the right learning approach and sensitive, supportive teaching. The result of such an approach was that the boys became responsible for the drama work collaborating with Sal and each other about the direction and content of all of the drama units.

The boys' responses, particularly in the questionnaires, supported my observations that the group drama experience was a positive one that could lead to a defined sense of community and an insightful understanding of drama as an aesthetic form. *I prefer group work to individual work... It provides a good balance of artistic autonomy and creative scope within a group effort... working as an ensemble*

makes it more creative and artistic as guys with different ideas are working together... there is no doubt that dealing with the piece in light of your own experiences allows you to draw upon your own emotions... group work is more creative in terms of a wider variety of thought, insight and opinion... everyone's talent is rolled into one. It gives a sense of brotherhood - to be able to work coherently and successfully with a common purpose and determination, this gives me a sense of confidence. (Questionnaires Group 1&2, Jan-Aug 1999, Jan-October 2000)

In exploring ways that hegemonic masculine practices can be minimised in boys' communities, Fitzclarence, Hickey and Matthew (1997) draw on the idea of Lave and Wagner (1991) of the creation of *institutional memory through story-telling*. In an attempt to uncover and deconstruct traditional and stereotyped perceptions, groups are encouraged to remake dominant story-lines which have influenced their gender knowledge and practice. It is a process which actively works to 'interrupt the replication of stereotyped (gendered) behaviours with alternative role modes.' (Tait 1992, p.27) Rather like Sal's improvisations based on the 'locker room' ideology that challenged the boys to explore solutions and situational alternatives through role play, the story-metaphor technique is particularly useful in 'finding moments that contradict and resist the dominant stories which are constructing the lives of young males.' (Fitzclarence et al in Kenway 1997, p.26)

The eclectic nature of Sal's drama program allowed multiple approaches to the dramatic work, and whilst the idea of institutional memory was not a concept Sal was familiar with, it was, I suggest, an intrinsic essential element in much of the forming work that depended on the sharing and exploration of the boys' own life

experiences. It was their memories and their encultured knowledge about being young men in their own contemporary world that shaped and framed many of the original dramas. Many times, the dramatic work was saturated in metaphors that typified the more stereotypical male pastimes and value systems that they were most familiar with. *The first group chooses a urinal in a football room toilet to display a battle of words to establish the (dramatic) element of 'place' inside the role play. The boys are quite physical in their actions trying to prove their points through aggressive non verbal communication. In time under Sal's guidance the work became more multi-dimensional.* (from Field Log, Feb 29, 2000, Lines 18-26)

What was most important in the boys' dramatic learning experiences was the act of debriefing and reflection, not just about the aesthetic value of the work but also how it may have affected the boys both personally and as a group. In situations such as the former improvisation, Sal worked with the boys on the dominant concepts evident in the role play gauging their authenticity and effectiveness not just as 'theatrical images' but as representations of their own male adolescent culture. The boys were taught early to consider drama as a mirror of their own society and whilst they were not censured in their choices, they knew that their decisions were always discussed as a drama community and were open to critical appraisal.

The process of forming and presenting the extended unit 'Mothers and Sons' was a valuable and important journey for many of the boys, not only from an artistic perspective but on a personal level as well. The main unit was called 'Finding Our Male Voice' and although the boys had agreed to present a performance based on their relationships with their mothers, Sal began the unit by looking at the complicated relationships some sons can have with their fathers. She began by using the classic playscript 'Death of a Salesman' by Arthur Miller. In the

introductory paragraph of the boys' task sheet Sal wrote:

Arthur Miller wrote that some modern plays are “ultimately involved with some aspect of a single problem. It is this: How may a man make of the outside world a home? How and in what ways must he struggle, what must he strive to change and overcome within himself if he is to find the safety, the surroundings of love, the ease of soul, the sense of identity and honour which, evidently, all men have connected in their memories with the idea of family?”

It was from this point that the boys reflected on the relationships in the play, linking the work when possible to their own understanding of family loyalty, commitment and expectations. The unravelling dramatic process that gave them the opportunity to explore themes and ideas about mother/son relationships allowed multiple views to be shared and heard. As the boys shared stories of different cultural and social backgrounds and how these affected their mother's attitudes and behaviour, a rich knowledge base emerged that gave the drama depth, variety and authenticity. It was the boys' own voices which made this dramatic work special. In discussing learning environments that can empower and motivate students, Palmer (1998) talks of spaces which invite and value the voices of the individual whilst affirming the voices of the group. In such an open learning environment, the group is invited to question and challenge ideas and perspectives in a supportive egalitarian atmosphere. The teacher, whilst still the voice of responsibility and authority, becomes an agent for evoking change and self-knowledge in the students by providing the appropriate structures for learning and sharing.

As one student explained, *the artistic integrity of our drama is kept intact by the teacher-student shared artist relationship, a relationship that actually enhances*

our artistic outcomes. She (Sal) has enough respect for us to give us a lot of artistic rope but honest enough to pull back when something does not work. We accept criticism pretty well - if something is not working and Mrs S wants us to try it a different way that works better, we will change it. (Matt, Guided Journal Task 1999).

Most significant about Sal's drama practice, was the way she held back her own philosophical stance on how performances should take shape, instead, allowing the boys to work from their own ideological 'grounded aesthetic' (Willis 1990) in the planning, interpretation and implementation of the dramatic piece. Whilst still the guide and facilitator when needed, she encouraged a rich dynamic co-artist relationship between herself and the boys that honoured teacher/student as initiator and controller of form and student/teacher as controller of ideas. (McLean's emphasis 1995) Sal confirmed the effectiveness of this approach, *the kids gain enormous confidence when the work is good and we deconstruct it together.. the boys know everything about the work they do... we (write) it together, they are informed. I trust that they can do it and they trust me that I know that they can do it.* (from Interview 2, Lines 23-26, 52-53, 70-71)

The boys' responses provided further evidence of the power of the co-artist relationship:

What made 'Mothers and Sons' so special was that we did it on a topic that was close and central to us... the artistic success of the play owes much to the concept of 'student devised' drama - we are sons talking about our mothers and so can

take a far more realistic approach to the topic... the amount of teacher involvement is great... helps guide us in the right direction whilst letting us still maintain a level of control over how the (performance) will turn out... I love the idea of teacher as participant, it works so well and lets us see another side to the teacher... we all gain from the experience. (from Questionnaires 2, August 1999)

Matt, in a journal entry, was more explicit,

I cannot stress how important teaching style in drama is, not just to me but to many others I have spoken to as well. Given the fragile nature of many students' creativity in drama, approaching it from an authoritarian position is going to crush most of the energy and passion the students have for the subject. What works for me is the teacher as co-artist and facilitator, someone on your level that you can spar with and bounce ideas off. (from Guided Journal Task 1, 1999)

Student questionnaires identified further a number of important elements in the co-artist relationship between students and teacher:

- The teacher's guided input allows students 'to get closer to their artistic visions' without stifling individual creativity.
- The greater artistic freedom in such a relationship allows for 'a higher level of artistic input and encourages everyone to work to their better potential'.
- Students are not confined by the 'personal criteria or agenda of the teacher'.
- Students are awarded 'an element of control with guided help'.
- The work is 'truly student devised and not just something the teacher wants students to do'.

- 'Having a personal relationship with a dramatic piece is integral to its success on both artistic and personal levels and allows a sense of ownership from the students.' (Questionnaires Group 1&2, Jan-Aug 1999, Jan-October 2000)

In reflecting on these points, I am reminded by the words of O'Toole (1998) who argues that many drama teachers actively manipulate what happens in the drama classroom by constructing dramas or plays which fundamentally reflect their own ideological or ethical stance. Using a metaphor of the beach, O'Toole suggests that drama teachers more often safely 'stay on the rocks' when they should be 'getting down in the sand and the tide.' (p.17) He adds that whilst drama teachers do have a responsibility to facilitate and guide students (or to manipulate in positive ways when needed) he hastens to add that drama must *open up and not close down or disempower students in any way*. Indeed as Willis (1990) suggests, students need to realise that there is no longer a 'shared universal value system' (such as cultural and social notions and constructions of gender) in our contemporary world and there are many of seeing and understanding our lives. (p.13)

This is an ideology which Sal takes very seriously and it is reflected in all her planning and classroom activities. Journal entries written by the boys provide evidence of a growing understanding of the existence of multiple knowledges and perspectives. In reflecting how they would approach creating performances based on 'Male Youth', some of the boys wrote:

Everyone in this universe and beyond learns an infinitely different experience through the same things. For one a flower may be yellow. To another it may bold

the whole beauty of evolution... then people say that (something is) wrong, it's wrong according to stereotype. This can be a hard idea to accept, but I wish to subtly thrust the idea across the minds of the audience causing them to have a sudden rethink of their lives and so called moral codes. (Dan, Journal Reflection, 1999)... Rather than hammering the opinions of the group members into the skulls of the audience, we have decided to present a more 'down the line' interpretation of mateship - presenting both sides and letting the audience form their own opinions. (Jake, Jim, Matt, Steve, Journal Reflection, 1999)

I observed the importance of mentorship between Sal and the boys and often, more surprising and I felt in many ways, most satisfying, between the boys themselves. Whilst it is commonly argued that many boys' conversations and relationships are marked by elements of 'oneupmanship' (Maccoby 1990) and 'competitive aggression', I found that in these classrooms, the boys were more able to listen to each other, act positively on suggestions made by each other for performance, take on proactive (and not aggressive) leadership roles and converse with each other in the more 'enabling and open' way most often attributed to female discourse. (Maccoby's emphasis 1990) This is not to suggest that there were no signs of aggressive communication or negative behaviour in these classrooms but rather that the constant positive role modelling of the drama teacher and the continued support and encouragement of the boys to talk to each other, to respect each other's views and to work collaboratively towards each performance, were instrumental strategies for showing boys alternative ways to relate to each other as men. Certainly, the very nature of the creative collaborative experience helped to break down any notions of a hegemonic male grouping and put all boys on a more level 'playing field'. The result was relatively relaxed attitudes from the boys about

student leadership and mentorship. *Leaders can give (the group) a shove in the right direction)... some guys can take the initiative and make decisions about the drama that gives focus and direction... there are natural born leaders in drama and. I am happy to listen and contribute for the good of the drama. some guys just know how to get us all going.* (adapted from Questionnaires Group 1&2, Jan-Aug 1999, Jan-October 2000)

Other elements of mentorship and co-artistry observed as highly effective with the boys include:

- Perceptive and selective side-coaching of the boys' work when needed. *I never let them 'drown'- they are more likely to take risks if they know I will be there to help.* (Sal, reflections on Field Log, May 17, 2000)
- Positive reinforcement at all times but balanced with refusal to accept lazy or thoughtless behaviour and work. *She waits until the work is finished and then talks to them earnestly about why she is unhappy with what has happened on stage.* (Field Log Feb 18, Lines 29-32)
- Constant analogising with the boys' real life experiences tapping into their 'grounded aesthetic'. (Willis 1990) *The aim of this unit is to empower boys with a new critical awareness allowing them to explore issues which affect them and others and make a statement about such issues.* (Sal, 1998, Senior Drama Program, 'Let's Lift Our Game' unit, p.1)
- Modelling work when needed - teacher as participant. *I am not frightened about modelling for them... the kids know that nothing frightens me in the classroom... they need to know this to take risks.* (Sal, Interview 3, Lines 40-44)

- Not providing all the answers for the boys but setting up enough ‘guideposts’ so that they can find their way. Sal sees her role at times as a *traffic cop at the fork of the road giving the boys opportunity but not showing them the entire path.* (Sal, Interview 3, Lines 7-9, 40-44)
- Asking the boys what they think about the work they do in the classroom and how it might be made better. (this includes the drama program itself)
- A constant encouragement to ‘believe in the work’ and to ‘look for the dramatic’ in everything they do.
- To draw on the strengths of all boys, to look for the positive and try to transform the negative. *I cajole, never yell or demand and I try to say things like ‘Come on, we can do this...you need to draw on their strengths such as the sports they do...’* (Sal, Interview 2, 2000, Lines 34-36 & Interview 1, 2000, Lines 11-14)
- Establishing a dramatic space which is safe and free for the boys to experiment with and explore their own masculinities. Learning to know which behaviour ‘must be stopped’ and which should be ignored. *The freedom I allow students to enjoy in my classes is a direct result of the way that I believe drama should be taught. I do this to enable risks to be taken in a fairly informal environment so that everybody feels comfortable and ready to take on the rigors of this art form.* (Sal, Letter to Senior Drama Students, 2000)

Interviews revealed that the boys valued Sal’s outstanding attention to planning, her comprehensive knowledge in the area of drama and theatre and her willingness to allow a ‘dynamic dialogue’ (McLean 1995) to continually exist between herself and the boys at every stage of the drama work. This was I observed, one of the reasons that the boys reacted so positively to their work in drama and why they exhibited such high levels of intra-and-interpersonal communication and self confidence. Sal’s own words best summarise her philosophy. *Good planning is everything - I*

document everything - changing assessment year by year to provide for different classes who struggle... activities in the classroom you know will reach them, not things you have learnt somewhere which won't work for them - challenge is the key. (Sal, Interview 2, 2000, Lines 44-46) The boys described Sal as an *organised, experienced teacher; who knew what she was doing... was full of passion and energy and who knew how to come down to their level... Mrs S really knows what she is talking about and we learn alot about theatre in this class... we trust her because she is really together and the drama we do is interesting... she works hard to make it enjoyable... she plans well, we never feel we don't know where we are going.* (adapted from Questionnaires Group 1&2, Jan-Aug 1999, Jan-October 2000)

McLean (1995) argues that one of the most basic elements for success in the drama classroom is thorough, well articulated planning. In order to provide students with empowering aesthetic and educational experiences, planning in drama must accomodate the essential tension between the 'open' conditions necessary to be creative and the tight focus of what is required for assessment purposes. (McLean p.138) More importantly however, good planning ensures the drama work is contextualised in the lives and interests of the students and that an an atmosphere of positive co-artistry and co-operation is created and maintained in the classroom itself.

The boys were united in their beliefs that the success of classroom drama experiences is grounded in the way the teacher views their own hierarchal position in the classroom, the personal traits they bring to the classroom, their ongoing commitment to 'stay in touch' with their discipline and their ability to treat the students as equal partners in the artistic process. In my observations I noted that

the boys responded most positively to teaching injected with good humour, spirited dialogue and a sense of justice. Questionnaires listed the following attributes as essential for any drama teacher of boys:

- A refined sense of humour.
- Enthusiasm and a genuine interest in what the boys are doing.
- Someone who does not get 'stressed' over the little things and can 'cut the students a little slack'.
- Well organised and who explains everything well.
- Someone who is able to guide the students along the process.
- A genuine respect and love of the students.
- The ability to be supportive and encouraging but able to take a 'critical stance' when needed.
- To be 'young at heart and on the same wavelength as the students'.
- To be able to accept all the students 'as they really are'.

(adapted from Questionnaires Group 1&2, Jan-Aug 1999, Jan-October 2000)

In discussions with the boys about what they considered were the most important elements 'of a good drama performance and an empowering and satisfying drama experience', they summarised:

- An experience where the class get on and no one negatively criticises anyone else.
 - Positive attitudes from the teacher and the students.
 - Exploring themes which will 'reach out' to the audience and that the students 'want' to do. Knowing that the audience was moved by the experience.
 - A sense of fun and play where friendships grow stronger.
-

- A performance where we can ‘give it our all’ without fear of censure or anxiety.
- A sense of ‘togetherness and community.’
- A ‘performing’ group who can remain focused, determined and dedicated to the work at hand.

(adapted from Questionnaires Group 1&2, Jan-Aug 1999, Jan-October 2000)

Recommendations

This research reveals that in order to guide these boys’ to their full masculine potential, Sal **needed to be the facilitator, the artist, the observer, the muse, listening to students in a fluid and changing reciprocal relationship that allows them to feel empowered in their decision making whilst their artistic integrity is supported and respected.** (adapted from Field Log, March 4, 1999, Lines 71-73) The development and maintenance of a ‘community of drama practice’ can work positively to enhance the boys’ knowledge of the aesthetic dimensions of the dramatic form whilst helping to transform traditional patriarchal perceptions and stereotypes of how boys should behave and feel.

With these points in mind, this research further recommends:

- Drama programs should acknowledge the powerful influence that gender can have on students and ‘incorporate (this consideration) into their students’ art-making and critical reflective processes’. (McLean 1995) Importantly, themes and learning activities which frame the program should in some way address the issue of gender and offer experiences to boys which help them to move beyond entrenched cultural and social expectations of masculinity.

- Drama teachers of boys need to view their work as an ongoing 'act of hospitality' (Palmer 1998); an act that invites (boys) to participate in, challenge and explore learning experiences as they make decisions intelligently and authentically for themselves. (Greene 1978) It is the energy and vision of the drama teacher that is an important catalyst for the boys' own commitment and focus. The decision to intervene when needed (particularly to alert the boys to stereotypical gender reactions or generalisations in their work and relationships) is essential to the well being of boys' artistic and personal development.
- Drama work needs to be contextualised and grounded in the adolescent lives of the boys but also **offer ongoing challenge and scope so that they are invited to explore and evaluate issues and ideas beyond their own lived cultural and social gendered experiences.** Thorough, flexible planning that adapts to the needs of each new class is crucial. Willis' (1990) notion of the grounded aesthetic underpinned Sal's planning philosophies and many of the boys confirmed that *giving (them) stuff that (they) know and understand makes drama alot more interesting and relevant.* (Questionnaire 1, Group 1 and 2, 1999-2000)

Most of the boys agreed that they enjoyed taking responsibility for their own learning and that the skills of interpersonal negotiation and co-operation are encouraged and developed by participating in ensemble drama work. *Too much teacher interference is annoying at times... shuts us down... can get in our faces... working with other guys can be really OK.* (Questionnaire 2, Groups 1 and 2, 199-2000) **Promoting strong co-artist relationships in the drama classroom is a powerful way to teach boys how to work collaboratively with tolerance,**

support, understanding, curiosity, empathy and justice. It can built on the notion of team work (a notion many boys are familiar with from sporting activities) in non-aggressive ways and promote discourse between boys that encourages high levels of personal disclosure and rapport.

Directions for further research

This chapter has endeavoured to highlight the most significant findings of this research and provide viable recommendations for drama practitioners in boys' classrooms. It has drawn on contemporary literature to complement and enhance discussion and has attempted to isolate the most notable aspects of the experiences of the boys and their female drama teacher. Every endeavour has been made to represent and honour the voices of the boys and Sal as authentically as possible and it is their unique stories that have helped shape the former discussion and recommendations of this thesis.

The constraints of the study (see p.115) page highlight a number of possibilities for future research in the area of boys' education and drama. Areas which render further scholarly investigation include:

- Continued intensive research into the benefits of using drama across a wide cross section of diverse boys' schools. It would be particularly useful to explore the experiences of boys in drama in a variety of schools across an extended time frame (e.g. throughout the five years of their secondary schooling) and analyse the personal and educational effects drama has on these boys. Additionally, the influence drama continued to have on students after they have left school would

also prove useful in determining the long term effects of drama as an educational and possibly vocational discipline.

- In relation to 'boyswork' in schools, more work needs to be done in exploring how drama can be used to help boys understand their own and others masculinities in more meaningful ways. The potential power drama holds in assisting students to transcend traditional ideas about gender and patriarchy cannot be underestimated. Although interest in this area is growing, much more needs to be done to alert educators other than drama practitioners to the value of including drama in boys' programs and school curriculum planning. Much of the contemporary work written about the value of boys' and drama or more precisely, boys and the Arts, has been cursory. Whilst many theorists espouse the value of boys' involvement in the Arts, there is a growing need to give educators a more comprehensive and detailed understanding of how important aesthetic education can be in the lives of our boys.
- Of vital importance is the exploration of the use of drama with boys classified as 'high risk' or 'problematic', those from ethnic cultures and those in lower-socio economic schools. The familial and cultural backgrounds of boys would provide a valuable and rich study of whether drama is a positive and empowering influence in their lives.
- The strong traditional link between the aesthetic and the spiritual could be investigated in terms of whether the 'religious' ethos and doctrine of Catholic schools in particular, affects the ways boys approach drama in the classroom and how they view themselves as young men.
- Further investigation is warranted into exploring the benefits of having a female teacher in all boy drama classrooms. It would be useful to offer a comparative

study into the differences and commonalities of drama classes taught by females and those that are taught by males. Of added interest would be an exploration of drama classes that are co-taught by both males and females.

A final word

This research has sought to explore the experiences of adolescent boys and their female teacher in two single sex drama classrooms. It has been driven by two basic philosophical guidelines. Firstly, it has been informed by contemporary discourse that boys are at crisis point in both their educational and personal lives. More specifically, the work was strongly guided by the belief that emotionally, boys are in trouble, lacking introspection about their own and others' emotional lives, partaking in violent and aggressive behaviour and bullying, committing suicide at alarming rates and often misguided by traditional and potentially destructive notions of what it means to be masculine. Secondly, my twenty year experience in the drama classroom has taught me that drama has an amazing potential to empower and enfranchise students in ways that many curriculum disciplines do not. I was particularly interested in exploring what happened in an all boys' drama environment with a female teacher over an extended period of time. Philosophically, Biddulph's (1995) claim that boys' need strong male role models in the classroom was the driving force in my decision to observe the relationship between adolescent boys and their female teacher. Whilst I don't reject Biddulph's assertion that boys need male teachers (indeed, I believe this is necessary for boys' overall development), I conclude that it is essential that at some level of their schooling, boys experience learning with confident and assertive female teachers.

Indeed, I believe that if boys are to learn about their emotions, to cast off enculturated ideals about what men do and don't do, then surely they need to more closely explore the female world of feeling and knowing. If men are to rediscover the primal core of themselves as Bly (1996) suggests, it will take more than the occasional weekend of 'grounding' activities with other men to make a difference. This research suggests it will take a complete reassessment of the way men think about and perceive their masculine selves. Part of this journey will be to find ways to express their emotions freely and uncensored. Whilst men can undoubtedly teach each other important things about mateship and loyalty, women have much to offer in terms of improving the emotional lives of men and boys.

For the field of educational drama, this research confirms the importance of teacher preparation, classroom management and discipline knowledge. McLean's (1995) work on the aesthetic framework and its importance to student learning was validated by the powerful effect the collaborative artistic experience had on these boys overall. Sal's work confirmed the crucial role the drama teacher plays in structuring experiences that are contextualised in the lives of the students whilst actively challenging them to think 'beyond' their own enculturated beliefs and values. It illustrated the need for variety and diversity in teaching methodology and learning experiences and highlighted the benefits of allowing students a respectful ownership and responsibility of the dramatic work they do in the classroom. It illustrated that trust, respect and empathy in the drama classroom are essential factors for ensuring a dynamic and creative learning space and harmonious interpersonal relationships. It showed that boys are capable of sensitive and insightful creative work not only in theatre performance, but also in other

expressive forms such as movement, mime and prose work.

In further reflecting on what I learnt during my time in the field, I return to the work of Palmer (1998) in making some final adapted recommendations for the field of educational drama and the teaching of boys:

1. The drama classroom should be bounded by defined expectations but also be 'open' with clear and compelling experiences and resources that invite and encourage boys to learn.
2. The drama space should be comfortable but 'charged' with an energy which supports boys to risk take and experiment.
3. The drama space should invite and value the voices of all boys and affirm, question and challenge beliefs and ideas raised by individuals.
4. The drama space should honour the 'little' stories of individual boys and the 'big' stories of discipline and tradition. Personal stories should be embraced but act as points of reference for universal and archetypal stories.
5. The drama space should support solitude whilst also surrounding students with the resources of community. Dialogue should be encouraged at all times so bias can be challenged and knowledge expanded.
6. The drama space should value silence whilst celebrating vocality so that group reflection becomes part of the learning experience. (adapted from Palmer 1998, p.77)

In finishing my research journey, I have included part of a performance script of the Senior boys in their last school drama assessment piece. When I read the script initially, I was moved by the candour and emotion of the piece and felt it was a final

powerful ode to how important the drama classroom had been to them. It seems fitting that the voices that began and shaped my research narrative, should now finish it:

*Another turning point, its time for us to go
Time grabs you by the wrist and this is our last show
So make the best of this task and say goodbye
It's not a question, it's a lesson learnt in time
It's something unpredictable but in the end it's right
We know we have had the time of our lives*

*So take the freeze frames and tension in your mind
Hang it on a wall, so we can read the lines
Socky and wrestling are always on our mind
For what it's worth it was worth all the while
It's something unpredictable but in the end it's right
We know we had the time of our lives.*

(adapted from the song 'Good Riddance (time of your life)', Warner Music:Australia, Senior Class, 2000)

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AUSTRALIAN CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY

February 1999

Dear Parents,

I am a lecturer in drama at the Australian Catholic University (McAuley) where I have taught now for seven years. My career in teaching has spanned almost twenty years where I have taught across both primary and secondary sectors of schooling. In the last seven years of teaching at ACU, I have been lecturer in charge of drama curriculum in the Bachelor of Education program and lecturer in charge of a number of drama units in the Bachelor of Arts program. My area of expertise is drama education and in particular, gender studies in drama classrooms. My research study for my Master of Philosophy in 1996 was a case study in one all girls' drama classroom and my current interest is the study of drama in an all boys' classroom. This interest in the teaching of drama to adolescent males and how drama contributes to the educational and personal lives of these students, has developed into a doctoral study at Griffith University.

I am seeking permission for your son to be part of my case study to be conducted over twelve months in his year twelve drama classroom. Under the authority of _____ (College Principal) and _____ (Classroom Teacher), research would be conducted on a weekly basis until school finishes in November. I will not be teaching your son, but rather participating in the classroom as an observer and an interviewer. The following information outlines the details of the research for your consideration:

Aim of the Study

The aim of this study is to understand the experiences of adolescent males in the drama classroom in a more comprehensive and informative way than we currently do. I am interested in why male students choose to do drama as a subject and how drama develops young men socially and emotionally to cope better with the adult world they are moving into. Other questions posed include: What do they consider interesting in their drama studies? How do they see drama as a tool for their own empowerment? Does drama change their view of the world?

At the end of the thesis study, I hope to publish the findings alongwith those of girls' experiences in the drama classroom, in a monograph publication aimed at drama practitioners and students of drama. My hope is that these studies will assist teachers in preparing better drama programs in their single sex classrooms as well as reassess their own understanding of the need for gender balanced educative practices.

The Procedure Involved

This research involves case study methodology as follows:

AUSTRALIAN CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY LIMITED A.C.N. 050 192 660
McAULEY CAMPUS 53 PROSPECT ROAD MITCHELTON QLD 4053 AUSTRALIA
P O BOX 247 EVERTON PARK QLD 4053 AUSTRALIA
TELEPHONE (07) 3855 7100 FACSIMILE (07) 3855 7105

- Interviews conducted with groups of students, videotaped and audiotaped.
- A questionnaire concerning activity and attitudes in the drama classroom.
- Informal discussions
- Personal journals for research data
- Field notes – observations of drama classroom and student interaction
- Teacher interviews.

Confidentiality/Participation Considerations

Research of this kind demands a commitment of confidentiality, an ongoing respect for the rights of the participants and that of the participating institution, and a high standard of ethical behaviour on the part of the researcher. This is a commitment I take seriously.

Your son's right to be protected during and after the study period will be maintained in the following ways:

- In all written data, a pseudonym will be used to describe his input at all times.
- Video footage will be used for transcribing student input but will not be shown in the public arena without the agreement of parents and school administration.
- Videos will be stored in a locked steel cabinet at the researcher's place of work. This will also apply to the use of audiotape data.
- Journal entries will be used by the researcher only. The students will be asked to use their pseudonym when making entries. Journals will be collected at regular intervals throughout the research period for data analysis.
- In both the final thesis and subsequent publications, the name of the school will not be disclosed.

Participation/Withdrawal from the Study

Your son has the right to request non-participation in the research at any time. Similarly, if at any time you free you would like to withdraw from son from participation in the study, your wishes will be respected. Students will receive their own letter of explanation clearly stating the researcher's expectations and the direction the research will take.

I would like to sincerely thank you for your time in considering your son's participation in this research. Research of this kind is always beneficial to the teaching practices of the future and the uniqueness of your son's contribution will undoubtedly enrich my own understanding of the value of drama in the classroom. Would you be kind enough to fill out the accompanying permission form and return via your son to the class teacher, Mrs Sue Lawson. Should you wish to discuss this issue any further in any way at all, please feel free to contact me on the numbers provided on my attached academic card.

Yours faithfully,

Tracey Lee
Lecturer in Drama



AUSTRALIAN CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY

Dear

I am writing to formally invite you to be a participant in my Ph.D. research case study of the experiences of adolescent males in one all male drama classroom. This is a major piece of work of approximately 100 000 words resulting in a thesis which will hopefully serve as an informative piece of research for teachers in all boys' drama classrooms. Your contribution to this case study is unique and invaluable and I hope you will agree to be part of this exciting journey.

To help you make your decision, I have included the details of the research for your consideration:

Aims of the Study

The aim of this study is to understand the experiences of adolescent males in the drama classroom in a more comprehensive and informative way than we currently do. I am interested in why you have chosen to do drama as a school subject and whether you think drama has contributed to your overall social and emotional development in any way. Other questions I would like you to think about include:

- What themes and topics interest you in the drama classroom?
- What is important to you about the kind of teacher you work with in drama?
- How do you see drama helping you cope with your life both now and in the future?
- Does working in drama change your view of the world?
- What makes a good drama lesson?
- What issues are important for young men to pursue in the drama classroom?
- What do you think about working in an all male drama classroom?

The Procedures Involved

This research involves the following procedures:

- You will be asked to take part in small group interviews, which will be audio or videotaped.
- You will be asked to fill out questionnaires.

AUSTRALIAN CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY LIMITED A.C.N. 050 192 660
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- You will be asked to have informal discussions with me about your drama experiences throughout the year.
- You will be asked to keep an individual reflective journal about your experiences in the drama classroom. This journal will form part of my research journal but will only be viewed by myself.
- Whilst you are working in the classroom with your teacher, you will notice me in the classroom taking notes and observing classroom interaction. I may sometimes speak with you during these classroom activities but I will not be formally teaching you.

Confidentiality/Participation Considerations

You have the right not to participate in this research. Additionally, if you agree to initially participate, you have the right to withdraw your participation at any time. This decision will be respected. It will mean I will not include you in any of my data collection. At all times, your real name will not be disclosed. Instead, a pseudonym will be used to protect your privacy in all documentation - this includes future publications, which may result from the thesis. You have the right to privacy and to expect confidentiality from myself as researcher at all times. Whilst I will discuss findings with your classroom teacher, your real name will not be disclosed in those discussions at any time.

I hope you will agree to participate in this research. Please discuss this issue with your parents who have also received a letter and a consent form. I would ask you also to sign a consent form to indicate your willingness to take part in the research. Should you have any questions about the work in your classroom, please feel free to discuss with me at any time. You are an important part of this work and your understanding of the procedures and your complete comfort with being a participant is of ultimate importance.

Yours faithfully,



Tracey Sanders
Lecturer in Drama
Australian Catholic University (McAuley)



AUSTRALIAN CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY

Dear ,

I am writing to formally ask if you would be willing to take part in classroom research which focuses on the experiences of adolescent boys in one all boys' drama classroom. This research, a case study, will be conducted over twelve months in your classroom and my role will be not of a teacher, but as a participant observer of drama activity. I know you and I have spoken about this at length and you have unofficially voiced your interest in being part of the research, but I would like to formalise this possible research relationship by outlining the procedures of the research and asking you to sign a consent agreement. The following information hopefully defines the direction the research will take and methods, which will be used to ensure confidentiality of you and your student participants.

Aim of the Study

The aim of this study is to understand the experiences of adolescent males in the drama classroom in a more comprehensive and informative way than we currently do. I am interested in why male students choose to do drama as a subject and how drama develops young men socially and emotionally to cope better with the adult world they are moving into. Other questions posed include: What do adolescent males consider interesting in their drama studies? How do they see drama as a tool for their own empowerment? Does drama change their view of the world? How do they approach the art form as young artists? How does the absence of girls impact on the boys' classroom experiences?

At the end of the thesis research, I hope to publish the findings along with those of girls' experiences in the drama classroom (Lee 1997) in a monograph publication aimed at drama practitioners and students of drama. My hope is that these studies will assist teachers in preparing better drama programs in their single sex classrooms as well as reassess their own understanding of the need for gender balanced educative practices.

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The Procedure Involved

This research involves case study methodology as follows:

- Interviews conducted with groups of students, videotaped and audiotaped.
- Interviews conducted with the classroom teacher.
- A questionnaire concerning activity and attitudes in the drama classroom.
- Informal discussions.
- Personal journals for research data.
- Field notes – observations of drama classroom and student interaction.

Confidentiality/Participation Considerations

Research of this kind demands a commitment of confidentiality, an ongoing respect for the rights of the participants and that of the participating institution, and a high standard of ethical behaviour on the part of the researcher. This is a commitment I take seriously. The privacy rights of the participating school and Year 12 students will be maintained in the following ways:

- In all written data, a pseudonym will be used to describe student and teacher input at all times.
- The school will never be directly named nor information given which would lead the school to be easily identified by the general public. This commitment to ensure anonymity will apply both to the writing of the thesis and any future publications, which may result from this work. It will also be upheld in any academic forums the researcher may be involved in during or after the research period.
- Video footage will be used for transcribing student input but will not be shown in the public arena without the agreement of parents and school administration.
- Videos will be stored in a locked steel cabinet at the researcher's place of work. This will also apply to the use of audiotape data. Data will be stored safely for a period of at least five years.
- Journal entries will be used by the researcher only. The students will be asked to use their pseudonym when making entries. Journals will be collected at regular intervals throughout the research period for data analysis.
- In both the final thesis and subsequent publications, the name of the school will not be disclosed.
- Data collected from the classroom will remain the property of the researcher for research analysis and discussion. Students' privacy will be upheld at all times and information about student work will not be discussed with outside bodies other than the classroom teacher (when appropriate) and the researcher's supervisors, Associate Professor John O'Toole and Dr. Philip Taylor (Griffith University) or in university based colloquiums. In all cases, the students' pseudonyms will be used.
- Parents, student participants and the classroom teacher will be asked to sign a consent form to take part in the study. Additionally, they will each receive letters of explanation

of research procedure to ensure they understand the commitment they are making. All letters and other written documents (e.g. questionnaires) must be submitted to the Griffith University Ethics Committee for clearance before the research begins.

Participation/Withdrawal from the Study

Students have the right to request non-participation in the research at any time. Students will receive their own letter of explanation clearly stating the researcher's expectations and the direction the research will take. Parents have the right to request their son's withdrawal from the research at any time or to seek clarification whenever necessary.

Sue, may I take this opportunity to thank you sincerely for considering your participation in this research. I have long admired your work and know that the year I would spend with you would be a powerful educative and personal experience. Should you agree to participate in the research, would you kindly sign the attached consent form and return to me as soon as possible.

Yours faithfully,

Tracey Lee
Lecturer in Drama
Australian Catholic University



AUSTRALIAN CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY

Dear _____,

As you are aware, I am seeking permission to work in your school next year with Year 12 drama class. I realise that before such permission may be granted, you will need to have a comprehensive understanding of the procedures involved in this research, in particular, the strategies which will be used to ensure confidentiality and privacy of the research participants and the school itself. The issue of disclosure is an important one which needs to be clearly negotiated and understood before I begin formal work in the classroom. With this in mind, I will outline the research step by step with particular focus on the measures to be taken to ensure confidentiality both during and after the research period.

Aim of the Study

The aim of this study is to understand the experiences of adolescent males in the drama classroom in a more comprehensive and informative way than we currently do. I am interested in why male students choose to do drama as a subject and how drama develops young men socially and emotionally to cope better with the adult world they are moving into. Other questions posed include: What do adolescent males consider interesting in their drama studies? How do they see drama as a tool for their own empowerment? Does drama change their view of the world? How do they approach the art form as young artists? How does the absence of girls impact on the boys' classroom experiences?

At the end of the thesis research, I hope to publish the findings along with those of girls' experiences in the drama classroom (Lee 1997) in a monograph publication aimed at drama practitioners and students of drama. My hope is that these studies will assist teachers in preparing better drama programs in their single sex classrooms as well as reassess their own understanding of the need for gender balanced educative practices.

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The Procedure Involved

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- Interviews conducted with groups of students, videotaped and audiotaped.
- A questionnaire concerning activity and attitudes in the drama classroom.
- Informal discussions.
- Personal journals for research data.
- Field notes – observations of drama classroom and student interaction.
- Teacher interviews.

Confidentiality/Participation Considerations

Research of this kind demands a commitment of confidentiality, an ongoing respect for the rights of the participants and that of the participating institution, and a high standard of ethical behaviour on the part of the researcher. This is a commitment I take seriously. The privacy rights of the participating school and Year 12 students will be maintained in the following ways:

- In all written data, a pseudonym will be used to describe student and teacher input at all times.
- The school will never be directly named nor information given which would lead the school to be easily identified by the general public. This commitment to ensure anonymity will apply both to the writing of the thesis and any future publications, which may result from this work. It will also be upheld in any academic forums the researcher may be involved in during or after the research period.
- Video footage will be used for transcribing student input but will not be shown in the public arena without the agreement of parents and school administration.
- Videos will be stored in a locked steel cabinet at the researcher's place of work. This will also apply to the use of audiotape data. Data will be stored safely for a period of at least five years.
- Journal entries will be used by the researcher only. The students will be asked to use their pseudonym when making entries. Journals will be collected at regular intervals throughout the research period for data analysis.
- In both the final thesis and subsequent publications, the name of the school will not be disclosed.
- Data collected from the classroom will remain the property of the researcher for research analysis and discussion. Students' privacy will be upheld at all times and information about student work will not be discussed with outside bodies other than the classroom teacher (when appropriate) and the researcher's supervisors, Associate Professor John O'Toole and Dr. Philip Taylor (Griffith University) or in university based colloquiums. In all cases, the students' pseudonyms will be used.

- Parents, student participants and the classroom teacher will be asked to sign a consent form to take part in the study. Additionally, they will each receive letters of explanation of research procedure to ensure they understand the commitment they are making. All letters and other written documents (e.g. questionnaires) must be submitted to the Griffith University Ethics Committee for clearance before the research begins.

Participation/Withdrawal from the Study

Students have the right to request non-participation in the research at any time. Students will receive their own letter of explanation clearly stating the researcher's expectations and the direction the research will take. Parents have the right to request their son's withdrawal from the research at any time or to seek clarification whenever necessary.

I sincerely hope this information provides a comprehensive overview of the proposed classroom research and the commitment I make to the school in terms of confidentiality and ethical behaviour whilst I am a guest in your college. I would be grateful for any feedback about areas you consider still need to be explained in more depth. I thank you for your time and consideration in view of this matter and hope you will allow me to work with these boys in 1999. Please feel free to contact me at any time on the numbers provided on my academic card.

Yours faithfully,

Tracey Lee
Lecturer in Drama
Australian Catholic University

Research Study Consent Form

Researcher: Tracey Lee (Griffith University)

Project: PhD Research (Classroom Case Study)

I/We _____ give consent for
~~my~~/our son _____ to participate in the research of
Griffith University PhD student Tracey Lee to be conducted in his drama classroom during
1999.

I/We understand that ~~my~~/our son will be asked to take part in interviews both video and
audiotaped as well as complete questionnaires and an individual reflective journal. I also
understand that the researcher will be present in the classroom as an observer, recording
(both written and videotaped) classroom activity during the research period.

I understand that I/We may request the withdrawal of ~~my~~/our son from the research at any
point during the research period. I/We have been informed of the aims, procedures and
possible future use of research data resulting from this research.

Signed

Date

Research Study Consent Form

Researcher: Tracey Lee (Griffith University)

Project: Ph.D. Research (Classroom Case Study)

I _____ agree to participate in the research of Griffith University Ph.D. student Tracey Lee to be conducted in my drama classroom during 1999.

I understand that I will be asked to take part in interviews both video and audiotaped, as well as complete questionnaires and an individual reflective journal. I also understand that the researcher will be present in the classroom as an observer, recording (both written and videotaped) classroom activity during the research period.

I understand that I may withdraw from the research at any point during the research period. I have been informed of the aims, procedures and possible future use of research data resulting from this research.

Signed _____

Date _____

Research Study Consent Form

Researcher: Tracey Sanders (Griffith University)

Project: Ph.D. Research (Classroom Case Study)

I _____ agree to participate in the research of Griffith University Ph.D. student Tracey Lee to be conducted in my drama classroom during 2000.

I understand that I will be asked to take part in interviews both video and audiotaped, as well as complete questionnaires and an individual reflective journal. I also understand that the researcher will be present in the classroom as an observer, recording (both written and videotaped) classroom activity during the research period.

I understand that I may withdraw from the research at any point during the research period.

I have been informed of the aims, procedures and possible future use of research data resulting from this research.

Signed _____

Date _____

**Research Questionnaire 1
Boys' College
2000**

Your participation in this questionnaire is appreciated and valued. In answering the questions thoughtfully you are assisting me in gathering important data for this research study. Remember whilst you have agreed to partake in the research, you do not have to answer any questions you preferred not to. Please ask me if you need clarification. Thank you.



Tracey Sanders

1. In your own words describe what makes you enjoy (or not enjoy) being part of this drama classroom? *The freedom and the people of the classroom makes it most enjoyable than other subjects.*

2. What has been the highlight of your experiences so far (it may have been in the classroom or perhaps even a theatre visit)? *I can really say one thing but I guess the theatre visit was exciting, as well as the recent writing assessment.*

3. The role of the teacher is very important in any drama classroom. How would you describe your relationship with your drama teacher in this drama classroom?

Ms Lawson is one of the reasons why I am doing drama. She is a great teacher as you can understand her easily and you can tell that she loves her students.

4. Write down four characteristics you consider make an effective drama teacher.

Able to understand
Able to get along with
Able to accept everything she says
organised

5. How important is the teacher's role and guidance when you are preparing for an assessment?

It is ~~extreme~~ extremely important as drama requires help from the teacher otherwise it would be very hard.

6. Would you say this classroom is a united one. If not what would you change about it?

This is my fav room. The lighting, stage, set, and atmosphere is everything but wrong.

BOYS' COLLEGE
DRAMA YEAR 12 1999. (ADAPTED FOR 2000)

Research Questionnaire Two

This questionnaire forms part of the research you are currently involved in. It pertains to the recent unit performance 'Mothers and Sons.' Please consider the questions carefully. As always it is completely voluntary but please keep in mind your contribution is invaluable to the overall study. Your contribution is considered important and unique and will be treated with the highest degree of confidentiality. You do not have to identify yourself. Please hand the completed (or uncompleted) sheets to your drama teacher.

Many thanks,
Tracey Lee (Researcher)

Question One

How would rate the success of the performance 'Mothers and Sons' in artistic terms?

Mothers and sons was a great success, overall.
Artistically it was very good. We kept things simple yet still brought it to the heart warming climax at the end.

Question Two

What did you personally gain from participation in the experience?

This was the first time that the class has worked together on a major task. It showed that all the different groups of people could successfully work together to create a quality piece of work.

Question Three

This performance was an ensemble effort (whole class participation and contribution). How do you view this process in comparison with group or individual work? Does it make for better creative, artistic work?

It allowed for everyone's creativity to be rolled into one which ensured the originality of the piece and kept it entertaining. Overall it was better working all together as opposed to in a group or individually.

Question Four

The role of the teacher as director, co-artist and participant was very important in this performance. How do you view this form of teaching style in drama? Do you find it allows for the class to really work effectively at an artistic level or do you need more teacher input?

The amount of teacher involvement was great. It helped guide us in the right direction while letting us still maintain a level of control over how the show was to turn out.

Question Six

Do you see natural born leaders in this class who help guide the drama when needed? Would you like to contribute more or less to the process?

There are definitely individuals in the class who stand out as natural leaders. As far as my position goes, I was and am happy with where I stand and feel no real need to change that.

Question Seven

What would you list as the most important elements for a good performance and an empowering and satisfying drama experience?

Basing it on something that is going to "reach-out" to the people who are the intended audience. Keeping it amusing or at least entertaining and actually having fun creating and presenting it.

BOYS' COLLEGE
DRAMA YEAR 12 1999. (ADAPTED FOR 2000)

Research Questionnaire

This questionnaire forms part of the research you are currently involved in. It is completely voluntary but please keep in mind your contribution is invaluable to the overall study. Your contribution is considered important and unique and will be treated with the highest degree of confidentiality. You do not have to identify yourself. Please hand the completed (or uncompleted) sheets to your drama teacher.

**Many thanks,
Tracey Lee (Researcher)**

Question One

How long have you studied drama at school?

This is the third year

Question Two

Why did you choose drama as a subject?

Because it allows you to let your body & your imagination run riot in a relaxed, intimate, & fun environment, with no wooden tables.

Question Three

As a school subject, how would you describe drama? Is it academically challenging?

Drama is definitely academically challenging, as it is a branch of English, yet much more involved.

Question Four

What value do you consider drama to have in your life?

Without trying to save, Drama is a lonely incentive to continue school, and to do so with enthusiasm. It is also a very refreshing subject, & helps me to keep a positive outlook on my school life.

Question Five

What do you think about being in an all boys' drama classroom? Are there benefits in not having females in the classroom? Discuss these as clearly as possible.

When there are no girls to participate, it prevents the "uninspired" members of the school to title drama as a "girls subject". But otherwise, I can't see that it would make too much difference.

Question Six

Do you think some contact with girls in drama during the academic year would add to the value of your learning? Why or why not?

Having never worked with girls academically, I don't really know, yet learning & interacting with the opposite sex could be interesting.

Question Seven

What kinds of issues/perspectives would you like to see covered in your drama class?

I like to see issues that concern us, as students, & other real issues that relate to elements of the wider community.

Question Eight

Is there anything you would like to see added to or deleted in your drama curriculum?

No.

Question Nine

Would you prefer to have a male or female drama teacher? Why or why not? (Remember your responses are confidential!)

Females appear much more open about their own feelings & emotions, which encourages us to do the same, while staying within our comfort zone.

Question Ten

What is the best thing about your drama class this year?

Definitely our drama teacher. She is extremely in touch with the way today's youth feel about themselves & each other.

Question Eleven

Do you consider drama an important influence in your life?

Drama makes us more confident about ourselves & about addressing others in the wider community.

Thank you!

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INTERVIEW 3 2000
(GROUP 2)

1 Tracey: Why did you pick drama as a subject?
 2 Paul: It's easy, well the writing is easy, the performance is harder
 3 Tracey: The theme you are doing at the moment, are you enjoying it?
 4 John: Yeah it's ok, it was a bit iffy last term but once you get into it, it's good.
 5 Tracey: Is there anything in drama that you would like to do that you have not done this
 6 year?
 7 John: What we are doing now, script writing is great, I have been wanting to do that since
 8 Year 8. You can write what you feel or what you think without writing about yourself.
 9 Tracey: Do you not have to bring yourself into that work?
 10 John: Not really, lots of kids our age have got big imaginations and can write about a lot
 11 of things.
 12 Tracey: Like what?
 13 John: Anything. Issues which are relevant inside guys' head.
 14 Tracey: Sex? Girls? (Both boys nod) What about life after school?
 15 John: This is what I want to do when I leave school. I want to act. I have to do well in it.
 16 Tracey: What about you Paul?
 17 Paul: I get to express myself which is good.
 18 Tracey: Do you think issues which are being covered in some of the plays you are doing
 19 are useful to you?
 20 John: Not really those issues don't really affect any of us in this class at the moment.
 21 Paul: We know about it, it is not going to change the way we think but maybe doing it
 22 might open our minds to other things - I am not saying drugs aren't around but I haven't
 23 had anything to do with them
 24 Tracey: You tell me you think Year 12 drama will be easy - is that easy for you or do you
 25 think drama is an easy subject all round?
 26 John: unintelligible
 27 Tracey: Not having girls in the class has been described by other boys as being an
 28 advantage - what do you think?
 29 Paul: Yeah, I like everyone in this class - like Miss put us into groups to work in and we
 30 are not really scared to do anything in front of our mates. → The benefits of the
 31 Tracey: So you would describe this class as pretty good mates Single Sex
 32 BOTH NOD THEIR HEADS & behaviour. class
 33 Tracey: Girls sometimes feel awkward working in front of each other - how do you feel
 34 Paul: No that is no problem
 35 Tracey: I note that you guys loved to muck around and jump on top of each other - what
 36 is that all about,
 37 John: Aw that is our male bonding (he laughs)
 38 Paul: Well you don't get to do that anyway else in any other class
 39 Tracey: So once that is over you get to the drama
 40 Paul: Yeah like once we get active then we want to stay active and usually it turns out
 41 very well.
 42 Tracey: Are there distinct leaders
 43 Paul: Yeah well in my group I also take a leadership role because a lot of people aren't
 44 really interested in drama but I have to do well in this so I take charge.
 45 Tracey: So do guys mind having someone telling them what to do
 46 John: Nah → communication an openness ??
 → attitudes. take it on the chin ??

Handwritten notes:
 - a popular tasks - allowing real ownership of the work & Praxis.
 - The 'Winkles' grounded aesthetic
 - N.B. relevance to boys.
 - The 'Safe' space to blow off steam physicalisation of the space.
 - Single Sex

47 Paul: As long as things get done, we don't really care
 48 Tracey: When you are doing drama do you really think about the theory you have learnt
 49 to help you put the drama together.
 50 John shrugs: Yeah well it can give you more options.
 51 Tracey: Now everyone agrees that Mrs S is a good teacher – can you just tell me again
 52 what makes her so effective.
 53 Paul: Well she's not like the other teachers – she is easy going and caring, she doesn't get
 54 stressed out like some of the others
 55 John: Yeah she helps us and doesn't always tell us what to do
 56 Tracey: If she was different would that affect your love of drama
 57 John: Oh yeah it would make it boring – you would not want to come at all
 58 Tracey: She gives you a lot of freedom to work inside the drama the way you see fit.
 59 Paul: It's good because drama is about expressing yourself.
 60 Tracey: Is there anything you have not liked this year
 61 Paul: At the start I could not get it at all – things really new are hard, the forming
 62 activities are difficult
 63 Tracey: How do you come up with ideas for drama
 64 John: Oh we kinda bounce off each other
 65 Tracey: Do you generally all listen to each other. Does everyone fit in?
 66 John: We are pretty much the same
 67 Tracey: Are there times when drama is destroyed by others
 68 Paul: Oh yeah, some people are really serious about the drama and others just don't care
 69 Tracey: How do you deal with this – of course, it may be you
 70 Paul: Guys will generally say something to each other and then it is all over
 71 John: Yeah the next day, it's gone
 72 Tracey: How do you see yourself as a typical Australian male – you've been looking at
 73 all kinds of images in drama, where do you see yourself?
 74 Paul: Well that depends, there are all sorts of people
 75 Tracey: Well what about mateship – is it really important?
 76 Paul: Yeah, Yeah, when you have someone standing beside you it really helps – you can
 77 call on your friends, it gives you a sense of freedom
 78 Tracey: Is there any pressure to live up to any male expectation in drama
 79 John: No not in drama, maybe outside – not in here. I think if we were to do something
 80 outside, we would not feel so comfortable. You can come here and you don't sit down
 81 and write but the way Miss explains it, she goes through it so we understand it.
 82 Paul: She gives us a lot of encouragement to do things
 83 Teacher: Could you give me five attributes which make Mrs S a good drama teacher
 84 Both John and Paul: Encouraging, helpful, friendly
 85 Tracey: I have read research that suggests that male teachers are better in boys'
 86 classrooms – what do you think about that?
 87 John: Aw male teachers are harder and fit in with boys like jocks and you know football
 88 Tracey: And that is not important to you
 89 Paul: Nah, not really
 90 John: Not at this school, there are not a lot of jocks here, not everyone here is into sports.
 91 Paul: We have a good sporting team, good swimming team – the Year 12's are really into
 92 it but it doesn't control us. Male teachers are too macho. The Year 12's are really into
 93 it but it doesn't control us. Male teachers are too macho.

benefits
freedom
be
sports
COMMUNICATION
BEHAVIOUR

N.B
The
importance
space

The benefits of a
balanced Praxis
theory + practical
The female teachers!
+ the importance of
the teachers
in drama.
→ drama as challenge
stretching the body
Thinking
COMMUNICATION
The benefits &
importance of
friendship in
the space
The view
on
male
teachers

This is important not all fit into the
category of jocks. The female teacher
provides a different perspective

SAR INTERVIEW 2 2000

1 Tracey: What do you think drama does for the boys you teach? *Drama approaches*

2 Sal: I think it allow them to become less 'boyo' - even though I give them that too in the classroom, it

3 really lets them see that the boy culture is not the only one, and you rally see that towards the end of the

4 year...the senior work and the risk taking is quite amazing in the fact that they are allowed to take risks in

5 groups especially, they feed off each other and the work is eclectic.. *✓✓✓*

6 Tracey: How would you describe a 'boys own' culture?

7 Sal: Well, by tapping in to the physicality of boys culture, such as the sporting metaphor, well it is a bit

8 deceiving but it allows me to work in other ways to branch off into other areas that they would not

9 normally go.. *Drama approach*

10 Tracey: Are they more feminine areas?

11 Sal: Yes, I would say so...boys really like to present drama that is in your face and the work they did with

12 me in class included masks and slow ritualistic movement, against what they normally do...even in style,

13 they were prepared to play around with style, like 18th century dance, they made up some wonderful

14 movements.. *Risk taking*

15 Tracey: No homophobia?

16 Sal: Well that does come out in comments..but it does not come out in the drama.

17 Tracey: So the drama allows them to look at their fears and put their toes in the water and have a go?

18 Sal: Yes, well they know they won't get roused on if they make some sort of homophobic comment, I try to

19 approach it in a rational communicative way rather than losing my temper and telling them I don't like their

20 comments. *→ changing perceptions teachers!*

21 Tracey: I have noticed that there have been a couple of boys more effeminate than others - do the boys

22 sling off at them? *Sal "*

23 Sal: Yes, but there is one particular boy in Year 12 who they do it to but they know the boys really like him

24 and so it is their way of dealing with his individuality and I noticed one or two ask him to work with them

25 and that is a real breakthrough *="*

26 Tracey: Yes it is

27 Sal: So to able to see someone of the macho culture wanting to work with someone who is the anitithesis of

28 that, that's great

29 Tracey: It is interesting that for a homophobic culture, the boys jump on top of each other and hug each

30 other.

31 Sal: That's the way they show mateship, the senior boys very good at sport do it a lot. *Comradery*

32 Tracey: Do you think drama empowers boys for life? *SORT '14/10*

33 Sal: Oh most definitely..I've got a boy in Year 11 who wants to be counted in for every theatre visit - many

34 go into the acting careers...I think that the normal run of the mill kid they would say it changes them by

35 giving them more confidence in other ways, it gives them the edge over other kids and they know this and

36 that is empowering for later life, I would love to say their views are changed about life issues but I don't

37 know if it does...maybe it is latent in their heads...it gives them a layer of thought I think we have

38 achieved our aims. *Drama Philosophy*

39 Tracey: There are times when I think it is hard to measure what happens in our classrooms. Does it bother

40 you if all they get is self confidence?

41 Sal: A balance of everything, risk taking and the ability to try aesthetic experience - if I can't engage them

42 aesthetically, then I am not doing my job. *↳*

43 Tracey: What are your strategies for doing this?

44 Sal: Good planning - I document everything - changing assessment year by year to provide success for

45 different classes who struggle...activities in the classroom you know will reach them, not things you have

46 learnt somewhere which won't work for them...challenge is the key. *↳*

47 Tracey: What do you think of Biddulph's ideas of male role models for boys

48 Sal: I disagree with that because I think some of the boys have a feminine side well I think I have a

49 masculine side as well, I am not stereotyped in any way and the boys respond to me well and look at me as

50 the drama teacher, not as the female teacher, and my age helps, the mother figure, the sister figure, they

51 know that I am interested in them, I participate fully and they see me in a rounded way. *↳ female*

52 Tracey: Would you say that you are unique in this way?

53 Sal: I think females teach well because we are prepared to take more risks with our teaching...obviously

54 the respondents will take more risks. The boys in my first year found me very difficult to deal with because

55 I wanted them to meet challenges that never had before.... *↳ The masculine ideal of*

56 Tracey: I think Biddulph likes to find the feminine *↳ risk taking*

N.B. The advantage of females in boys' schools!!!

School perceptions
important!!

- 57 Sal: I think the boys do that anyway at this school...we encourage the boys to touch each other and show
58 support from each other..it is a specific area, we have bullying like any other school but there is far more
59 overall mateship in this school and the boys are devoted to each other overall. I have kids ring me up and
60 ask me for coffee who I have taught three years ago.
61 Tracey: In the girls' classroom I sometimes felt that I was not always welcome...I did not have that feeling
62 here, the boys really wanted me to be part of the classroom.
63 Sal: Yes I encourage that, I would not have wanted it any other way, they knew I knew you and they trusted
64 you and they all read your letter after you had gone. There is a great sense of nurturing in the school culture
65 here.

N.B a change from traditional
notions of boys don't show affection &
teaching only in Sport!! This is
important in understanding the
unique approach here. Boys can find
alternative ways of knowing &
feeling in the classroom!

INTERVIEW 1 2000

- 1 Tracey: I would like you to tell me why you chose to do drama / *the importance of*
 2 Orlando: I think I chose to do drama because it is enjoyable and because of the teacher - *the teacher's*
 3 if it wasn't for the teacher I would not have done drama.
 4 Jake: It's just a lot of fun and I do enjoy it, yeah..(Jake is uncomfortable and unsure of
 5 what to say, he is moving about in his chair in an awkward way)
 6 Dan: I chose it because it is fun and it counts towards your OP as well and it helps with
 7 public speaking.
 8 Tracey: Did you choose drama because you wanted to know more about the world or did
 9 you not give that any thought when you chose it?
 10 THE BOYS ALL SHAKE THEIR HEADS / *contextualisation*
 11 Tracey: If you had your choice to pick the issues you did in drama, what would you pick? *student*
 12 Dan: Teen issues like teenage suicide - I guess it is not a brilliant thing to happen in real *reception*
 13 life but the feelings teenagers get, you know before it and how to prevent it..
 14 Orlando: Yeah it is more a teenager thing. *Re recorded aesthetic*
 15 THE BOYS ALL MUMBLE AGREEMENT THAT THEY WOULD LIKE TO LOOK *WILLIS*
 16 AT THINGS TO DO WITH ADOLESCENCE.
 17 Tracey: Do you think drama allows you to freely look at issues like that? I notice
 18 sometimes it takes a long time for you all to settle into a topic. Why is that?
 19 Orlando: Because it is boring
 20 Tracey: So what are the elements in drama that make it really interesting for you?
 21 Jake: It has to be practical. Yeah
 22 OTHERS NOD AGREEMENT
 23 Dan: Making it up ..about life *connecting*
 24 Tracey: So what don't you like to do
 25 Dino: Writing and theory..
 26 Tracey: Now you have told me that Mrs S is a great drama teacher - would it make a
 27 difference if she were male?
 28 Jake: Oh yeah, you can't get as close to a male teacher as you can to a female teacher
 29 THE OTHERS LAUGH
 30 Dan: Yeah they can more understand where you are coming from - in some ways it is
 31 good and in some ways bad.. Mrs S is just like a second mother to me. *→ the*
 32 Tracey: Is that important?
 33 THEY ALL NOD IN AGREEMENT
 34 Tracey: Can you tell me what the characteristics of a good drama is for you? Someone *mentors*
 35 you can trust?
 36 Orlando: Yeah, Mrs S has a really good background in theatre and everything and she can
 37 really understand us at times *the teacher must be in touch*
 38 Dan: Yeah despite our age difference she really knows where we are coming from..
 39 Tracey: So am I hearing you say that a caring teacher is really important to you? *knowledgeable*
 40 THEY ALL NOD IN AGREEMENT
 41 Tracey: Are there any other elements of a good drama teacher we have not discussed?
 42 Orlando: Well when we were in grades 8,9 and 10 she played a lot of games with us and
 43 showed a real interest in the subject. *→ games a good connecting*
 44 Tracey: What makes what you would call a 'bad' drama teacher?
 45 Orlando: When she is not happy - it kinda brings the whole place down. *strategy for*
 46 Tracey: So is it important for a teacher to be happy?

boys - boys + games + risk taking = drama

47 Orlando: Yeah and enthusiastic
48 EVERYONE AGREES
49 Dan: Well there are gonna be times when she is not happy but when she it's good being
50 around her.
51 Tracey: What about when you are misbehaving?
52 Dan: Well she takes it for a while.. *C.B.*
53 Orlando: When she tells us to settle down, we settle down..we know we have gone too far
54 and we stop | *The importance of boundaries → a need*
55 Tracey: Can we just talk about mateship – it is a really important issue in a boys' class,
56 isn't it?
57 ORLANDO NODS *to be firm & clear.*
58 Tracey: I notice it seems pretty important (the boys nod) – you guys like to punch each
59 other and roll on top of each other. → *physical connections.*
60 Dan: That's just a male bonding thing..

is it?

* A happy, enthusiastic but well informed teacher → A BALANCED Act.

* Clear & firm boundaries

* The opportunity for physical activity.

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FIELD LOG: July 26, 1999

1 There is controlled mayhem in the class - boys are spawled all over the floor talking to
2 each other, uniforms askew, shoes off, some with shoes on. One of the boys
3 acknowledge me but the rest are deeply involved in their own worlds. I keep asking
4 myself what am I seeing here, what does this mean to me as the researcher? I
5 continually remind myself to look beyond the obvious. Over time this kind of behaviour
6 has begun to speak loudly to me - this is a place of relaxation, of being oneself, of
7 laying back and allowing the world to be a little different for a little while. Different in
8 form, that is, to other classes and other teaching styles. I do confirm this with the boys
9 in the interviews and my hunches have been right. Sal calls the boys to attention but
10 they settle slowly. There is still grinning and private eye signals between some of the
11 boys but Sal is unperturbed. She begins discussion on ritual, symbol and focus and
12 asks the boys to move around the class ready for a warm up activity. Two of the boys
13 are rolling on the floor and my friend Orlando is laughing with great glee. Sal lets me
14 alone. She knows, (I know this from watching her and confirming details with her) that
15 left alone, Orlando will come good but I often don't know how she manages to keep so
16 seemingly calm when Orlando is such a challenge. The boys start the game which deals
17 with the dramatic element of focus - Sal gives clear and detailed instructions providing
18 strong role modelling of what is expected. She urges them to focus and not talk and this
19 side coaching always help keep the boys on task. The boys follow her instructions well
20 moving through the game effectively. The activity is extended, more challenging in
21 form and this time, the boys are more focused. The next task sees the boys divided into
22 two groups and asked to choose a moment from the plays they have been working on.
23 They must select one image which appealed most to them. They are given rehearsal time
24 to work on the small presentation. Sal points out to them that they must show symbolic
25 reference in this piece.

26 As the boys present the work, Sal continues to point out important elements about the
27 work, both the good and the less effective. She urges them to move on with the next
28 piece of work and to 'think theatrically about using rhythm and repetition.' She gives
29 them extended time to work on this task but at all times urges them to work quickly and
30 with purpose. I am impressed as always when the work is presented again with Sal's
31 mantra, 'respect and support' ringing positively in our ears. This ensures the work is
32 most often received with respect by the group and the theatrical integrity preserved. It is
33 not easy to keep the boys on track but mantras such as this one certainly go a long way
34 in developing a healthy artistic environment in this room. I need to know from Sal if
35 there has been any notable change in the boys' attitude from hearing these words on a
36 daily basis?

37 Sal moves on adding new dimensions of chorus and chant but now the boys seem
38 fatigued and off tangent. Sal picks up on this and works to refocus but realises the boys
39 may have given all they can in this class. The bell gives the answer here and the boys
40 trundle out with loud goodbyes.

FIELD LOG: AUGUST 2, 2000

1 When I arrive today, the boys are loud with a great deal of rough housing going on.
2 They are fighting on the floor, laughing and pushing each other and are not disturbed in
3 any way by my arrival - they seem quite comfortable to carry on this way in front of
4 me. I need to talk to them today about interviews but deem it best to wait for Sal to get
5 their attention. After all, I am a stranger here - of this I am always aware. Sal calls them
6 to focus on her with a great sense of firmness and deliberation but they continue the
7 present behaviour. She reminds them, even firmer this time, that their behaviour is
8 inappropriate and she is unhappy with the situation. It is hard going for her today and I
9 am frustrated for her. She seems to gain strength from some inner reserve and stresses
10 her expectations for the class. At this point, finally, I get to talk to the boys about the
11 interviews. They are always polite where I am concerned but I sometimes feel awkward
12 if I feel I am the cause of their loss of focus - I am sure they often show off just for my
13 benefit. Or do I place too much on my importance on myself that they would be
14 bothered to privilege my presence with their misbehaviour?
15 Sal begins the warm up modelling clearly what is expected. Some of the boys laugh
16 seemingly embarrassed by the task - it requires risk taking and intimate space proximics.
17 It is interesting to watch some of the boys, shy and unsure, others macho and laughing
18 to cover their true selves. This is not easy for them, they smile at each other and at me
19 occasionally, others have their eyes downcast whilst others knock into each other on
20 purpose. Sal continues to side coach, encourage and support when necessary and the
21 group moves through the task with growing security. She is not afraid to point out
22 when the group is 'playing the fool' and sabotaging the work. 'Learn to risk' she urges
23 - no one is let off the hook here but no one is made to feel disempowered either. Sal
24 senses the time to move on and begins a new warm up using butcher's paper. The boys
25 are still not working effectively and Sal talks to them about contributing equally to the
26 drama work. She seems to regroup her thoughts and suddenly makes the game into a
27 competition which instantly seems to engage all the boys. Ah she has struck the right
28 chord! Suddenly everyone is excited wanting to be involved and a myriad of
29 behavioural traits begin to emerge. Someone is pulling on another's trouser, Duf is
30 trying to pull someone's hair from behind. It strikes me as a male bonding ritual at
31 work, relaxed and natural, cheeky and bold. Sal handles it carefully allowing them the
32 release whilst keeping them on task. She brings the activity to a halt and consolidates
33 the work. Some of the boys have not read the situation well and continue to 'act the
34 fool'. Sal is angry now and uncharacteristically raises her voice to the class. The boys
35 realise they have gone too far and go quiet and Sal restates her expectations for this
36 class. The lesson winds down. Sal is apparently unhappy with today's work.

FIELD LOG MARCH 18 1999.

1 Today marks the first interviews with the boys and I am hoping they remember to meet
2 me at lunch. When I spoke to them last, they were very enthusiastic about the interview
3 process and planned the most suitable times with me. Lunch time suited them best - I
4 remember thinking how much easier this was with the boys than it had been with the
5 girls in my last research (Lee 1997) who were always reluctant to give up lunch times.
6 They really enjoyed being with each other and talking and sometimes it was difficult to
7 get them to commit to the interviews at all. The boys on the other hand are really 'into'
8 the recess, are eager to please and want to be part of the process.

9 I enter the drama room early today - there is noone around. Sal has not arrived at this
10 point and suddenly four faces peer in the door looking for her. Suddenly Matt arrives -
11 always on time and reliable. 'Are interviews now?' he asks. 'I hope you're not the only
12 one.' I plead. All at once Sal arrives and offers to go and find the others and I feel
13 almost as if she has given me a gift.

14 INTERVIEWS

15 I arrive at the classroom after the interviews. There are two visitors in the room today
16 come to see the boys at work, one is an ex student and another a school administrator.
17 Sal asks the boys if they would mind showing the guests some of their work in
18 progress and they readily agree. It takes some time for the boys to decide on what they
19 want to do, they confere at length and finally when they start to disagree, Sal urges
20 them to make a decision quickly. She leaves them to get some scripts and Matt's group
21 is left to decide on what they will do. Today they seem all at sea, not sure what to do -
22 have the visitors thrown them for the moment? 'What do we have to do?' they ask me. I
23 am forced to momentarily take on the role of teacher, 'Do your rap piece introduction,' I
24 offer. They are not sure. I encourage them again, 'You do that so well, come on, do it.'
25 Matt is striving for diplomacy. 'Oh who wants to explain to our visitors about this
26 piece?' he asks the group. Everyone looks at each other. Jim says finally that he will do
27 it. Matt looks at me as if he must explain his leadership, 'I am just trying to make the
28 others take some responsibility,' he says, 'Good idea,' I reply not sure what he wants
29 me to say. Matt nods. The boys take up the challenge at last and begin their showcase.
30 They do an excellent job gaining confidence as they go. They seem in control of the
31 form and handle the work with ease. All their anxieties have seem unfounded. They
32 have done their pieces on mateship and in the third frame of the work, their confidence
33 seems to unfold with Jacob and Jim losing focus suddenly. They seemed unhinged by
34 the audience's attention. But to their credit, they regroup and refocus. Group two takes
35 the stage and explains their themes. They have had some trouble focusing previously
36 but swing quickly into this work with minimum fuss. Lines are secure and the form is
37 solid. Group one suddenly has a confrontation - they hate their work they tell me. Matt
38 is saying sternly, 'We need more energy, take it by the balls and squeeze it.' 'It is
39 disgusting' Matt explodes. The others look downhearted. They are being very hard on

40 themselves I decide but it seems necessary for them to shift direction. I am unsure if I
41 should intervene at this point. They look at me guardedly but I decide to risk giving
42 them some feedback. I feel my whole body relax with an outgoing breath as I realise
43 they appreciate and embrace the feedback. Their depression about their efforts has
44 dampened their enthusiasm however and they will need to work hard to get back on
45 track. I journey on and give them some more ideas and they listen. They are used to
46 Sal's co-artist relationship with them and so accept my words as positive artistic
47 feedback and this is so good to see. They repeat the scene. 'Do it again,' I urge. With
48 new found focus, Matt takes on the role as leader and really 'cracks the whip over the
49 others.' He is ruthless at times. They rerun the scene far more expressively and it is
50 better, more realistic and tigher in form. You can just about touch their growing
51 confidence as they look at me. I nod my approval and tell them it is so much better. At
52 the same time I tell them why I think the work had improved. They seemed pleased.
53 The lesson draws to a close.

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ANALYTIC MEMO. SEPTEMBER 1999 EXEMPLAR

1 I look back over the week with a mixture of feelings. I have come to what I consider an impasse in the
2 research where as hard as I try, I don't feel that I am moving forward in the process. I need to look more
3 closely at what is happening with the boys – it is so easy to become complacent, to miss the small but
4 important messages of the classroom text. The drama classroom is an easy space to become 'too
5 comfortable' and I must continue to be aware of this as I observe and record the everyday classroom
6 experiences. I wonder how different it would be in a more formal and highly structured classroom where I
7 was confined to observe the students in a less accessible way. I find the boys so open here willing to share
8 their classroom lives with me. Their relationships with each other are not uncomplicated but I have been
9 surprised by the way they treat each other overall. I have not seen a great deal of aggression or oppression
10 within these classrooms, the boys seem to be able to overcome any difficulties they may have with each
11 other by working them out through the dramatic collaborative process. This has been a little surprising for
12 me as I expected to see more stereotypical masculine behaviour. As for Sal, it always seem that I am
13 finding only good in what she does in the classroom but the boys' continue to confirm for me the
14 effectiveness of her approach and I really can't see any negative in the work she does. It seems to work so
15 well with them and the drama work is always of a high standard – even work which is not quite as the boys
16 would have hoped, is impressive. There are times, I become frustrated by some of the more disruptive
17 behaviour and am constantly in awe of Sal's ability to ignore negative behaviour turning it around so that
18 the boys get back on task quickly and without fuss.
19

20 These are the times when I am reminded about how important good 'boyswork' is, the respect and support
21 of boys, all boys, no matter what they are like. Listening to them and allowing them their own voice lies at
22 the very heart of helping boys find their own place in their masculine world.

ANALYTIC MEMO. JUNE 10 2000.
EXEMPLAR

1 There is something vaguely discomforting in walking into a classroom you don't know for the first time.
2 Unfamiliar eyes meet your gaze as you awkwardly edge into the space, smiling tentatively, thinking, Where
3 the hell do I sit here? Why are they looking at me like that? Did I do up that button in front?
4 And so it was for my first day in the field with a group of senior drama students; those boys in men's
5 bodies, staring unabashedly at me as they saunter around the room finding their own 'familiar space.'
6 Already I feel swamped by perceptions which are completely unfounded. I know that I must wait, watch
7 and allow the story to be told, unencumbered by my own worldly views. I feel a little disoriented. My
8 feelings are akin to times when I have stood off stage waiting for my cue in some theatre performance.
9 Eager to move, excited by the rush of what was about to happen, anxious down to my toes, breathless,
10 anticipatory, gazing upon the action on stage, I stand 'frozen' waiting in the wings.
11
12 I know that I can never hope to be totally immersed in the culture of the classroom no matter how much I
13 would wish that to be so. I am so apart from the boys in so many ways and my limited time in the
14 classroom means there will be special moments I will not be part of. I am determined however to try to
15 capture as much of the true 'picture' of the classroom as I possibly can whenever I can. It is a privileged
16 position that I am in and the stories of the boys need to be recorded and told as honestly as possible.

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FIELD LOG APRIL 4

Sal is assessing today and is extremely stressed trying to juggle my research requests and needs, the boys' constant needs and other curriculum matters. At times I feel her generosity in allowing me in the classroom is another burden for her in these busy days - she is always gracious and welcoming however and I try not to be too demanding of her time. The boys are talking spreading their bodies around the room in various positions, some on PE mats, some against the wall, others sitting on the floor or the stage area. Sal talks to them about their behaviour and lack of energy in the drama work and the boys listen silently and attentively. They don't seem to resent the comments and certainly don't try to defend themselves. They are in rehearsal mode at the moment and know they have to pull their weight today. After discussing carefully with the boys what today's expectations are, Sal sets them to work. I decide to move around the groups to get a more precise feel for what they are doing. I want to do this without too much intervention and make the boys uncomfortable and unnatural in their interactions. I listen in on one group who is deciding which scripts they would like to use. Whilst they acknowledge my presence they don't seem at all perturbed by it and generally carry on as they were before I arrived. I note one of the boys takes a distinct leadership role in the negotiation process and this is seemingly accepted without challenge by the others. After a time, they enter into a debate about the elements of drama they will use in the work. It is here that I note that not everyone is happy with the decisions being made but in the usual spirit of these boys, all continue to contribute to the discussion trying to convince each other of the value of their own opinions. It seems that despite the leader, this is a reasonably democratic process for the boys and they finally come to some sort of agreement which suits everyone. Other groups are sprawled across a number of mats in the room engaged in their own activities some not on task - I see one playing with a steel rod bashing the mat. Orlando is sleeping but somehow notices me. 'Hang on, she's writing notes about you,' he warns one of the boys who then retorts, 'Well I'm not doing work if you're not!' I am unaffected by the comment and notice this group is not really going anywhere. Sal notes this too and speaks to them directly about doing some quality work. The boys decide finally to co-operate. I move on to the third group who is next door working quietly without teacher guidance. Occasionally Sal guides them with questions about how they are using the scripts but generally she take a backseat and let's them find their way through the process. They take Sal's comments on board, refocus on the work and hand and keep working until the bell rings.

no it certainly does not worry me.

both what I not loves about news.

it doesn't seem to worry them does it?!

That's a really important outcome

excited about work is crucial!

They really had not been stressed as I'm always that that could impinge on the boys' performance

This is something that I have to come to grips with at the moment. I don't think I necessarily mean that the boys are not ready or appear unprepared. It is my perception which does not necessarily mean that it is the correct reading of the situation.

This is so important to their work - that they know the form & that they can talk/negotiate that to the form & translate that to their presenting work.

Interesting how powerful she can be in the group.

That is so valuable to their lives. None of these boys want to be actors - but how important all these skills to their later life. That other subjects give them these experiences/skills?

Really important to capture them into work.

I must address this.

FIELD LOG MAR 28

It's really interesting to show his influence permeates the group

1 I walk in first, one boy follows me but says nothing. The other boys saunter in slowly.
2 I have missed a week and the boys eye me like they have never seen me before. I
3 don't quite know whether to address them as I sense the relationship with them has
4 weakened slightly since I saw them last. It is their first assessment of the year and Sal
5 is extremely stressed. I can see she is in no mood for their apathy today. They lie all
6 over the floor in various positions talking amongst themselves - parties, sports training
7 are the main topics of conversations I pick up on. Orlando is humming a song and
8 slowly others join in. There is unrest here today - perhaps assessment nerves? The
9 first group to be assessed takes their place on stage and Sal positions herself to mark.
10 Some of the boys are still whispering to each other. Sal stops the action commenting
11 to the boys on stage that their projection is so poor they cannot be heard. There is no
12 compromise here for Sal. She stresses actors must learn to speak up over any other
13 noises in the theatre space - in this case, the classroom fans. The boys near me begin
14 to irritate me with their lack of respect for their peers - Sal too has had enough and
15 moves the offending pair over to her. Orlando laughs but the boys on stage forge on.
16 On the other side of the room three boys are playing with a piece of wire which one of
17 them is modelling as a fake penis. They pass quiet comments. Embarrassed? Bored?
18 Uneasy? Nervous? The scene finishes - the boys on stage have worked well. Sal gives
19 them warm encouragement and praises their choice of language and ideas. The boys
20 begin to talk again and soon chatter is quite loud. I take my hat off to Sal for enduring
21 at times. Orlando is massaging another boy's back as he lies on the floor. They seem
22 very relaxed with each other. Orlando is making funny comments. But this time, Sal
23 decides enough is enough and talks about the importance of audience respect and
24 focus. Do they heed her? I am eager to jump in and ask them what they are really
25 thinking. Orlando repents and counts the boys in for Sal. One of the boys on stage is
26 simulating kissing a girl - this really appeals to the audience and a couple begin to
27 snicker quietly. The text is 'Blackrock' which is a powerful Australian play about
28 adolescents in the fictional town of Blackrock. Perhaps the theme is too close to the
29 bone here or just too hard to really engage with. Sal is not happy with the boys' work
30 on stage - there is a lack of focus spoiling the form. She waits until the work is over
31 and then talks with the whole class about what has happened on stage. The boys take
32 the comments and constructive criticism well and nod their heads. Orlando is talking
33 with another boys about ringing a girl tonight. He seems oblivious to what is being
34 said. Sal continues talking to the boys about the importance of respect in assessment
35 and not letting each other down. She explains that it up to the boys to talk to their
36 partners about the way they have let the team down. She now passes the responsibility
37 over to the boys. Whilst everyone is changing between scenes. I talk to the boys about
38 the play and ask them if they thought it was realistic - they talk to me in a relaxed way
39 and tell me they think it was - most of the early tension is gone at this stage. The boys
40 are more relaxed now are more focused. The lesson ends with everyone seemingly
41 happy and content.

Oliver's way of coping with not being ready for the task.

I did not notice that

I think perhaps they think it's their first presentation week and they are all not really coping with the expectations of the demand of semi drama.

SAL 2000.

INTERVIEW REFLECTION IN POETRY

LINKS

- 1 Excitement
- 2 Noise
- 3 Corridors crowding
- 4 Overflowing ----a room brimming with the joy of learning!
- 5 "Drama" I hear some say excitedly
- 6 "Air-conditioning" I hear others retort with a sigh of relief
- 7 Body heat
- 8 Chatting and laughter
- 9 The room once desolate
- 10 Suddenly fills with the rituals that belong to my boys!
- 11 Pushing, shoving, slapping backs, headlocks
- 12 "G'day Miss" "Sue" "Miss" "How are you?" greets me as they stumble in
- 13 I think they're glad to be here
- 14 No chairs or desks
- 15 They sense a feeling of relaxation "freedom" I think is a better word.
- 16 "Hello Boys" I greet them when settled
- 17 The learning begins!
- 18 A few little cherubs off task!
- 19 They get a warning
- 20 They know when enough is enough
- 21 "Take a risk" they hear me side coach
- 22 They do
- 23 They know I like them
- 24 I'm glad to be in their presence
- 25 The work is good
- 26 They want to know how good!
- 27 Drama is cool!
- 28 They are cool!
- 29 They make me feel cool too!!

I must address this.

FIELD LOG MAR 28

It's really interesting how his influence permeates the group

I did not notice that

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11 to the boys on stage that their projection is so poor they cannot be heard. There is no
12 compromise here for Sal. She stresses actors must learn to speak up over any other
13 noises in the theatre space - in this case, the classroom fans. The boys near me begin
14 to irritate me with their lack of respect for their peers - Sal too has had enough and
15 moves the offending pair over to her. Orlando laughs but the boys on stage forge on.
16 On the other side of the room three boys are playing with a piece of wire which one of
17 them is modelling as a fake penis. They pass quiet comments. Embarrassed? Bored?
18 Uneasy? Nervous? The scene finishes - the boys on stage have worked well. Sal gives
19 them warm encouragement and praises their choice of language and ideas. The boys
20 begin to talk again and soon chatter is quite loud. I take my hat off to Sal for enduring
21 at times. Orlando is massaging another boy's back as he lies on the floor. They seem
22 very relaxed with each other. Orlando is making funny comments. But this time, Sal
23 decides enough is enough and talks about the importance of audience respect and
24 focus. Do they heed her? I am eager to jump in and ask them what they are really
25 thinking. Orlando repents and counts the boys in for Sal. One of the boys on stage is
26 simulating kissing a girl - this really appeals to the audience and a couple begin to
27 snicker quietly. The text is 'Blackrock' which is a powerful Australian play about
28 adolescents in the fictional town of Blackrock. Perhaps the theme is too close to the
29 bone here or just too hard to really engage with. Sal is not happy with the boys' work
30 on stage - there is a lack of focus spoiling the form. She waits until the work is over
31 and then talks with the whole class about what has happened on stage. The boys take
32 the comments and constructive criticism well and nod their heads. Orlando is talking
33 with another boys about ringing a girl tonight. He seems oblivious to what is being
34 said. Sal continues talking to the boys about the importance of respect in assessment
35 and not letting each other down. She explains that it up to the boys to talk to their
36 partners about the way they have let the team down. She now passes the responsibility
37 over to the boys. Whilst everyone is changing between scenes. I talk to the boys about
38 the play and ask them if they thought it was realistic - they talk to me in a relaxed way
39 and tell me they think it was - most of the early tension is gone at this stage. The boys
40 are more relaxed now are more focused. The lesson ends with everyone seemingly
41 happy and content.

Olly's way of coping with not being ready for the task.

I think perhaps it's their first presentation and they are all not really coping with the expectations or the demands of senior drama.

No it certainly does not worry me.

FIELD LOG APRIL 4

I try really hard not to appear stressed as I'm conscious that that could impinge on the boys' performance

That's what I just focus about them.

it doesn't seem to worry them does it?!

That's a really important outcome

Facilitated work is crucial.

Sal is assessing today and is extremely stressed trying to juggle my research requests and needs, the boys' constant needs and other curriculum matters. At times I feel her generosity in allowing me in the classroom is another burden for her in these busy days - she is always gracious and welcoming however and I try not to be too demanding of her time. The boys are talking spreading their bodies around the room in various positions, some on PE mats, some against the wall, others sitting on the floor or the stage area. Sal talks to them about their behaviour and lack of energy in the drama work and the boys listen silently and attentively. They don't seem to resent the comments and certainly don't try to defend themselves. They are in rehearsal mode at the moment and know they have to pull their weight today. After discussing carefully with the boys what today's expectations are, Sal sets them to work. I decide to move around the groups to get a more precise feel for what they are doing. I want to do this without too much intervention and make the boys uncomfortable and unnatural in their interactions. I listen in on one group who is deciding which scripts they would like to use. Whilst they acknowledge my presence they don't seem at all perturbed by it and generally carry on as they were before I arrived. I note one of the boys takes a distinct leadership role in the negotiation process and this is seemingly accepted without challenge by the others. After a time, they enter into a debate about the elements of drama they will use in the work. It is here that I note that not everyone is happy with the decisions being made but in the usual spirit of these boys, all continue to contribute to the discussion trying to convince each other of the value of their own opinions. It seems that despite the leader, this is a reasonably democratic process for the boys and they finally come to some sort of agreement which suits everyone. Other groups are sprawled across a number of mats in the room engaged in their own activities some not on task - I see one playing with a steel rod bashing the mat. Orlando is sleeping but somehow notices me. 'Hang on, she's writing notes about you,' he warns one of the boys who then retorts, 'Well I'm not doing work if you're not!' I am unaffected by the comment and notice this group is not really going anywhere. Sal notes this too and speaks to them directly about doing some quality work. The boys decide finally to co-operate. I move on to the third group who is next door working quietly without teacher guidance. Occasionally Sal guides them with questions about how they are using the scripts but generally she take a backseat and let's them find their way through the process. They take Sal's comments on board, refocus on the work and hand and keep working until the bell rings.

This is something that I have to come to grips with as I do not necessarily mean that they are not ready or appear unprepared. It is my perception which does not necessarily mean that it is the correct reading of the situation.

This is so important to their work - that they know the form & that they can talk/negotiate that to the form & translate that to their presenting work. Interesting how powerful she can be in the group.

That is so valuable to their lives. None of these boys want to be actors - but how important all these skills to their later life. That other subjects give them these experiences/skills? Really important to capture them into work.

APRIL 10

FIELD LOG 1999

1 I arrive at the school unwell today. A nasty strain of flu couple with pregnancy has
2 immobilised and I feel it will be a struggle today to be in the classroom environment.
3 However it is too important now for me to miss too many opportunities to observe the
4 boys at work. My mind has begun to buzz with possible directions the work could
5 develop. What is becoming most evident to me at this stage:

6 The partnerships of the boys inside the classroom are all important in making the
7 drama work. These boys are not necessarily close or 'friendly' outside the
8 classroom but once together the artistic endeavour becomes all-important.

9 There is strong leadership by one or two of the boys which seems to be essential
10 for the others to work as a community. In particular the leadership seems to give
11 direction and cohesion to the work of some of the less capable drama participants.

12 I arrive in the classroom and the boys seem to be in better form today than when I saw
13 them last. They are friendly, happy and welcoming. They were supposed to write a
14 self-description for me today and I can tell by their sheepish faces that quite a few
15 have forgotten to do it. I growl at them that I want them tomorrow - I begin to wonder
16 if I will ever see these pieces of work but stay positive that the boys will eventually
17 remember to bring them. Sal is full of energy this morning and launches the boys
18 straight in to their work on 'Fossils'. Some of the boys form an audience for others
19 who are shaping the work for the performance. Jake is struggling a little with the role
20 and Sal begins to side coaching in order to support his difficulties. The atmosphere is
21 relaxed and a sense of community pervades. With her long experience in the acting
22 field, the boys respect Sal's opinions and value her interventions and obvious
23 knowledge. They allow her to lead them in the work and listen to her with
24 attentiveness. I notice the boys nod their understanding and sometimes talk amongst
25 themselves on stage trying to think of better ways of presenting the work. Next is a
26 large excerpt about the everyday life of an ordinary woman and the boys have divided
27 up the script and now need to deconstruct the language of the script which is filled
28 with Americanisms. Sal asks them to get into the 'caring' circle where they will work
29 together to put the language into more identifiable Australian idiom. Sal tells me the
30 boys have disagreed about the form of this piece and it will be interesting to see how
31 the piece continues to take shape. Sal asks them to try the chorus piece again this
32 time using the script and whilst the boys initially agree, they are not convinced that
33 this will work as part of the performance. Sal decides to allow them to discuss this
34 further in their circle again and the boys enter an animated and good-natured
35 discussion about possible stylistic choices. There is a real sense of community here
36 and I am impressed by the way the boys are working together at this stage. There is
37 the usual leader in Matt but everyone seems to be able to have their voice heard. Jake
38 volunteers to start the piece off and I think it is good to see him take a risk in voicing
39 his opinion here. Sal takes an active part in the discussion but the voices here are
40 largely the boys and each contribution is valued. It is a valuable exercise with full
41 commitment from the boys and continues to work well for the rest of lesson.
42

I work on the premise that this is a partnership & that I facilitate how far they want to succeed

I need to let them discuss if they have able to handle - looks like (Vida's style) they believe confident they can do it.

encourage these boys to take leadership roles & they seem to give the others confidence.

yes, they must own the work themselves

I'd forgotten about that!! And yet we ended up doing it in chorus style!!!

I try very hard to get them to be autonomous learners + to be ready to take risks AND voice their opinions

FIELD LOG August 18 1999

I must be remembered that I know all their mothers + hence the

1 Due to public holidays and illness on my behalf I have not seen the boys for over a
 2 week and feeling less than pleased to have missed their progress in this time. On the
 3 other hand I feel it may give me some real insight into the progress they have made
 4 with their mother and son performance preparation. I am interested in how the boys
 5 have managed to relate the theme to their own mothers and translated this into
 6 dramatic form.
 7 I also have some concern about losing the close relationship I have formed with them
 8 during the research by being away from them too often—I felt I was just starting to
 9 make headway with them when I needed to take this break away from them. The boys
 10 are always friendly but I feel they are still unsure as what it is I hoping to learn them –
 11 I try to assure them that there are no expectations here, just an unfurling of learning
 12 for all of us. At times, I feel our communication is a little stilted with me uncertain of
 13 how I should talk to them whilst maintaining the researcher stance. At times, these
 14 boys seem extraordinarily mature and I feel I need to careful not to speak down to
 15 them; they need absolute respect in terms of what they want for themselves in this
 16 class. *Tagui + once you learn that about boys, they trust you implicitly.*
 17 Sal has collected all the journal work from the boys for me to peruse – she is so
 18 organised and generous with her time and is making my work here so much easier
 19 with her unyielding generosity and co-operation. The boys have agreed to showcase
 20 the work from the 'witches from Macbeth' segment of their work. Although they have
 21 agreed, I feel their energy is low – their shirts are hanging out and their faces tell me
 22 they are not rally 'into' this at the moment. Sal counts them in and suddenly they
 23 simply seem to immerse themselves immediately into the form and the work is
 24 polished, wonderfully clever and very slick. I love their techniques, the style and the
 25 direction the work is going. The next addition to the work is a piece taken from the
 26 Australian play, 'After January'. Using the idea of the Greek chorus the boys take on
 27 a narration form which invites the audience to become part of the performance, it is
 28 engaging and beautifully theatrical and the boys handled it extremely well. Sal's side
 29 coaching is extremely important here – her constant encouragement and challenge to
 30 the boys to pay attention to the form at all times is pertinent I believe in helping them
 31 to successfully engage with the drama. She allows them enough time to work
 32 carefully with the form but moves them briskly enough to keep energy high and focus
 33 precise. She moves them on to the next play on offer – 'Fossils'. This is a delightful
 34 account of how parents view their parents and is the perfect selection to help the boys
 35 ground the work they are doing with their own lives. Before we proceed with this one
 36 of the boys has a video for us to view of a Jewish mother – this is an entertaining and
 37 funny piece. As it begins, we see a bit of nakedness and the boys break up laughing –
 38 Sal allows this moment to pass and does not censure the boys. They quickly return to
 39 the focus they had before and enjoy the messages the video brings to the work.
 40 Sal returns to the script 'Fossils' which she now uses for the basis of the next piece of
 41 work. The boys all stand in a circle, boys in various stances. Petri and Jim are
 42 engaged in a slapping game as they stand and wait for instructions and Sal waits as
 43 she gives them the eye to behave. Dan us lying in the corner on his own, not unusual
 44 for him. The boys are now paying out on Jim who is trying to do some role playing in
 45 the circle – he is having trouble getting the words out. He finally tells Dan to shut up
 46 as he is the loudest of the critics. Sal chooses to ignore this interchange allowing the
 47 boys to sort it out for themselves. This seems to work best. The discussion turns to
 48 what mothers do for us. For some reason this causes tension in Dan who starts a fight
 49 with Jade accusing him of calling some other boys outside of the class a 'faggot'. It
 50 seems uncontextualised and I am not sure where Dan is coming from at this point.

look of doing the thing of no personal

don't underestimate boys

that's the nature of most boys - that's why I love teaching them.

actually it was a novel

go back to my respect for Vid a who is often the expert of this learning

method of used it all the time with her actors. it

saves time. instead of letting the boys do the whole thing

of the frame of action + then give notes

try the scene again, its much better its clear than through everything he need it.

none of us ever knew where he was coming from ?!!!

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PRAXIS - BOYS + SAL INTERACTIONS

(July 1999. Group 1)

Some stereotypical work

35 The boys show work which is not particularly good and is highly literal and I
36 note that the boys seem uncomfortable and displeased with the efforts themselves. I think
37 they have realised that they must work much harder in putting together than own script
38 than when they have the luxury and comfortable of a script provided for them. It is an
39 effective and much needed challenge for them. Matt's group presents a more sophisticated
piece of work, more stylistic in form and much more professional than the others. Sal is

The influence of others to show good work.

(May 11. 1999. Group 1)

leadership

23 Our Mat is
24 the leading voice once more here but the others don't seem intimidated or afraid to
25 voice their approval or disapproval in the developing performance. This is a lengthy
26 but effective and valuable artistic experience for all concerned. They move from their
caring circle to smaller work groups. As the boys move through the pieces I hear Sal

praxis

→ the value of collaborative sharing

(Aug 18 1999.) Group 1. Matt is selected

57 to work his section of the scene and I am a bit taken aback to find they watch this
58 without much enthusiasm - what has happened here? Have they suddenly lost energy
59 and interest? Has Dan's lack of interest dampened the whole groups' energy? Sal
60 notices this too and comments on it but the boys just give a shrug and a grin and
61 continue to take positions to block the next scene.

praxis

↳ the power of the group? Do sometimes. The need for refocusing.

(OCTOBER 1999.) Group 1

27 urge 'Beautiful and sensitive'. There is no laughter here - the boys are doing work
28 which artistically and emotionally beautiful, their mothers honoured in every
29 movement and piece of dialogue they deliver. I am blown away by this and cannot
30 believe such wonderful work is coming from these boys about the subject which I
31 really did not think they would be interested in. They experiment with difficult levels
32 with hands in pockets and shuffling feet but the work is good! Petri lies on the floor

praxis

↳ 'Mothers & Sons' The value of good praxis - The ABILITY OF BOYS TO BE EMOTIONAL & EMPATHETIC AT HIGH LEVELS!!

praxis respect

59 All are involved in the
60 process and no one is hanging back. There is lots of laughter which seems necessary
61 for the release of the intense emotions evoked by the work. Group 2 who previously
62 were rolling about on the floor is now more on task working fairly well. Finally
63 presentations begin. The first is a parody of 'Little Red Riding Hood' with a
64 stereotyped Little Red Riding Hood met by the evil Mafia type wolfman. The boys
65 have combined a variety of Brechtian techniques and the boys work confidently and
66 receive ample encouragement from Sal. I note she tries to make them feel very
67 important without patronising them. This is a challenging unit and the boys I think
have an amazingly good grasp on the concept. A result of Sal's modeling?

praxis
→ The need for a freedom of space to find their way into the work.

(FEB 22. 2000.) Challenging beyond the norm

FIELD LOG. JUNE 7 2000

1 It is a freezing day and bundled up against the cold, I literally drag myself up the road
 2 to the school. I am almost too cold to think about research today. I have not seen the
 3 boys for a week due to work experience and I am feeling detached. Frozen,
 4 unresponsive. I always chastise myself when I feel like this. I am fatigued, this I know
 5 and have reached a path in the research when I feel the challenges in the boys'
 6 attitudes and classroom behaviours could defeat me. I know that once I see the boys
 7 again, this feeling of malaise will undoubtedly lift. I feel as if Spradley is looking over
 8 my shoulder whispering to me about 'ethnographic fatigue' - I tell myself to rally - not
 9 to be outdone by this momentary lapse of energy, direction and vision. *Tempo & Tenacity*
 10 I enter the classroom where some of the boys are punching each other until Sal asks
 11 them to stop. In their usual fashion they take their seats against the wall and smile at
 12 me. Ah, I am back! I sink into the comforting confines of the drama room which
 13 somehow invite me to relax, watch and listen.
 14 Sal asks the boys to do some work for me on forming that they were working on
 15 yesterday. They all initially groan but agree to do the work which entails taking one
 16 liners and shaping them into an improvisation which will be further shaped into scene.
 17 Groups of four each take a line and with three minutes given to the boys to get the
 18 work together, they move quickly into working. I notice with great interest that
 19 compared to the earlier part of the research, the boys are now working:
 20

- With greater focus and speed than before
- Working co-operatively with each other in a generally supportive and egalitarian way
- Communicating through physical action, wrestling, punching and teasing but still very much engaged with the drama.

Praxis
 21
 22 Orlando is really progressing with his classroom behaviour, the drama helping focus
 23 him and giving him strong support from the other boys whilst allowing him a space to
 24 be himself. His group is complaining that their work is a mess and Sal steps up to
 25 encourage them to keep trying to shape the work. Despite my earlier observations of
 26 Orlando's improvement he now pipes up that he 'doesn't wanna work today.' 'Come
 27 on' urges Sal. She reads the situation seeing the need to intervene and direct the boys
 28 back on track - she gives strong but open advice allowing them to take the directions
 29 and continue to work independently. Whilst the group try to communicate effectively
 30 with Sal, it is still tough going. But Sal moves on giving the boys the time they need
 31 to decide for themselves where the work is going. *'Orlando' (C.B.)*
 32
 33 As I move around the class, one of the boys asks how my young daughter is. I am
 34 suddenly thrown off my research kilter although I do appreciate his interest. Do I allow
 35 the pace and focus of the work be compromised by answering a personal question? I
 36 take a risk and decide to answer his query. The others listen to me intensely and I
 37 realize they are interested in me, I am accepted, I am trusted. This is good. *mentoring Praxis*
 38 Sal calls the practice to a halt asking one of the groups to present their work. It is a
 39 brave attempt in the style of a musical with one of the boys singing the final line. I am
 40 so impressed by the risk taking I see here. Orlando's group is up next and Orlando's
 41 lines are despondent but he is certainly trying harder than before. Whilst Sal is
 42 supportive, she asks Orlando about his dramatic decisions forcing him into some
 43 introspective reflection about the drama. The continued reflection, which Sal insists
 44 on, allows the boys, all of them, to think deeply about the dramatic form and the
 45 decisions they often make about the work. Here is a wonderful combination of
 46 analysis and synthesis, which enriches the boys' work on an everyday basis. Group
 47 three handles their turn well. Group four stumble over some difficult lines but
 48
 49 *changing places*
'Orlando'
the pieces in the pudding

ethnographic fatigue
an
losing perspective here
The result of Classroom Structure
patience
praxis

Orlando, the 'difficult' student who has ~~been~~ improved so much whilst doing drama !!

50 recovers although it does cause a great deal of laughing from the group. But I see this
 51 as supportive laughter and the group doesn't seem disturbed by the reaction.
 52 Sal asks the boys to take out their journal to reflect on the day's work. Orlando retorts
 53 his is at home. Sal is not pleased. She tells the boys that she is not their mother and
 54 anyone without their journal should now take the responsibility of making sure the
 55 entry goes in the right place. I think that sometimes the boys see Sal as their mother,
 56 certainly they have told me this in the interviews we have conducted from time to
 57 time. Whilst she allows this relationship at times, when it interferes with the boys
 58 ability to move forward in their dramatic learning, she is quick to remind them that
 59 they must take responsibility for their work themselves. They watch her mindfully
 60 knowing that a line has been crossed here. Orlando lies down on the floor and seems
 61 to decide that he will do nothing. Sal moves on to the next task undaunted by his
 62 reaction. This task is a presenting task and will call for risk taking from the group. I
 63 watch as one of the boys sits on top of Orlando pushing and prodding him. They look
 64 at me smiling and waiting for a reaction. I feel uneasy and cranky with them willing
 65 them to pay attention. Someone is now trying to pull off Orlando's pants and several
 66 of the boys think this is hilarious. Sal ignores this behaviour (later interviews with Sal
 67 reveal that she allows the boys to let off this kind of steam so that they may refocus -
 68 this seems to work generally) and keeps trying to bring the majority of the boys back
 69 on task. The two boys who have volunteered to go up on stage looking at the
 70 superobjective of a dramatic situation keep on task quite successfully. Despite a lapse
 71 in the dialogue, the side coaching from Sal keeps the action moving. I note that Sal
 72 keeps them on track by:

- 73 • Probing
- 74 • Paraphrasing for better insight and greater depth of work
- 75 • Encouraging and urging the boys at every turn

76 Other boys have a go at this activity just before the bell rings and the class is over.
 77 I am feeling back on track again - immersion in the field context once more has given
 78 me new direction again and I remind myself that every moment in the classroom is
 79 new, every moment offering rich opportunity to understand these boys and their
 80 teacher a little more comprehensively, a little more deeply...

*Boundaries
&
Discipline*

C.B.

*Mentoring
→ These strategies work*

*↳ The changing perception of the
 researcher, the importance of immersion
 & engagement in the world of the
 participants*

FIELD LOG 1.
(FEB 21 2000)

Relaxed
Confident
boys

The boys saunter into the classroom in varying degrees of undress - ties off, shirts hanging out of shorts, it is hot. They are talking, singing, and yelling out Monty Python types of "Good Morning" to no one in particular. This is my first day with this group and whilst they eye me with curiosity they do not seem to be perturbed by my presence in any way. Sal is trying to get their attention but all this is familiar to her - she knows many of these boys from junior drama. She makes a comment that they should greet me and they all join in a chorus of "Helloooo Tracey." I greet them warmly and smile when one bright spark quirks, "We are not supposed to notice Tracey in the classroom". Quite right I think. This lot will be a challenge. They seem cheeky and spirited, friendly and generally good-natured. They ask how my baby daughter is and I am not sure how much I should say given my role here is to observe closely for the initial stages and then hopefully move into more familiar territory as we all relax into the semester. But what is the harm I ask myself - is it not possible to learn more about the boys by being invited into their own discussions? *yes!!*

They are certainly a handful with lots of noise now as Sal tries to bring them to some kind of order. She works hard to do this but they respond to her booming but warm voice. She begins with focus games as this is a unit on the elements of drama - the boys are noisy but excited and seem quite willing to participate readily. *Sal realises that their focus is 'loose' and explains in detail why the game is important and how it will progress* - she gives them lots of strong encouragement and positive comments as the game moves on. A group of boys are up against the wall making comments but Sal does not address them, instead moving on through the work with purpose. They eye me occasionally but I make no eye contact with them and continue to concentrate on what is happening throughout the classroom. *This group is finding it difficult to participate in the game but Sal's own dynamic and unwavering focus and sense of purpose keep them moving on. She stops, regroup, encourages and supports and the game begins again.* The 'wall' boys are trying to participate but it is not easy going for them or Sal. I see this group as one who will possibly struggle throughout the year, self esteem possibly low and my presence making it all that much harder to loosen up. Sal continues to use discipline but in a way which brings the boys back in line without humiliating or alienating them from the drama work. Her comments are direct and commanding but delivered with warmth and respect. The boys on the whole respond to this. Constant side coaching is important here to give the boys the chance to immerse themselves in the work without a sense of censure or perhaps what they sense to be a 'critical eye' from Sal.

The interesting thing here is that the 'wall' group cannot seem to help becoming involved as the game itself is fun and enjoyable as well as instructional about the element focus in drama. Sal continuing intervenes with "what if?" questions pertaining to the action. What do the boys notice happens to the focus when the activity changes one way or another. Her constant links back to the drama, from game to drama, drama to game, makes this clearer and clearer for the boys and you can see them starting to make connections. When Sal changes the audience to players in an effort to get everyone involved in different ways, the boys' behaviour deteriorates and she loses her patience. Their behaviour she explains is making her 'seriously unhappy' (I love the way she puts this). She restates her expectations but does not become resentful or nasty at any time. Her mantra "Encourage and support" is constantly modelled to the boys through her own behaviour and teaching approach. She asks them if they acting up because I am here. I feel my face turning cherry as they all look at me some grinning but I decide to ignore them and give their behaviour no attention whatsoever. This will not be a positive outcome if they feel they must constantly

Communication
a familiar relationship between researcher and participant

a more magnetic trait

Classroom below.

Memorizing

C.B.

Boundaries

6-Artistry
↓
IMPORTANT LINK
Contextualis.

Boundaries

SIDE COACHING
↓
IMP!!
=

boys need honest + clear instructions + feedback. NEED REASONABLE BOUNDARIES.

FIELD LOC. MAR 28

a sense of discomfort for the researcher.

a relaxed atmosphere

boys' behavior

interest of the boys

1 I walk in first, one boy follows me but says nothing. The other boys saunter in slowly.
 2 I have missed a week and the boys eye me like they have never seen me before. I
 3 don't quite know whether to address them as I sense the relationship with them has
 4 weakened slightly since I saw them last. It is their first assessment of the year and Sal
 5 is extremely stressed. I can see she is in no mood for their apathy today. They lie all
 6 over the floor in various positions talking amongst themselves - parties, sports training
 7 are the main topics of conversations I pick up on. Orlando is humming a song and
 8 slowly others join in. There is unrest here today - perhaps assessment nerves? The
 9 first group to be assessed takes their place on stage and Sal positions herself to mark.
 10 Some of the boys are still whispering to each other. Sal stops the action commenting
 11 to the boys on stage that their projection is so poor they cannot be heard. There is no
 12 compromise here for Sal. She stresses actors must learn to speak up over any other
 13 noises in the theatre space - in this case, the classroom fans. The boys near me begin
 14 to irritate me with their lack of respect for their peers - Sal too has had enough and
 15 moves the offending pair over to her. Orlando laughs but the boys on stage forge on.
 16 On the other side of the room three boys are playing with a piece of wire which one of
 17 them is modelling as a fake penis. They pass quiet comments. Embarrassed? Bored?
 18 Uneasy? Nervous? The scene finishes - the boys on stage have worked well. Sal gives
 19 them warm encouragement and praises their choice of language and ideas. The boys
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 22 very relaxed with each other. Orlando is making funny comments. But this time, Sal
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 24 focus. Do they heed her? I am eager to jump in and ask them what they are really
 25 thinking. Orlando repents and counts the boys in for Sal. One of the boys on stage is
 26 simulating kissing a girl - this really appeals to the audience and a couple begin to
 27 snicker quietly. The text is "Blackrock" which is a powerful Australian play about
 28 adolescents in the fictional town of Blackrock. Perhaps the theme is too close to the
 29 bone here or just too hard to really engage with. Sal is not happy with the boys' work
 30 on stage - there is a lack of focus spoiling the form. She waits until the work is over
 31 and then talks with the whole class about what has happened on stage. The boys take
 32 the comments and constructive criticism well and nod their heads. Orlando is talking
 33 with another boys about ringing a girl tonight. He seems oblivious to what is being
 34 said. Sal continues talking to the boys about the importance of respect in assessment
 35 and not letting each other down. She explains that it up to the boys to talk to their
 36 partners about the way they have let the team down. She now passes the responsibility
 37 over to the boys. Whilst everyone is changing between scenes. I talk to the boys about
 38 the play and ask them if they thought it was realistic - they talk to me in a relaxed way
 39 and tell me they think it was - most of the early tension is gone at this stage. The boys
 40 are more relaxed now are more focused. The lesson ends with everyone seemingly
 41 happy and content.

C.B.

Modelling + modelling

C.B.

F.R.

Boundaries

C.B.

Modelling + modelling

C.B.

Boundaries

the ownership of the boys' of the drama
 through effective praxis + a belief from the
 teacher.

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Tracy.

Year 12
Drama



A Unit of Work

TITLE: **Let's Lift Our Game**

LENGTH: **Term III**

RATIONALE:

By Year 12, the boys should be ready to tackle a unit of work that focuses on critical inquiry. Through Brechtian devices/techniques, the boys will be given an opportunity to critically evaluate their own journey towards adulthood. Through an exploration of looking at drama/theatre in a political sense, the boys will have an opportunity to examine their own values and the society in which they live. The issues that confront them in the world in which they live will be the focus of the unit.

The aim of the unit is to empower the boys with a new critical awareness allowing them to explore issues which affect them and others and make a statement about such issues. Like Thomas of Villanova - a patron of the poor - the boys will look at those who are oppressed in their world.

The boys will then recognise how powerful drama can be as the shaper of peoples' values and attitudes. Through the issues in Nick Enright's BLACKROCK, the boys will be given ample opportunities to explore the issues in this powerful play through drama process.

The following material is crucial to this unit of work:

- ⇒ **The Accident** - Christine Comans
- ⇒ **Blackrock, Teachers' Note, La Boite** -
- ⇒ **Maddie's Story - A Process Drama** -

CONTEXT: **W.D. A.D. S.D.**

FOCUS TEXTS: **The Measures Taken, Brecht**
Blackrock, Nick Enright

SUGGESTED OBJECTIVES: **By the end of this unit the boys should be able to:**

FORMING:

- manage the elements of drama to create and shape dramatic action within a style that belongs to political theatre.
- explore and analyse a Brechtian and contemporary text
- explore Brechtian techniques
- transform issues arising from class discussion and work in the process drama into individual student devised work - Socio Political Statement.
- explore issues belonging to BLACKROCK and devise a script that compliments Enright's text.

PRESENTING

- demonstrate the use of the elements of drama to present text and group devised work
- use acting techniques that are appropriate to Epic and Political Theatre
- interpret Brecht and Enright's style of theatre

RESPONDING:

- demonstrate an understanding of the elements of drama in Brecht's and Enright's style of Theatre
- identify and analyse the cultural and political contexts in La Boite's production of X-STACY and the issues that are prevalent in the script
- synthesise understandings of Brecht and Enright's form, content and current social issues to construct dramatic meaning.
- synthesise understandings of Margery Forde's X-STACY, its content and current social issues to construct dramatic meaning
- evaluate form and content in BLACKROCK
- communicate effectively Brechtian techniques
- to construct their own critical inquiry around issues that have been raised and to challenge others to respond to these through dramatic presentation

SUGGESTED LEARNING EXPERIENCES

- Discussion about social justice issues, oppression, looking at various newspaper articles
- Exercises involving Brechtian techniques
- Bringing dramatic texts to life through discussion and workshopping of sections of texts
- Researching text in terms of its social and intellectual background, the playwright and style, to inform the dramatic interpretation
- Creating own work in the form and style of Brecht
- An understanding of the role of director using Brechtian techniques
- An understanding of the role of scriptwriter using Brechtian techniques
- Workshopping techniques that are appropriate and applicable to the style of Brecht
- Rehearsing extracts from BLACKROCK for presenting purposes
- Presenting the style of Brecht through student devised work
- Developing knowledge of Brechtian style of theatre through critical reflection, discussion and research
- Analysing, synthesising and evaluating Brecht's style and finding contemporary social issues to find context and relevance
- Responding to the effectiveness of Brecht's techniques in bringing about social changes
- Viewing and discussion of X-STACY performed at La Boite Theatre

SUGGESTED RESOURCES:

Empowering Students through the Epic Form, Christine Comans: QADIE says - Flexing our Muscles, 1989.
Theatre of the Oppressed, Augusto Boal
Games for Actors & Non-Actors, Augusto Boal
The Play on the Page, Ruth Barratt
Acting in Person and in Style, Jerry L. Crawford
Living Drama, Bruce Burton
Play Upon a Stage, Wendy Michaels
Drama from Ibsen to Brecht, Raymond Williams
Modern Drama Essays in Criticism, edited by Travis Bogard & William I Oliver
Re-interpreting Brecht, his Influence on Contemporary Drama & Film, edited by Pia Kleber & Colin Visser
The Boal Experience, Storm Greenhill Brown & Linda Stratham
Blackrock Teachers' Notes, Debbie Wall (La Boite)
Maddie's Story - Sue Davis

WEEK ONE

- Reflection on last term's work.
- Fill out profiles.
- View Presenting video.
- Give out Task sheets.
- Give out Texts.
- Discussion of QTC's Injected Brecht

WEEK TWO

A process drama using Brechtian techniques: - THE ACCIDENT.

AIM: To introduce students to specific Brechtian techniques used throughout the process drama, THE ACCIDENT.

FRAME 1:

- ⇒ Boys are to divide into 2 even groups, lie down and close their eyes.
- ⇒ The stimulus material is set in the middle of the space - A rock and an earring. This is done while boys have their eyes closed and lying on the floor.
- ⇒ As the boys are used to this convention of Teacher Narration, take this opportunity while they are quiet, to refocus their minds on what is expected of them during a process drama.
 - Don't sabotage
 - Accept the fiction
 - Stay in role
 - Make every effort to advance the action

FRAME 2

Teacher Narration

An accident has occurred. The following has occurred prior to the accident taking place. You have been to a party with your girlfriend. You know most of the people at the party, as the boys go to your school and you have become friends with most of the girls as a result of socialisation.

One of your friends, Geoff is the host. Most of the parties you go to are at Geoff's house because he lives on 3 acres and you don't disturb the neighbours and his parents don't seem to hang around.

Most of your friends like to drink and most are sensible. However, as usual, there are some who are off their faces as a result of not being able to handle their drink. That always happens, so you are not surprised at their behaviour.

Your good friend Steve is at the party with his new girlfriend, Libby. She is gorgeous so you all rip into Steve about him being able to snare such a good catch. The party is proceeding rather wildly with drinking, dancing and couples disappearing etc. etc.

You all notice Steve disappearing down the back yard. You whistle and jeer as he and Libby disappear from sight. After a while you sneak down to see if you can see Steve and Libby. As you approach them you can hear them arguing quite loudly. You all leave and go back to the party. However, before you leave you just manage to see Steve pushing Libby, so hard that she falls to the ground.

Some of you return a few minutes later and do not like what you see.

⇒ Open your eyes and let's discuss what I've just narrated.

⇒ An accident has taken place. It is up to you to decide:

what
how
who
when
why

⇒ These 2 items (earring and rock) are items of evidence.

FRAME 3:

⇒ Each group is to choose a police officer. The rest of the group will be the WITNESSES to the accident.

⇒ All police officers leave their groups to write a short list of questions to ask the witnesses at the scene of the accident

- e.g. - Can you tell me your age, address and occupation?
- Where were you when the accident happened?
- Show me where you were standing?
- What exactly did you see?
- Can you show me what you did when the accident happened?
- What did you say to the victim, to others? etc

At the same time that the Police Officers are writing their questions, witnesses in each group must decide on:-

- general circumstances of the accident
- where it took place
- what happened
- who was involved

Each witness must decide:

- what he was doing at the time of the accident
- what he saw of the accident
- who he is
- what he said

FRAME 4:

The Police officers go back to the groups and begin their questioning. The role play finishes when all have been questioned.

Students must be told to use a naturalistic approach.

FRAME 5:

Each group to demonstrate "Questioning" role play.

N.B. The questioning should direct the students to DEMONSTRATE what they saw, to RECALL what they saw.

FRAME 6: Role Play B

Instruct students (in their groups) to prepare to act out the accident as it really happened. The Police Officer can now be in role as the victim. Once again, instruct the students to use a NATURALISTIC approach.



Groups to demonstrate to the class.

FRAME 7: AIM OF THE ROLE PLAYS

- What is the difference between the two role plays?
- Put the following summary on blackboard - students to write responses in journal.

ROLE PLAY A:

- Event was **reported**
- **Past tense** was used
- Witness **narrated** the incident
- Actor **uninvolved emotionally**
- Audience **did not become emotionally involved**
- **Victim was not present**, so that the dramatic impact lessened
- The action was **demonstrated**

This technique is called ALIENATION - where we use the third person..

ROLE PLAY B:

- Audience **saw the event**
- Actors were **engaged both emotionally and physically in the action.**
- Audience's **emotions** were engaged.
- **Interaction** occurred between the actors' characters
- The **present tense** was used.

Class Discussion follows → clarification and understanding of Alienation.

Hand out Brechtian Techniques sheet to boys.

Hand out notes from **Inject-ed Brecht - QTC**

WEEK 3

FRAME 8: THE ACCIDENT - TAKE TWO

AIM: To introduce the idea of DIDACTICISM in Brecht's Epic Theatre.

Didactic - To instruct/To teach.

Each group now chooses a CONTEXT for the accident e.g. Libby's circumstances are as a direct result of denying Steve sexual gratification.

Other contexts for an accident could be:

- gang rape
- alcohol induced accident
- drug induced accident
- victim of crime
- act of bullying
- cultural persecution

Once the students have decided on the CONTEXT, then they are to consider:

- What was the accident?
- Was it an accident?
- Why did this incident/accident happen?
- Who are the people involved?
- What time of the night did it occur?

Group decides on a FOCUS. They must build into the Improvisation the fact that the accident draws attention to an ISSUE OF CONCENTRATION e.g. Mates watching another mate bullying, demonstrating violence, sexually assaulting a female etc.



DECIDE THE ISSUE

Explain to the boys that we are now becoming POLITICAL - that is, using DRAMA to focus on an issue.

FRAME 9: THE STRUCTURE

Explain the following **structure** to the boys. (handout).

The Police Officer begins the Role Play in a different role - as NARRATOR. He tells the audience about where the accident happened (the context i.e. down the backyard.) and what actually happened. He then invites the audience to listen to each account from the witnesses.

After the student finishes narrating to the audience, he moves quickly to take on the role as the Police Officer again and asks each witness to speak.

Witnesses adopt some kind of FORMAL standing or sitting arrangements and each in turn **unemotionally** recounts and gives reasons as to why it happened. The witnesses must address the audience.

The narrator (police officer) returns and takes a didactic stance on the issue and presents this strongly to the audience.

TEACHING POINTS:

WHAT CHARACTERISED THIS ROLE PLAY (Write on B/B- get students to put in journal).

- strong focus on an issue
- narrator presented **one** point of view
- DIDACTICISM is a strong feature of Brecht's Epic Theatre
- use of a NARRATOR to describe the action and report the events.
- use of actors taking dual roles e.g. Police Officer/Narrator
- OBJECTIVE CHARACTERISATION - The actors do not develop emotionally involving any of the characters.
- Use of RITUALISED or FORMAL sitting/movement.

Further discussion points:

- How could slides/projections have been used to increase the audience's response to the issue?

- Direct students to the Brechtian Techniques handout

Subject Matter
Structure
Characterisation

Give out Brecht Booklets

1)	The Exception and The Rule
2)	He Who Says Yes
3)	He Who Says No

Read the 3 plays for Weekend Homework.

FRAME 10:

AIM:

To introduce a range of other Brechtian techniques that characterise the Epic Form e.g. the use of

- song
- music
- comedy

- use of collective units as opposed to individual characters (e.g. the four agitators in **The Measures Taken** and collective grouping in improvisation)
- the use of fable
- masks
- freeze frames

Give boys handout THE ACCIDENT - TAKE THREE

Instructions are on the Handout. Students will need at least 2 to 3 lessons to develop their piece of Theatre. After negotiating with students re forming and rehearsal time, they will present their piece of theatre.

After presenting, discuss what Brechtian techniques were used. Draw a summary on the blackboard. Get students to copy into Journals.

Perhaps the following was used -

- narration
- collective groupings - decreasing audience involvement in characters
- words of songs reinforce message
- comedy, satire, dance, mime etc.
- masks - decreases emotional involvement of the audience
- banners, signs, projection reinforces message

Draw students' attention to the EPISODIC nature of their piece of theatre i.e. how each unit can be self contained - there is no adherence to time, place or continuity.

Emphasise to students the Brechtian technique of presenting a series of loosely connected scenes or episodes as opposed to the usual plot line which builds to a climax and an denouement.

WEEK 4

FRAME II:

AIM:

- (1) To introduce the concept of HISTORIFICATION - seeing the present through the past.
- (2) To discuss STAGING TECHNIQUES used in role plays and improvisations to date and further develop students' Knowledge and Understanding of Brecht's staging techniques.

METHOD:

- (1) Use ACTING IN PERSON AND IN STYLE for definition of HISTORIFICATION (consult handout as well - Brechtian techniques)
- (2) Class discussion on how the improvisation work to date could be transposed into an historical period in order to make a strong statement about the present.
- (3) Class Readings of one of the short plays. eg The Measures Taken.
- (4) Discuss with class, the staging techniques already used.
- (5) Choose some of Brecht's poetry and read to class.
- (6) Discuss Cabaret style in a Brechtian performance.
- (7) Discuss and model some contemporary writers who use Brechtian techniques e.g. POPULAR FRONT & TWO WEEKS WITH THE QUEEN.

FRAME 12:

Go through Handout **Brecht's Dramatic Theories - Epic Theatre and Alienation.**

FRAME 13:

Reflect/evaluate all of Brecht's techniques that have been explored in class. Allow students time to ask plenty of questions, as full understanding of his techniques is important for all Assessment tasks.

FRAME 14:

Reflect on X-STACY in preparation for Responding Task.

FRAME 15:

- Students to rehearse for Presenting Task
- Students to access me for Forming Task

WEEK 5

Tie up any loose ends.

Prepare boys for:

FORMING TASK
PRESENTING TASK
RESPONDING TASK

WEEKS 6, 7 & 8

Presenting Rehearsals

WEEK 9

Forming Assessment & Q.C.S.

WEEK 10 & 11

Exams

- Presenting Assessment
- Hand in Responding Task

YEAR 12 DRAMA

Structure:

- ⇒ The Police Officer begins the Role Play in a different role - as NARRATOR. She/he tells the audience about **where** the accident happens, and **what** actually happened - CONTEXT. He/she then invites the audience to listen to each account from the witness.
- ⇒ After the student finishes narrating to audience, he/she moves quickly to take on the role as the Police Officer again and asks each witness to speak.
- ⇒ Witnesses adopt some kind of FORMAL standing or sitting arrangement and each in turn unemotionally but strongly recounts the accident and gives reasons as to why it happened.
- ⇒ The witnesses **must** address the audience.
- ⇒ The Narrator (police officer) returns and takes a DIDACTIC (to instruct/to teach) stance on the issue and presents this strongly to the audience.

YEAR 12 DRAMA

AIM: Introducing a range of other Brechtian techniques

The Accident - Take Three

Following on from the previous Role Play, you are now going to develop a short piece of theatre that incorporates at least **three** or **four** of the techniques from the list below.

- Present a fairy tale beginning "*Once upon a time....*"
- Present it satirically held up to ridicule and contempt).
- Base it on a parable, a fable, a biblical story, a well-known story, or a saying such as "Love thy neighbour".
- Use a narrator to present the variety of opinions and standpoints of each collective unit within the group.
- Have the individuals step out of the group and address the audience.
- Write an original song (or one to a well-known tune) about the issue.
- Have groups or individuals give stage directions *eg.* "Police Officer all move stage right!"
- Incorporate comedy routines/jokes, freeze frames, mime, masks.
- Use Juxtaposition *eg.* comic recounting of incident in downstage area with a slow motion, serious re-enactment of the incident, upstage.
- Slides/projections/banners/signs could accompany the improvisation.

TASK 14

Year 12 Drama - 1999
➔ Finding our Male Voice

DIMENSION:	RESPONDING - Individual
CONTEXT:	S.D. A.D. W.D.
TASK:	Analytical Essay

NAME: _____ TEACHER: MS

During this term we will be working on your Extended Study show to be performed in a public venue the first week in June.

To compliment your theme of Mother/Son in your Presenting Task, you are now to look at the Father/Son relationship in your Responding Task.

The following is a list of plays that have been set aside for you to choose from. These texts will come from either the College's library or my own library. You have until Week 3 to make a decision. Please consult with me before you make your final choice.

Summer of the Aliens	-	Louis Nowra
A Glass Menagerie	-	Tennessee Williams
Away	-	Michael Gow
Hotel Sorrento	-	Hannie Rayson
Hamlet	-	Shakespeare
Oedipus Rex	-	Sophocles
Death of a Salesman	-	Arthur Miller
X-Stacy	-	Margery Forde
A Hard God	-	Peter Kenna

Arthur Miller wrote that some modern plays "are ultimately involved with some aspect of a single problem. It is this: How may a man make of the outside world a home? How and in what ways must he struggle, what must he strive to change and overcome within himself and outside himself if he is to find the safety, the surroundings of love, the ease of soul, the sense of identity and honour which, evidently, all men have connected in their memories with the idea of family?"

The Family in Modern Drama, Arthur Miller, from MODERN DRAMA, Essays in Criticism, edited by Travis Bogard and William I Oliver.

With the above quote in mind, you are to write an analytical essay looking at the relationships between father and son/s from one of the plays listed above. Your answer must address **The Human Context** in that you must look at the male **Roles and Relationships** that exist in your chosen play. You must also look at how the **situation** that these men are placed in is shaped by the societal context. **Tension** in relationships is an element that playwrights use to heighten Mood and audience engagement. You must consider this aspect when addressing the question.

In brief you are to:

- (1) Choose ONE play from the list
- (2) Identify the father son/s relationships
- (3) Relate the quote to your writing
- (4) Address the Human Context – Roles/Relationships, situation (shaped by societal context)
- (5) Tension of Relationship to heighten Mood.

You are to submit a Bibliography

Date Issued: ____/____/____

Due Date: ____/____/____

Length: 800-1000 words excluding quotes

RESPONDING TASK - Extended Study

You have:

CRITERIA	A	B	C	D	E
<p>Knowledge and Understanding of Drama:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Roles/ Relationships • Language • Themes/issues in texts 	<p>Demonstrated a perceptive and detailed understanding of the roles and relationships of the males from your chosen text and how these males blend with the themes/issues of the text. Information is relevant, interesting, original and extremely accurate. A pleasure to read such insightful work. Top stuff!</p>	<p>Demonstrated a credible understanding of the roles and relationships of the males from your chosen text. Perhaps more discussion on how these males fit into the themes/issues of the text would have been useful. Nonetheless, information is relevant and accurate. Very good solid work - Well done!</p>	<p>Shown a basic understanding of the roles and relationship of the chosen males. However you have not fully explored how these males fit into the themes/issues of the play. However, you have attempted to develop some interesting discussion. Keep up the good work!</p>	<p>Shown some understanding of the males in the chosen text. However, little discussion re their relationship within the themes/issues of the plays. Disappointing work. It does appear you have little depth of understanding of the text. Keep trying.</p>	<p>Little/no understanding of what the task is asking you. Very sketchy understanding of the characters chosen. Little preparation for this assessment task.</p>
<p>Analysis, Synthesis and Evaluation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Insightful understanding of Australian males in chosen texts 	<p>Shown a sophisticated and insightful understanding of the process and you have supported your arguments with excellent and pertinent quotes from the text. Synthesised information clearly and maturely. Your writing is consistently well balanced and objective. Such mature work. Very exciting. Congratulations!</p>	<p>Consistently shown a substantial understanding of the process, supporting your arguments with good quotes from the text. Synthesised information with clarity, allowing your writing to be read with ease. Your opinions are valid and clearly justified. Solid work!</p>	<p>Shown some understanding of the demands of analysing and evaluating the material. However, you have tended to describe rather than analyse. Such a pity as your opinions are well supported by appropriate quotes from the text.</p>	<p>Occasional insight; however, you tend to describe offering no real insights into the characters. Some information is vague, often irrelevant and rather disorganised. No/few quotes to support arguments.</p>	<p>Little understanding of how to analyse any of the necessary information. Few opinions or opinions not supported by relevant/any quotes.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Written Communication Skills 	<p>Consistently fluent and coherent written expression which is almost free of mechanical/structural errors. Wonderful work!</p>	<p>Generally fluent and coherent written expression. Few minor mechanical/structural errors. Well done!</p>	<p>Some lapses in fluency and coherence. Some mechanical/structural errors.</p>	<p>Many lapses in fluency and coherence - some mechanical/ structural errors.</p>	<p>Largely in-coherent written expression. Many mechanical and structural errors.</p>

Comments: _____

Teacher's signature: _____

Date: ___/___/___

Parent's signature: _____

Date: ___/___/___

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Packing Down in Drama



Year 11 Drama

A unit of work prepared by

TITLE: Packing Down in Drama

LENGTH: Term 1

RATIONALE

For students of Drama, the Elements of Drama provide the framework for their study for Years 11 and 12. Since the Elements have substance only in dramatic context, it is essential students use them within the dimensions and contexts of drama and not as isolated activities. This unit of work aims to explore each element of drama through Games, Role Plays, Improvisation and Text. However, the primary focus of this unit will be to enable students to understand how to manipulate the Elements of Drama to create a new dramatic meaning.

Since Sport plays a big part in the lives of boys at Villanova College, this is a perfect context to explore the Elements of Drama. Students will be given stimulus to be used as a pre-text.

SUGGESTED OBJECTIVES

FORMING:

- Manage the Elements of Drama to create and shape dramatic action.
- Explore, analyse and shape dramatic action and text.
- Experience the challenge and satisfaction of interacting with others to form drama.

PRESENTING

- Manage the Elements of Drama to communicate and present dramatic action.
- Present extracts from various texts to illustrate the elements.
- Present student drama to a level of performance appropriate to a particular audience.
- Value this ability to present drama confidently and effectively.

RESPONDING

- Identify and analyse the elements in the Extended Improvisations/Texts.
- Synthesise understandings of the elements and the context of the drama.
- Communicate the above through oracy and in writing (Journal - Focus questions will be given at the beginning of each week).
- Participate in activities to engage in the aesthetics.

SUGGESTED LEARNING EXPERIENCES

During the course of this unit, students will be involved in a variety of learning experiences that may include:

Games
Drama exercises
Improvisations
Role Plays
Conventions in Drama
Exploration of Texts.

Texts that could be used in this unit

- An Anatomy of Drama, Martin Esslin
- Dramawise, Haseman & O'Toole
- The Uses of Drama, Edited by John Hodgson
- Improvisation for the Theatre, Viola Spolin
- Theatre Games, Clive Barker
- Impro, Keith Johnstone
- Improvisation Starters, Philip Bernardi
- A Guide to Improvisation, (A Handbook for Teachers), Ronald James and Peter Williams
- Improv. Comedy, Andy Goldberg
- Theatre Games for Young Performers, Maria C. Novelly
- Theatre Sports Down Under, Lyn Pierse

Articles

- Newspaper Articles from Courier Mail, the Australian, etc.
- Various sporting magazines.

Playscripts

Attached at end of each week's work.

WEEK 1

- Getting to Know Your Games
- Outline the year's work
- My Philosophy
- My Expectations/Their Expectations
- What is Drama? - Group Work/Butcher's paper
Finding their own definition
Class Discussion
- What is Drama? Resource I - Handout to boys
- Assessment Items
- Elements of Drama - Resource II (Dramawise) - Handout to boys.
- Drama book
 - Documenting 2 year journey through Drama - Class discussion
 - Reflections on lessons/units/assessment
 - Newspaper clippings
 - Reviews of plays seen
 - Drama/Arts related articles
 - Handouts for each unit of work
 - Reflections of theatre visits - how appropriate they are for students of Drama

WEEK 2 - The Human Context

- Handout Responding Task
- Handout Focus Journal Sheets
- The WHO Game - Viola Spolin
- Model with another student
- Do in Paris - each have a go
 - Deconstruct as a class
 - Was it clear?
 - Did the language match the role/relationship/situation?
 - Did we understand the context?
- TABLEAUX/FREEZE FRAMES → to illustrate relationships/situations

Model for boys with 5 volunteers



OFFICE SCENE

Roles: Boss Assistant Accountant
 Secretary Receptionist

Students (with class and teacher's assistance are to form a TABLEAUX to illustrate their role/relationship and possible situation



Present - class discussion

Using the same TABLEAUX as above, students are one by one to find an appropriate movement for their role. This movement, in turn, must match the given word (see below)

Boss	-	"profits"
Assistant	-	"meeting"
Client	-	"finalise"
Accountant	-	"balance"
Secretary	-	"message"
Receptionist	-	"line:"

One by one, students will say their WORD and execute their matching movement.

In order to make the context clearer, students are then given a sentence containing their word. They are to utter their sentence, one by one, with their already established movement.

Boss	-	"We've got to increase our PROFIT"
Assistant	-	"I've scheduled a MEETING for 7.30 am."
Client	-	"Can we finalise matters then?" Thursday.
Accountant	-	"We need to focus on BALANCING the accounts".
Secretary	-	"I'll send a MESSAGE to all those who need to attend the meeting:"
Receptionist:	-	"Mr Jones is on LINE three".

After students have presented, whole class deconstructs scene in terms of THE HUMAN CONTEXT.

INTRODUCE TO DRAMA

Objective:	To establish a CONTEXT
Preamble:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Form a drama • Requires co-operation • No "acting"/adopt attitudes and values of others • Must accept the Fiction • Base the drama in reality

ROLES/RELATIONSHIPS - Created by a Pre-text

- ⇒ Class is shown a copy of Bikies gathering at a rally from "Wild at Heart"
- ⇒ Couple of minutes devoted to discussion
 - What do they see?
 - Who are they?
 - What's happening
 - Connections? eg. building - where are they?

Groups of Four Roles	-	4 people from scene
Relationship	-	Choose the relationship eg. mates, club members, girl friend/boy friend, etc.
What	-	What are you doing there?
Why	-	Why are you there?

- Students are to choose "a moment" using the above situation and work out a TABLEAU/SENTENCE/MOVEMENT to depict their roles/relationship/situation etc. The moment may not have any bearing on the actual picture; it may in fact be before they arrived at this scene.



Present

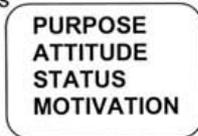
- Students are now to develop the above into an Improvisation, approximately 1 minute in length.



Present

Deconstruct with Class

- ⇒ Different fictions being developed
- ⇒ Situations/Contexts
- ⇒ How relationships were developed through Improvisation
- ⇒ Each character's



Teacher Narration - eyes closed/on floor

- ⇒ You are members of the local council
- ⇒ You have been watching the bikies from your Chambers
- ⇒ The bikies are protesting in front of the Council Chambers
- ⇒ They feel aggrieved because Council will not allow them to use the local camping ground as a meeting place for the National Bike Week Rally.
- ⇒ The media is congregating; hence, there is a lot of confusion, anger and tempers flaring
- ⇒ In groups of 6, you are to choose either
 - councilor
 - media person
 - bikie

and take an ATTITUDE towards this confrontation. Let the improvisation develop; however, if someone else also shares the same attitude as you do, you may change your attitude/stance if you like. Naturally, if all share different attitudes, the tension will increase.

- ⇒ When the focus for this scene should be THE HUMAN CONTEXT - roles/relationships/situation in terms of their character's *Purpose, Attitude, Motivation, Status*. For example, does your character's purpose change? Think about how your character is shaping. Are you being given an opportunity to ACCEPT, REJECT, MODIFY any of your language?

CONTEXT: The steps of Council Chambers

SITUATION: To discuss the problems between the 2 groups. (Don't forget the media!)

- ⇒ Open eyes - organise your space and develop your Improvisation.
- ⇒ The bikies are protesting in front of the Council Chambers



Workshop the scene

↓
Present
↓
Class deconstruction in terms of The Human Context
↓
Consult Handout 2 - Dramawise - the Elements of Drama

*Script to be used for The Human Context
Blackrock, Nick Enright pp 2-4*

FOCUS QUESTIONS

- *Focus questions should be addressed at all lessons. Students should be given the opportunity to show their entries in case they are not addressing the relevant issues/elements.*

WEEK 3 - Dramatic Tension

Games involving the creation of tension

GAME: WHO AM I?
One student leaves the room while others decide who he is. Student returns to ask questions of each member of the group. they must reply with YES or NO.

↑
Tension of Relationship

GAME: WHAT'S IN THE BAG?
Put a certain amount of items in a bag, eg. scissors, staples, cocktail stirrers, melon ball, rubber band, pen, highlighter, sharpener, etc. Blindfold a volunteer - Volunteer is allowed 15 seconds to feel all the items. Volunteer must then remember all items and recall them to the class in 10 seconds.

↑
Tension of Task

GAME: GRANDMOTHER'S FOOTSTEPS
One student faces the wall - others try to advance without being caught when the former turns around.

↑
Tension of Surprise

GAME: WHO WILL IT BE?
Every student is given a number. On the back of a bar of chocolate write a number. If the number matches - presto! the winner!

↑
Tension of Mystery



Deconstruct. How could we move from GAME to DRAMA? Whole class discussion.

HARNESSING TENSION

In a dramatic incident, there is a tension which comes from not knowing

- Not knowing **WHEN** something will happen
- Not knowing **WHERE** something will happen
- Not knowing **WHO** it will happen to
- Not knowing **WHY** it is happening
- Not knowing **WHAT** it will mean to you.

Relate the above to the Games played - in terms of the Specific Tension.

Write all Tensions (Task, Relationships, Surprise, Mystery) plus the above on Blackboard and get boys to write in their Journals.

Creating and controlling the TENSION is the key ingredient in the making/shaping of the drama.



Tension created by TIME and SPACE

PAIRS A & B

- **A** is a person condemned to die on the scaffold.
B directs **A** on how to walk up the steps to approach the noose. Present without dialogue and use ways you think would heighten the tension.



Try this scene at various speeds - how is the tension affected?

GROUP OF 5/6

- Repeat the above scene with one person the condemned man, one the executioner and the rest play the crowd.
- How can you use the space between the crowd and the man to heighten the tension?

Suggestions

- Try the scene with a large space between the crowd and the condemned man. At a certain moment, the crowd could surge forward to close the space. What would be the best moment to do this? What might trigger this reaction in the crowd?
- Try bringing in a messenger carrying a reprieve.

TENSIONS CREATED BY A PRE-TEXT

Students will look at the Pre-text "The Locker Room", and during discussion they will decide:

- who's locker could it be?
- is there anything significant about this locker?
- what do you think the owner's personality is like?

In Pairs, students will be working together to explore Tensions of Task, Relationship, Surprise and Mystery using the Pre-text as their stimulus. Students to lie on floor with eyes closed to listen to Teacher Narration, *ie.* the context.

IMPROVISATIONS - PAIRS

① **Tension of Task**

Context - Athlete is running late for training; he finds it difficult to open his locker - he tries to get his training gear out of the locker. He managed to open it, only to find he is dropping everything. Meanwhile, the coach enters to inform him that he is out of the team because of his constant late arrival to training.

Focus - Harnessing the Tension of Task.

② **Tension of Relationship**

Context - The athlete who uses the adjoining locker is having an ongoing feud with the person who uses the opened locker. WHY? You decide that. Allow the tension to be built around the ongoing feud.

Focus - Harnessing the Tension of Relationship

③ **Tension of Mystery**

Context - You are both club members and use the locker room almost daily. You know the person who belongs to the opened locker - he is a good friend of yours. However, the locker that adjoins it is always locked - you have never seen it opened. You wonder what is inside? Hidden steroids? Stolen goods? You don't open it.

Focus - Harnessing the Tension of Mystery

④ **Tension of Surprise**

Context - You are both security guards called in to investigate the contents of the closed locker. You decide who has called you to find out what is inside the locker. It could be the Manager of the club or someone in authority. You are having enormous difficulty getting the locker opened. However you do succeed. What do you find?

Focus - Harnessing the Tension of Surprise

Students will present their improvisations. After each tension, the class will deconstruct the tensions presented.

*Script to be used for Dramatic Tension
Blackrock, Nick Enright pp 36-39*

FOCUS QUESTIONS

Focus questions should be addressed at all lessons. Students should be given the opportunity to show their entries in case they are not addressing the relevant issues/elements.

WEEK 4 - Focus

Games involving Focus - Focusing the Action

GAME: GIVE AND TAKE EXERCISES TO SHOW/ESTABLISH/DEMONSTRATE FOCUS

➊ Tug of War



What was the Focus?
How was the Focus established?
Was the focus maintained?

➋ Japanese Restaurant (whole class or 6 players working in pairs)

PAIR A PAIR B PAIR C

- Give each player a WHO WHAT & WHERE
- Side coach by calling A, B or C to determine when each pair can engage in conversation
- Students proceed to such an advanced level that they can converse independently without the side-coaching, *ie.* GIVING AND TAKING THE FOCUS.

- Objective ACTION. To get students to FRAME their action. In other words, FOCUSING THE ACTION. Deconstruct as a class. How was FOCUS maintained? How did this maintenance of Focus advance the drama?

Role Play Divide class into 3 groups:
- Kids in a coffee shop
- bikies
- police

Outline to boys WHO they are and WHERE they are. Don't allow them any time to prepare/organise (FORM) the improvisation. The improvisation will, hopefully, not work because there is no FOCUS/FRAMING OF ACTION

- no preparation on roles/characters
- no attempt to establish/develop tension
- lacked a clear Frame
- little information/direction from me

FOCUS - CREATED BY A PRE-TEXT

Students will look at the Pre-text "The Two Women", and during discussion they will decide:

- who are the two women? (their relationship)
- what are they looking at?
- why do you think they are there?
- what time is it?

In pairs, we are going to use the stimulus, create the context and FRAME that context through improvisation.

WHO? 2 women
WHAT? car accident

INSIDE: 2 women talking to each other about the accident.
ON THE EDGE: One woman going home to tell her husband "Guess what I've just seen?"
OUTSIDE: 2 councilors talking about whether lights should be installed.

➡ Write up on blackboard for boys to copy into Journals

When and where we decide to set the action, we call the frame eg.

1. footpath
2. inside the house
3. Council Chambers

In improvisation one of the characters are INSIDE the action.

In improvisation two of the characters are ON THE EDGE.

In improvisation three of the characters are OUTSIDE the event.

Script to be used for Focus
Popular Front, Errol O; Neill pp 99-101

FOCUS QUESTIONS

Focus questions should be addressed at all lessons. Students should be given the opportunity to show their entries in case they are not addressing the relevant issues/elements.

WEEK 5 - Place and Space

Resources: Butcher's paper and felt pens

In groups of 5-6, design two totally different settings for a drama, using the "Champions" pre-text as your stimulus.

- Think about WHO these players are
- Think about WHAT they are doing
- Think about HOW important this scene is to your drama
- Think about placing your characters in:
 - (a) the locker room prior to running on the field, and
 - (b) in the clubhouse after the game.
- Be as specific as possible in your designs as the focus in PLACE and SPACE

When you have designed your settings, arrange yourselves in the PLACE as the characters in the SPACE.

FREEZE FRAME the above.

Script to be used for PLACE and SPACE: Heroin Lies, Wayne Denfhy pp 7-9

FOCUS QUESTIONS

Focus questions should be addressed at all lessons. Students should be given the opportunity to show their entries in case they are not addressing the relevant issues/elements.



WEEK 6 - Time

- Aspects of Time
- Association of period
- Dramas may happen on one night
- Dramas may happen over a period of days, weeks, months and even years.
- Dramas may go back and forward in time.

Put information above on blackboard and get boys to copy in Journals.
In groups of 5-6:

FREEZE FRAME 6 periods of time associated with the pre-text. These 6 periods of times must be in chronological order, eg.

1. Team being announced
2. Fitting for uniform/gear
3. Looking at boat for the first time
4. Freeze Frame the actual pre-text
5. Crossing the finishing line
6. Presentation ceremony that night.

TEACHING POINT

The Pre-text must be ONE of the frozen frames so that audience knows exactly what the time frame is.



Present / Evaluate / Deconstruct

TEMPO AND TIMING

TEMPO relates to the kind of action going on, and to the mood eg. a fight will proceed at a faster tempo than a funeral. Think back on our improvisation about the condemned man. What was the Tempo there? How was the mood created in relation to the Tempo?

TIMING relates to the management of time in a broad sense. The precise use of time, from one moment to the next, we call timing. It is an important factor in building dramatic tension eg. through long pauses or hasty interruptions.

Script to be used for TIME: Shimada, Jill Shearer

FOCUS QUESTIONS

Focus questions should be addressed at all lessons. Students should be given the opportunity to show their entries in case they are not addressing the relevant issues/elements.

WEEK 7 - Language and Movement

Divide into groups of 5

PREAMBLE

A.

- Each group is to build an improvisation in which each member of the group speaks 3 blocks of language. A block of language is quite substantial - perhaps a couple of sentences.

eg. *"Goodbye darling" (1) "Have a great day" (2)*
"Don't forget we're going out for dinner tonight" (3)

- Each person in the group can speak in any order you like, each developing the situation as it grows.
- Be sure you don't use any more than 3 blocks of language.



Present

B.

- Rework your improvisations replacing each block of language with THREE words only. This means that each member of each group will speak NINE words.

You must keep the original meaning of your first improvisation, so give careful thought to the way you can express meaning through body language and the way you speak.



Present

C.

- Rework the improvisation, replacing your NINE words with THREE - ONE word for each block of language.

You must keep the original meaning of your first improvisation, so give careful thought to the way you can express meaning through body language and the way you speak.



Groups present

Language works best when it is used with economy.

Using the Pre-Text of the boys with the surfboard, students will devise improvisations that will illustrate the best use and most appropriate use of dialogue.

Using this pre-text as a stimulus we discover that these 5 boys have been away on a Biology excursion. somebody has taken a photo of the boys and it has been published in the local newspaper. The principal and the parents are furious with their behaviour, as it is seen as bring the school into disrepute.

Groups of 3-4

In a series of improvisations, you are to show how the LANGUAGE differs under different circumstances.

- IMPRO I: Principal talking to the boys involved.
- IMPRO II: Parents of one of the boys talking to the boys involved.
- IMPRO III: A group of boys (not involved) talking about the incident.



Present



Deconstruct in terms of LANGUAGE and MOVEMENT.

Script to be used for LANGUAGE and MOVEMENT: "The Kid", Michael Gow.

FOCUS QUESTIONS

Focus questions should be addressed at all lessons. Students should be given the opportunity to show their entries in case they are not addressing the relevant issues/elements.

WEEK 7 - Mood and Symbol

Source: Dramawise

Put together all the elements we have investigated so far and we have MOOD. It is the feeling or atmosphere that is created by, and emerges through, the dramatic action.

Ways Mood can be build into the drama

A. Pairs: A & B

**Roles: A - student
B - parent**

CONTEXT: A arrives home from school and goes straight to the bedroom. The parent waits, then decides to go into the child's bedroom to find out what the problem is.

CONSTRAINTS: At school A was hurt, embarrassed and humiliated by other students (A decides what. A is hurt and doesn't want to talk about it. The parent is sympathetic/supportive and must find out what the problem is as gently as possible. Let the Role-play build slowly.

B. Group: A, B, C, C

Roles: All members of a high powered computer firm:
A - Boss, overworked and fast talking
B - Personal Assistant to Boss / efficient and fast talking
C - Top Salesperson, successful, fast talking
D - Personal Secretary to top salesperson, fussy, fast talking

CONTEXT: 1) Sales have slumped and **C** is trying to convince **A** (Boss) to spend an extra \$200,000 on advertising. The decision must be made urgently.
2) **B** and **D** keep interrupting the discussion between **A** and **C**. The interruptions could be letters to sign, urgent fax, cheques to sign, Bank Manager has just arrived, important client has just turned up etc. etc. It must be remembered that **A** and **C** must continue their discussion.
3) **A** and **C** must deal quickly with these interruptions before returning to their discussion.
4) Let the action develop with constant interruptions and speedy problem solving.

OUTCOME: After about 1½ minutes **B** advises **A** that **A** is running late for an important appointment and must leave at once. **A** hurries off, making a decision before leaving.

↓ ↓

Deconstruct/Evaluate in terms of a particular MOOD that has been established.

Role Play A - intimate, sensitive

Role Play B - frantic, chaotic

Using the pre-text of the FOOTBALL students will devise an improvisation that will illustrate a contrast in MOOD.

Pairs. You and a mate have had some involvement with this football. You haven't seen this picture for at least 10 years. To demonstrate a contrasting MOOD you are to present 2 improvisations showing how you are reminiscing about the past, eg...

IMPROVISATION I:

You remember the moment when you found out a very close team member sustained a very bad injury as a result of a vicious attack from an opposing team member.

IMPROVISATION II.

You remember the moment when you won the Grand Final. Relive the moment with your team made

↓ ↓ ↓

Present

↓ ↓ ↓

Deconstruct in terms of MOOD.

Script to be used for MOOD, "Gary's House" by Debra Oswald.

FOCUS QUESTIONS

Focus questions should be addressed at all lessons. Students should be given the opportunity to show their entries in case they are not addressing the relevant issues/elements.

WEEK 7 - Symbol

- ⇒ Discussion with class about the significance of symbol - its powerful messages, its visual image that creates dramatic meaning.
- ⇒ Compile a list of well known symbols eg. Hitler's Arm Signal, Handshakes, Villanovan symbol of the Heart, Arrow and Book.
- ⇒ Discuss with class, the symbol used in our work so far, especially the symbol used in "Popular Front" by Errol O'Neil.

In 2 groups, present a series of six frozen symbolic frames that the audience could easily relate to.

In our pre-text of the lone runner, is there any SPECIAL MEANING when we look at the picture? DISCUSS. How can we relate the importance of SYMBOL to drama?

Remainder of time should be spent pulling all the Elements of Drama together and answering any questions the students may- have.

Students to work on Presenting and Responding tasks.

Forming task to be done in exam block.

TASK 1

Year 11 - Drama

➡ PACKING DOWN IN DRAMA

DIMENSION: FORMING - Group Practical

CONTEXT: S.D. W.D. A.D.

TASK: Improvisation

NAME: _____

TEACHER: _____

- ♦ During this unit of work you will have been exposed to numerous pieces of text - texts that were especially chosen to illustrate a particular element of drama.
- ♦ You are required to work with a partner and carefully choose ONE of these texts and develop an improvisation using the chosen text as the basis for the improvisation.
- ♦ I will spend some time illustrating and giving examples of the type of improvisation that may come from a particular text.
- ♦ You will be given ONE lesson to prepare the improvisation. The process for this piece of FORMING assessment will be as follows:
 1. THIS lesson to discuss the assessment task and for me to illustrate and give examples.
 - Choose a partner today.
 - Decide on the text you will use as the basis for your improvisation.
 2. TOMORROW'S lesson will be when you and your partner will develop, form and workshop the improvisation.
 3. The THIRD lesson will be when the assessment will take place.

DATE ISSUED: ____/____/____

DATE DUE: ____/____/____

LENGTH: 2-3 minutes per student

PLAY: _____

SCENE: _____

CHARACTERS: _____

PARTNER: _____

TASK 2

Year 11 - Drama

➡ PACKING DOWN IN DRAMA

DIMENSION: PRESENTING - Group

CONTEXT: W.D. A.D.

TASK: Prepared Readings

NAME: _____

TEACHER: _____

- ♦ In this unit of work, various scripts will be used to demonstrate/illustrate one or more of the Elements of Drama.
- ♦ In groups of no more than **FOUR** you are to prepare at least **THREE** texts for a prepared reading. This reading will demonstrate your understanding of the chosen element/s of drama that applies to each of the chosen scripts.
- ♦ As knowledgeable students of drama, you must explain to your audience the Element/s used in each of the scripts and the process you used to create the new dramatic meaning.
- ♦ On the day of assessment, you **MUST** attach copies of your scripts to this task sheet. The process/decisions you made **MUST** be clearly marked on your scripts. The characters you read must be clearly highlighted on the texts.

PLAY 1: _____

PLAY 2: _____

PLAY 3: _____

CHARACTERS: Play 1 _____

Play 2 _____

Play 3 _____

DATE ISSUED: ____ / ____ / ____

DATE DUE: ____ / ____ / ____

TASK 3

Year 11 - Drama

➊ PACKING DOWN IN DRAMA

DIMENSION: RESPONDING - Individual

CONTEXT: S.D.

TASK: Focus Journal Questions

NAME: _____

TEACHER: _____

- ◆ In this unit of work on the Elements of Drama, you will be documenting your work week by week. This journal will allow me to monitor how you **HANDLE** and **ANALYSE** drama.
- ◆ Each week you will be given **FOCUS QUESTIONS** in order for you to have a guideline/springboard for your writing.
- ◆ The Journal will **NOT** be a forum for you to make personal judgements about your peers (*or me!!*) or engage in a diatribe of how good you felt when the drama was completed.
- ◆ Rather, it will **FOCUS** on how you attempted to understand the intricacies of how the elements work, eg. how the Tension of Task was set up. Then when you analyse that moment in the drama when the Tension of Task was set up, you will discuss whether the task was difficult enough in order to have any real impact on the outcome.
- ◆ Hand me in plenty of drafts (*week by week*) so that you know you are on the right track.

DATE ISSUED: ____/____/____

DATE DUE: ____/____/____

Task 16

Year 12 Drama - 1999

- The Advice of our Founder is to Live, Share, and Help Each Other in our Community.

DIMENSION: PRESENTING - Group Practical

CONTEXT: A.D.

TASK: TEXT INTERPRETATION

NAME: _____ **TEACHER:** _____

In groups of 3-4, you are to choose an extract from "Aftershocks", a project by the Newcastle Workers' Cultural Action Committee.

A copy of the extract **MUST** be attached to this criteria sheet and submitted to me on the day of presenting.

You may cut and paste various scenes if you feel the need. Likewise, you can present different characters' stories.

All decisions made during the rehearsal process **MUST** be clearly documented in pencil on your script. Your character's lines must be highlighted.

DATE ISSUED: ____ \ ____ \ ____

DATE DUE: ____ \ ____ \ ____

LENGTH: 3-5 mins per student per group.

STANDARDS SCHEMA - PRESENTING - TEXT INTERPRETATION

CRITERIA	A	B	C	D	E
Demonstrating and managing: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Roles • Relationships • Focus 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Managed to demonstrate with consistency and perception a role that is very appropriate for the type of script used. You have also managed to set up relationships that are very appropriate and consistent with the chosen text. Solid work. • Framed the action with such flair that the audience was able to fully engage aesthetically with your interpretation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Managed to demonstrate with consistency, a role that is very appropriate for the type of script used. You have also managed to set up relationships that are very appropriate and consistent with the chosen text. Solid work. Very pleasing. • Framed the action in such a successful manner that the audience was easily able to engage themselves aesthetically. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Managed to demonstrate with satisfaction, a role that is mostly suited to this type of script. You have managed to set up relationships that are appropriate and mostly suited to the chosen text. Satisfactory work. • Focus was lost occasionally - action need to be better framed. Nonetheless, audience was able to engage themselves aesthetically. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not really managed to demonstrate with any real consistency, a role that is in keeping with this script. Relationships with others are not fully realised. • Problems with focus were apparent. No attempt to frame any of the action, forcing problems with audience getting engaged in the performance. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Little/no demonstration of how to set up successful roles/relationships. • This led to focus problems; lack of real focus. Disappointing work. Very immature lazy work.
Acting Techniques: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interpretation of Character and Text • Vocal quality 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintained a sensitive interpretation of text and character/s. Invites belief in situation and concentration and control, showing absolute commitment to the task. Excellent ensemble playing. Mature work. • Developed a fluent and confident vocal ability - sensitive selection of modulative devices to suit character, style and situation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintained a very good interpretation of text and character/s. Performance shows a very sound knowledge of character and sub-text of the script. Empathy between characters. Confident performance. • Developed a vocal ability that is mostly fluent and confident. Some more deliberate choices needed to be made. Mostly suited to character, style and situation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintained a satisfactory interpretation of text and character/s. Performance shows a good knowledge of character. More understanding of sub-text would have enhanced character. Satisfactory performance. • Chosen a vocal quality that mostly suits character and style of text; some minor problem evident. More decisions need to be made to enhance vocal quality. Clear and audible nonetheless. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintained some satisfactory interpretation of text and character/s. However, uneven performance due to loss of lines and/or concentration. Disappointing performance. • Problem with clarity, audibility and monotony. Lack of energy. Use of voice not an obvious consideration. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Little/no understanding of character and/or text, leading to a very uneven performance. Problems with lines. Little awareness of scrip's demands. • Major problems with vocal choices. Merely "reciting" lines. Little understanding of how to best use voice to match character with text.
Realisation of Style - Community theatre	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Managed the style with excellent understanding and control; consistent with conventions of this style of theatre. Imaginative dynamic performance. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Managed the style with good command, understanding and control; well suited to this style of theatre. Good solid performance. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some difficulty in understanding the demands of the style. However, realisation was evident. Satisfactory performance. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grave difficulty coming to grips with style. Little understanding of the demands. Disappointing work. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Little/no understanding of style. No attempt to try to understand the demands of this style of theatre.

COMMENTS:

Teacher's Signature: _____ Date: ___/___/___ Parent's Signature: _____ Date: ___/___/___

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BOYS' COLLEGE DRAMA YEAR 12 Guided Journal Tasks

By this stage of the year, you have experienced an array of drama experiences, which undoubtedly have evoked many responses in you on both artistic and personal levels. I would like you to think carefully about these experiences and now take some time to write in your journal about your feelings and responses. If you have not done any journal writing to date, this is your opportunity to share with me how you perceive the tasks and performances have unfolded. **Please take the time to write something – this is important to the research we are sharing.** I have provided some guideline thoughts to help you get started.

- Have you been changed in any way by the experiences you have had this year?
- You have now completed two drama assessment performance pieces. What are your reactions to both? Did one have a greater impact on you than the other? Why or why not.
- You largely created the performances you have experienced with teacher negotiation and co-direction. Please make some comment on how well this class works together in terms of artistic integrity and artistic outcomes.
- How well have your performance groups worked together. What made them a positive or negative experience?
- How important is teaching style in drama? What makes for a positive and rewarding creative experience?
- Are you enjoying this Year 12 drama experience? What important contributions has drama had for your personal or academic development?

Thank you

Tracey

Dear Journal,

15/4/97

Last term, as most would agree, was the hardest in Drama. This statement is reflected in my mark regarding the written task. I was very disappointed with the marks mark and to be honest, hated the assignment. On a good point however, I was delighted to receive my presenting task back as I did better than I thought. On the other hand, my forming task was average as I felt I could have done much better.

On the ~~whole~~, whole, my responding was by far the worst mark in drama I ever got. But admittedly, I didn't spend as much time on the task as I should have.

22/2/99

Black Rock

Mateship Condemning it.

With "Mateship" as our theme, I believe we should portray it as a bad thing. With Black Rock as our refered text, we want the audience to know about the rape & murder that Jarrod witnessed and change their interpretation of "Brother Hood". With this and some short scenes of other sightings of destruction, I want to show the audience that if you don't tell ~~any~~ anyone and in the concept of Mateship, then some one will find out and you'll be in lots of trouble.

25/8/99

Hi Tracey! How are you feeling? The baby giving you a hard time? I'm sure reading this won't attribute much help to your physical well being, so I hope it helps you write your Ph.D.

So far my group of four have chosen a character, each with a relatively large piece. Including myself we are Jack, Joseph and Mark. In addition to this we have, as of today, begun workshopping (forming) our ideas into reality. Yesterday was mainly a brainstorm, where we thought of possibilities for set arrangement, interaction among characters, as well as the cohesion and flow of our monologues into each others. We have broken our scripts into four parts and have arranged them according to content and train of thought. My first thought which I put to the group was that we could split the area (stage space) up into four stations, each relevant to our own character. Then as the script progresses we would flow in and out of each others, while interacting, using freeze frames in the background and generally making the monologue performed seem as natural as possible. Obviously there has been a great deal of group input into this forming process, which has contributed greatly to the success of our ideas. Although I must simply

comment on my observations of some of the group members. Not that I'm complaining, our group is working extremely well, yet I can sense Joseph becoming distant and reluctant towards a certain part in our progress. Pardon me, but whether or not he is in disagreement or just bitchy about something, I don't know. I have a feeling he may be a little on edge about Mark, who becomes very bossy and overbearing at some times, yet not really to the point of dictation, and that's where Joseph misunderstands his position. Yet I'm sure when he gets the opportunity and is in the right mood he'll imitate Mark's behaviour today. On the other hand I feel sorry for Jack who seems to be the least acknowledged member of our group. While most of the time I find Jack's ideas intriguing and appropriate to the theme, he seems to be pushed to one side. I also think Joseph can sense this too. Sorry about the negatives. Others would probably think I'm exaggerating, however these were my observations of actions, attitudes, underlying subtexts and reactions to certain things.

On a more positive note, I believe this presenting amendment is really down my alley. I remember

enthusiasm and interest if the courses of work vary, such as the strictly ritualised Brecht and the excitedly intimate self creation of 'Mothers and Sons'. In each of these situations we were able to be creative and expand our artistic horizons.

Our class is a very honest and open group who allow each other to freely voice their thoughts with sincerity - they are always genuine. Ms. Lawson has been very honest with us in helping form our drama, and encouraging the maturity of our work. The teaching style portrayed by Ms Lawson, that of a concerned, supportive and professionally critical teacher has allowed us to grow in our talents and enthusiasm for drama, while encouraging a freedom and responsibility unlike other subjects. On the whole this years drama experience has given me greater confidence in my performance and creative skills, in addition to the analysis and insight into plays and texts. Drama is also a relief from other pressures of other subjects, and sometimes drama is a release valve for me, to feel free to work and

20 July

It's about time I started writing! One semester has gone by with a B+. Better than ever, and ready to go for higher ground. Starting with ^{the} Brechtian Forming Task, my second favourite assessment so far. A-, A- (I'm in one of my rare happy boasting moods at the moment). It was one of my favourites because it was my topic and I ~~had~~ could be as innovative as I wanted to be. I had wanted to do something like that ~~is~~ ~~actually~~ for a long time. Next, ~~was~~ the Responding Task. B, A-. At the time I was surprised by the grades, since I tended to ~~have~~ have difficulty completing Responding Tasks in the past let alone scoring high grades in the area.* But looking back, I realize that I had a much better chance at doing well in this one, because of three reasons.

1. The previous Responding Tasks (see asterisk) I had to write were based on plays which I didn't like.
2. I was impressed by this play (First Asylum).
3. Mrs. Lawson is a very good teacher.

* When I say previous tasks in this case, I'm referring to Year 9/10 Drama

The Presenting Task in Term 1 was a worry for me. I didn't have the enthusiasm for this task that I had for the Forming, because I was 'tied down' ~~to~~ (a bit of exaggeration here) to a single play (Blackrock). What saved me was the requirement to write and perform some original scenes, and I had great fun creating, ~~and~~ co-scripting, and performing the arrogant psychiatrist Doctor Kurtz. BT, BT, I think. Finally, the three ~~the~~ words: Mothers and Sons. At the beginning of development, I was indifferent, maybe a bit uncertain. After all, the ~~class~~ entire class had never been in a single group working on a single production before. After the two big nights, I was jubilant. The months of choosing and editing material, the writing of scenes and sequences, even the two 6 hour rehearsal days (a real taste of preparation for a public performance) was all worth it. An outstanding, successful task. I still have one of the ~~the~~ illustrated advertising posters on my bathroom wall above my desk, and I'm not taking it down anytime soon. BT, A-. This is a great class to work with.

It seems difficult to think of points to write about in this Journal, but I will start with M&S.

M+S was for me, the most exciting experience of the Drama Curriculum, if not the most exciting experience of the year.

To craft + shape a piece of work with reasonable personal contribution, then to perform it on stage in front of a full house, including our parents, was unforgettable. More important though, was the bumpy road in getting there.

Being forced to work on something as personal as this, with people you wouldn't ordinarily socialise with, is (for me) confronting. However, in true 'Drama' style, we all worked great together, despite the occasional bitching and hypocrisy.

A particular focus for negativity, was the apparent excess of Mike Lyons input & the constant attention & appraisal he got. Although im sure he didn't mind. In the end though, we all got along pretty good.

was great. She really gave me the shits though, when she kept telling me to "perform more". It was like having Stanley Kubrick breathing down your neck, Making you repeat every line 1000 times, but in the end, she put me on track, and like EYES WIDE SHUT, M+S was a masterpiece. Even though this was student devised material, it wouldn't have had even half the shimmer without as a director, Making it a show neither her, us or our parents will ever forget.

YOUTH PARTY CULTURE – EXPERIMENTATION.

There is a part of society that condemns many of the modern mindsets that accompany much of society's youth culture in today's higher developed countries.

The idea of underage drinking at parties, functions whether they be family, educational or social and gatherings of friends for small closed parties.

And the usage of illegal drugs whether it be at a party situation (most frequent examples are that of pot), at a small grouping of friends or LSD based drugs and ecstasy in the rave scene (although a different culture, it can be easily related to the youth party culture, the **"Live for the moment, why give a damn about tomorrow!"**)

All of this ties into the theme of experimentation. Experimentation with drugs, drinking, sex - with life in general. It's about living the moment, enjoying yourself and etc...

There is the issue of overdose. Whilst many consider getting high, or tipsy, enough, there are those who simply forget or don't give a damn about what might be the results of the immediate future and long terms, directly and indirectly.

Again this ties in with the motto; **"Live for the moment, why give a damn about tomorrow!"**

The didactic play that our (P.S. J. K. M. A., D. R.) group will present shall deal with supporting the issues associated with the youth party culture. It shall push for acceptance of the idea of experimentation with drugs, alcohol and sex. This is a view judged harshly, in particular those of the older generation and in particular, those in authority. The idea seems too radical, and immoral.

One reason why these rules will be hard to accept, and unlikely to change in any amount of short time, is that many politicians, and authoritative figure heads are determined **NOT** by skill and real experience, but rather by the stereotype that the more senior the person, that is not senile, but the more so called experienced, should be given the job.

An idea that comes hard to many is that the youth can be infinitely more advanced in experience and judgement than the older. What someone may learn in his or her whole life, could be understood by another in a matter of months. Everyone in this universe and beyond learns an infinitely different (yet infinitely same) experience through the same things. For one a flower may simply be yellow. To another it may hold the whole beauty of evolution, the most amazing genetic strains, and the complexity of infinity.

A reason for the prejudice that's commonly held by those of the later generation gap is the so called "values" system (many times it is the fault of "religion" that rings this on).

It is not wrong for you, unless it's directly against your conscience.

There are very few times in one's life when they have to make a conscious decision on something. When people say that it's wrong, it means it's wrong according to a stereotype.

This can be a hard idea to accept, but I wish to subtly thrust the idea across into the minds of the audience, causing them to have a sudden rethink of their lives and so called moral codes.

SENIOR DRAMA
PRESENTING
STATEMENT OF INTENT

This performance focuses on the issue of "mateship".

Rather than hammering the opinions of the group members into the skulls of the audience, we have decided instead to present a more "down the line" interpretation of the issue – presenting both sides and letting the audience form their own opinion.

We have decided to present this issue using a variety of formats, from student devised scenes to poems. All scenes are introduced by a song relevant to the issue being presented.

The decision making process in the group was not necessarily driven or directed, rather it was based on spontaneous discussion and brain storming. From this, we refined the ideas we had and structured them into a form appropriate to present. Scenes were then designated to group members to work on, with rehearsing and workshopping beginning as soon as someone had a concrete version of what they wanted for "their" scene.