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**The Use of Drama to Explore Violence Within Relationships:  
A Study of Young Men's Experiences**

by

**Tammie Brunk**

Honours Psychology, University of Waterloo, 1993

**THESIS**

submitted to the Department of Psychology  
in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the Masters of Arts degree

Wilfrid Laurier University  
September, 1996

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## **ABSTRACT**

Sexual assault, sexual abuse, wife assault, and sexual harassment are perpetrated, most often by male acquaintances, on an overwhelming proportion of women. Many analyses of male violence propose that gender inequality and gender role socialization maintain abusive attitudes and behaviours within our culture. Adolescents comprise an important audience for violence prevention efforts. However, a review of high school programmes focused on prevention of sexual assault raises questions about the effectiveness of traditional lecture formats. Peer-based drama interventions provide an active, experiential form of learning which may be especially effective with adolescents. I used a qualitative, emergent design to investigate nine young men's experiences as drama troupe members within two high school peer-based drama interventions. I also interviewed several teachers/staff members within each high school. Findings revealed that many factors that are thought to support male violence against women (i.e., gender inequality, gender-role socialization and prevalence of interpersonal violence) were apparent within the school contexts. However, the young men's self-reports suggest that their experiences as troupe members within the drama interventions were successful in raising consciousness regarding violence. The young men also reported changed attitudes and behaviours related to violence within relationships. The results are discussed with a focus on how the intervention process counteracted male gender role socialization by providing nontraditional gender role models and an opportunity to interact with young women and men in an atmosphere of equality and mutual respect.

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## PROLOGUE

The issue of male violence against women was virtually unknown to me until the age of nine or ten. At that time an angry, volatile young man (whom I will call John) came to live with my family. John's former life had been chaotic and abusive. He had been raised in a rigidly patriarchal and violent family. His father was an alcoholic who battered his wife and children. Soon after arriving in our household, John established control over my family by using turbulent mood swings, emotional manipulation, and threats of violence. The brunt of his anger and frustration was aimed predominantly at my mother and me. Over the duration of the seven years that John lived in my family home, I endured emotional, psychological, and, eventually, sexual abuse. At age sixteen, I escaped this nightmare. Unfortunately, physically removing myself was only the beginning of a long and arduous journey to heal myself from the trauma I had experienced. Now at age 38, I can count myself amongst the numerous courageous individuals who have found a way to survive the violence and abuse that many men direct toward women.

My life experience left me with a strong desire to understand and, ultimately, to change the structures within our society that encourage and support male violence and abuse of power. This desire influenced my choice of graduate programme and my choice of master's thesis topic. Inevitably, my experience also influences the perspective and interpretation I bring to my research work. As Sandra Kirby and Kate McKenna (1989) explain, "throughout the research enterprise, who you are as a person, including the particular experience you have, affects what you can know" (p.

52). I believe that my personal encounter with male violence allows me to bring passion, insight, and empathy to my work; however, at times it also leads me to react with anger, frustration, and despair that things will never change.

My first-hand knowledge of the pain and trauma that can result from intimate violence and my continuing struggle to rise above that trauma has led me to focus my research efforts on prevention. I believe that men, as the perpetrators of violence against women, need to be the primary focus in prevention programming. I believe that traditional ideas of masculinity and men's superior position within our society support their violence against those who are less powerful. I believe that by inviting men to explore their connection with violence, and the conventions and structures that encourage that violence, they can begin to change themselves. Finally, I believe that the cultivation of egalitarian relations between the sexes will benefit both women and men.

The following review of literature pertaining to violence against women and its etiology bolsters many of my personal beliefs and experiences. An overview of the historical background of North American society illuminates the traditional structures and sanctions which maintain intimate forms of violence today. The statistics on various forms of male violence (i.e., child sexual abuse, femicide, physical assault, sexual assault, and sexual harassment) reveal that an overwhelming number of women experience abuse, most often at the hands of men they know. The potential for negative impact on victim's self-esteem, physical health, and psychological well-being

has also been extensively documented (Canadian Panel on Violence against Women, 1993; Thorne-Finch, 1992; Wyatt, Newcomb, & Riederle, 1993).

Many analyses of male violence propose that gender role socialization and gender inequality maintain abusive behaviours within our culture (Caputi, 1993; Feltey, Ainslie, & Geib, 1991; Kaufman, 1987; Scully & Marolla, 1993). Additionally, research on attitudes linked with violence against women reveals that belief in male prerogative, objectification of women, peer support for coercive sex, belief in rape myths, and the perception that few consequences will follow, all work to promote intimate forms of violence. It seems apparent that the prevention of these forms of violence demands a modification of socialization practices for men and women and a raised consciousness about the oppressive beliefs and societal structures that perpetuate abuse of less powerful individuals.

In North America, the educational system serves as a primary socializing agent, and, therefore, may also serve as an important setting for primary prevention efforts. Unfortunately, a review of prevention programmes focused on sexual assault raises questions about the effectiveness of traditional lecture formats. Additionally, most of these programmes have focused on teaching avoidance strategies to young women rather than encouraging young men to examine the ways in which they participate in or support violence.

The prevention programme described within this thesis provides much-needed documentation and evaluation of the processes and impact of an alternative approach to education on social issues. The previous use of drama to explore sensitive and/or

political topics provides a basis for belief that drama, because of its potential for developing empathy and engaging intellectual and emotional reactions, is an important medium for catalyzing change in attitudes and beliefs. Furthermore, interventions using drama-based peer education have shown promising possibility for reaching adolescents. I believe that an in-depth study of young men's reactions to this type of intervention can offer new insights on how to promote male consciousness-raising, on how to counteract negative socialization experiences, and on how to invite men to explore their relationship with violence without arousing their defensiveness. I hope that this research will play a small part in the movement toward prevention of violence against women.

## **CHAPTER 1: LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Historical Background of Male Violence Against Women**

Physical, emotional and sexual abuse of women and children have been linked to gender roles and patriarchal structures which permit men to dominate and subordinate those in less powerful positions. The traditional family, with husband as head of the household and wife as dependent, nurturer, has provided an environment where intimate forms of violence may occur. During the seventeenth, eighteenth and nineteenth centuries in North America, men's right to control and chastise their wives and children through the use of physical force was unquestioned (Dobash & Dobash, 1979; Martin, 1976). The belief that physical punishment is acceptable discipline for children is still deeply entrenched in our society (Propper, 1990).

Wife abuse remained outside legal jurisdiction until early in the twentieth century. For example, as late as 1866, the Supreme Court of North Carolina ruled that a husband was permitted to beat his wife provided he used a stick no larger than his thumb (Martin, 1976). The offence of wife assault finally became part of the Criminal Code of Canada between 1909 and 1960; however, "the victim had to demonstrate a greater degree of bodily harm than was required in other types of assault" (MacLeod, 1989, p. 24). Generally, abuse of family members was viewed as family business and not as real crime. Not until 1977 could women prosecute abusive husbands in Criminal Court rather than Family Court (Blackman, 1989). Husbands could not be charged with raping their wives until 1983 (MacLeod, 1989).

As reflected in the legal sanctions above, violence against women and children has been an accepted part of patriarchal rule until very recently.

During the twentieth century, various events played a role in moving intimate forms of violence from the private realm into public view. The Great Depression of the 1930's brought increased governmental intervention into issues previously understood as personal concerns (e.g., unemployment). Civil rights activists of the 1950's and 1960's rallied for increased social justice and for equality regardless of race, colour, national origin, and, eventually, gender. Following the Vietnam War, a realization that high levels of societal violence coincide with increased family violence focused new attention on family problems. The women's movement re-emerging in the 1970's proclaimed an emphasis on violence against women and children as significant societal problems (Blackman, 1989).

The first major book on rape, written by Brownmiller, was published in 1975: Against our will: Men, women and rape. In 1976, Del Martin's Battered wives appeared. The publicity focused on these new social issues "worked to redefine the characteristics of victims by leaving no doubt that they were undeserving of the violence inflicted on them" (Blackman, 1989, p. 10). However, early support services for victims of violence received limited governmental support. Eventually, grassroots organizations received increasing attention from federal agencies, and programmes for victims grew dramatically throughout the 1970's. The redefinition of intimate violence as a societal issue, has stimulated research aimed at quantifying its presence, shaping policy recommendations, and determining the effectiveness of programmes developed

to address the problem (Blackman, 1989). Legislative and judicial action regarding violence against women has been achieved by interest groups, lobbyists, demonstrations, and conferences. Much progress has been made through the commitment and hard work of many people. Unfortunately, although this previously taboo subject has been brought into public awareness, intimate forms of violence still exact a heavy toll in many women's and children's lives.

### **Different Forms of Violence Against Women**

Statistics on the various forms of violence against women and children are shockingly high; however, they are still incomplete. Police files provide only partial evidence because many abuse victims do not feel safe to call the police. The fear, shame, and stigma which accompany sexual assault, sexual abuse, and battering often impel victims to avoid asking for help (Thorne-Finch, 1992). Themes of intimidation, dominance, and male prerogative are common in violent behaviours that range from childhood sexual abuse, to murder of women, to battering, to sexual assault, to workplace harassment. The threat of these forms of violence places constraints on most women's lives; the experience of violence often results in great trauma.

### **Child Sexual Abuse**

Sexual exploitation of children and adolescents has been identified as a prevalent form of male violence against women. Statistics on sexual abuse from the National Clearinghouse on Family Violence (1993) reveal that 98% of abusers are male and most victims are female. "Child sexual abuse occurs when a child is used for the sexual gratification of an older adolescent or adult. It also involves the abuse



of power that an adult has over a child. The sexual abuse may be used by the adult as a means of fulfilling his needs to be powerful" (The National Clearinghouse on Family Violence, 1993, p. 1).

In 1984, the national Canadian study known as the Badgley Commission estimated that approximately one in every two women and one in every three men have experienced unwanted sexual acts. Four out of five of these acts occurred during childhood or adolescence. "Survivors [of sexual abuse] often hold the distorted belief that they are responsible for the abuse perpetrated against them. This results in feelings of extreme guilt and self-blame. ...[Additionally], numerous studies have discussed the direct relationship between child sexual abuse and adolescent/adult prostitution. The estimates range from 76 to 90 percent of prostitutes having a history of child sexual abuse, the most common form being incest" (The National Clearinghouse on Family Violence, 1993, p. 2).

A recent study which involved 420 interviews with Toronto women, the "Women's Safety Project", found that "54 percent of the women had experienced some form of unwanted or intrusive sexual experience before reaching the age of 16, [and] 43 percent reported at least one experience of incest and/or extrafamilial sexual abuse... 96 percent of the perpetrators of child sexual abuse were men" (Canadian Panel on Violence against Women, 1993, p. 11). The majority of sexual abuse survivors are traumatized by this experience and sexual adjustment is often negatively affected (Wyatt, Newcomb, & Riederle, 1993). Statistics on the prevalence of sexual

abuse and the predominance of male perpetrators raises the question, "What is it about men in our culture that encourages and supports abuse of others"?

Research studies suggest that societal structures which maintain gender inequality play an important role in intimate forms of violence. Based on stories from incest survivors, Judith Herman and Lisa Hirschman (1993) conclude that incestuous families are often traditional in structure: "The men were, without question, the heads of their household. Their authority within the family was absolute, often asserted by force. ... But even as they were often feared within their family, they impressed outsiders as sympathetic, even admirable men" (p. 50). "Implicitly the incestuous father assumes... that if his wife fails to provide satisfaction, he is entitled to use his daughter as a substitute" (Herman & Hirschman, 1993, p. 47). These authors point to men's dominance and entitlement within the family as directly related to abuse of women and children in less powerful positions.

### **Femicide**

The murder of women because of their gender is a form of male violence referred to as femicide. Serial sex killers such as the "Boston Strangler", "Jack the Ripper", the "Los Angeles-South Side Slayer", and the "Son of Sam" can be viewed as extreme examples of sexualized oppression. In her chapter on "The sexual politics of murder, Caputi (1993) explains the gendered nature of this crime: "people who torture, kill, and mutilate in this way are men, whereas their victims are characteristically females--women and girls--and to a lesser extent young males" (p. 19). In Canada in 1989, there were 657 homicides of which 21 cases were sexual

homicides. Men make up two-thirds of general homicide victims; whereas, 85-90 percent of sexual homicide victims are women (Roberts & Grossman, 1992).

Women have also been murdered in situations which were unrelated to sexual behaviour but directly linked to their gender. On December 6, 1989, fourteen women were slain in a classroom at the University of Montreal by a 25 year-old man, Marc Lepine. Lepine, who also killed himself, left a statement that blamed feminists for various problems in his life. "The admission by Lepine that his intent was to kill feminists stymied the usual tendency of the media to portray violence against women as the isolated acts of maniacs and focused attention on the pervasive phenomenon of woman hating [sic] in our society" (Stato, 1993, p. 132).

Many women are killed by the men they share their lives with most closely. The Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics Homicide Data Project reports "that of the 210 solved domestic homicides in 1987, more than one-third involved the murder of the wife by the husband. (Of the 16 percent where the husband was the victim, many wives were acting in self-defence.)" (Kaye, 1989, p. 46).

For some women, killing their abusive husbands was the final outcome in the cycle of violence. In Montreal, between 1982 and 1986, three percent of all male homicides were committed by their female partners. In almost every case, the woman was in immediate or imminent danger of physical violence and was living in an abusive situation. In at least half the killings of women in the same period, the men committed the murders because they could not accept the women leaving them; in other cases they committed the murder as revenge for having 'lost control' over their wives' lives. (Canadian Panel on Violence against Women, 1993, p. 11)

### **Physical Assault**

The abundant literature on wife battering documents another widespread form of male violence against women. In 1980, Linda Macleod estimated that one in ten women in Canada are physically battered by their husbands or live-in partners. This relatively early estimate of woman abuse rose to one quarter of all women in Canada based on a recently conducted national study (Statistics Canada, 1993). The Women's Safety Project found that 27 percent of Toronto women interviewed for the study had "experienced a physical assault in an intimate relationship. In 25 percent of the cases, women who were physically assaulted reported that their partners explicitly threatened to kill them.... All of the physical assaults on women were perpetrated by male intimates" (Canadian Panel on Violence against Women, 1993, p. 11). Women outside of marriage-like relationships are not exempt from physical abuse from intimates. A recent newsletter (Federation of Women Teachers' Associations of Ontario, 1990) reported that 11 percent of students at a Toronto high school were physically assaulted while dating.

In a 1989 report, "Wife battering and the web of hope: Progress, dilemmas and visions of prevention", Linda Macleod (1989) states that "there is widespread consensus that to eliminate violence against women in the home, values and social structures which emphasize the power of men over women and children must be identified and changed" (p. 15). In response to recent controversy surrounding the lack of focus on husbands who experience violence, Linda MacLeod (1989) presented the following points: assault of men by their wives occurs much less frequently, this

type of violence is often an act of self-defence or an attempt to protect children, and the social norms and institutions which condone, excuse and perpetuate violence against women leave them with fewer options to leave violent relationships and a greater sense of helplessness compared to men.

### **Sexual Assault**

Another form of intimate violence, sexual assault, can be defined as any unwanted act of a sexual nature (i.e., kissing, fondling, oral or anal sex, intercourse or other forms of penetration) that is imposed on another person" (Ontario Women's Directorate, 1993a). Sexual assault is committed against women in all age groups, of varying physical appearance, and different cultural and socioeconomic backgrounds. A majority of women do not report sexual assaults to the police; many tell no one (Brickman & Briere, 1984; Ontario Women's Directorate, 1993b; Warshaw, 1988). Reasons for not reporting include fear of another assault, shame, concern about treatment by police and courts, and the belief that police could do nothing.

The Ontario Women's Directorate (1993a) estimates that "27 percent of women (more than one in four) are raped or sexually assaulted at some point in their lives. Of these offenses, 99 percent are committed by men" (p. 1). Community-based samples often reveal higher rates of victimization. For example, the Toronto-based "Women's Safety Project" reported that "51 percent of women have been the victim of rape or attempted rape. Forty percent of women reported at least one experience of rape. Eighty-one percent of sexual assault cases at the level of rape or attempted rape

reported by women were perpetrated by men who were known to the women"

(Canadian Panel on Violence against Women, 1993, p. 11).

A study of the prevalence of sexual victimization amongst university students in the United States found that 27.5 percent of women reported experiencing rape and 7.7 percent of men reported committing an act that met legal definition of rape or attempted rape (Koss, Gidycz, & Wisniewski, 1987). A similar prevalence rate was found with high school students: one in five students had experienced forced sex (Davis, Stormont, & Peck, 1993).

Many young women will experience sexual assault before reaching adulthood. A recent national study on the prevalence of sexual assault across Canada (Statistics Canada, 1992) found that teenagers and children (nineteen and younger) made up a larger proportion of victims than adults. Four in every ten sexual assaults were committed against teens; four in every ten were committed against children. Eighty percent of the perpetrators were known to the victim in younger age groups compared to 70 percent for adults. Sexual assault also occurs to men, approximately one in every five to seven and largely under the age of 13. Approximately 95 percent of the perpetrators of sexual assault against boys are also men (Ontario Women's Directorate, 1993a).

### **Sexual Harassment**

Finally, an overwhelming number of women will experience sexual harassment at the hands of men in a workplace or academic setting. Sexual harassment is considered discriminatory behaviour which is prohibited by the Human Rights Act of

1976-77. The Equal Employment Opportunities Commission defines sexual harassment as

unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature... when 1) submission to such conduct is made either explicitly or implicitly a term or condition of an individual's employment, 2) submission to or rejection of such conduct by an individual is used as a basis for employment decisions affecting such individual, or 3) such conduct has the purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with an individual's work performance or creating an intimidating, hostile, or offensive working environment. (Charney & Russell, 1994, p. 11)

Dara Charney and Ruth Russell (1994) in a review of the sexual harassment literature found that 42 percent of women and 15 percent of men experience sexual harassment in occupational settings, 73 percent of women and 22 percent of men during medical training, and 20 to 30 percent of female students experience sexual harassment while attending university. The majority of harassers are men, and perpetrators may be peers and co-workers or persons in a position of authority over the victim.

Sexual harassment can result in job loss, decreased morale and absenteeism, decreased job satisfaction, damage to interpersonal relationships at work, and can also negatively impact on women's psychological and physical health. Beliefs and attitudes that support sexual harassment are similar to those surrounding other forms of sexual victimization: it is men's prerogative to initiate sexual contact in any situation, or women provoke harassment (Fitzgerald, 1993). Harassment of women in the work place, especially those which are traditionally male-dominated, can be seen as "an expression of contempt and hostility for any woman who ventures beyond the socially prescribed confines of the private feminine sphere of the home into the public and

masculine arena" (Fitzgerald, 1993, p. 1072). Fitzgerald (1993) asserts that "harassment grows out of women's inferior status in the world of work; [and] it can be eliminated by improving that status" (p. 1075).

A study which investigated instances of sexual harassment experienced by high school students found that "although most respondents did not think that sexual harassment by teachers was frequent or serious in their high school, half cited examples of such incidents involving other students. Approximately six percent of the respondents reported having personally experienced sexually inappropriate attention from high school teachers" (Corbett, Gentry, & Pearson, 1993, p. 93). Although there were some reports of harassment involving a female teacher and male student and of same-sex harassment, most incidents involved a female victim and male perpetrator (Corbett et al., 1993).

### **The Consequences of Male Violence Against Women**

There are vast differences in how individual women will respond to being a victim of male violence: "there is no one appropriate or typical reaction" (Thorne-Finch, 1992, p. 31). Researchers have identified many emotional and physical responses suffered by victims: anger, depression, disinterest or fear of emotional or sexual contact, increased fear and anxiety, memory loss or disassociative experiences, diminished self-esteem and increased self-blame, suicidal or homicidal thoughts or actions, damaged or destroyed trust, increased drug or alcohol use, eating disorders, gastro-intestinal irritability, physical trauma, unwanted pregnancies, sexually transmitted disease, muscle tension, and sleep disorders (Thorne-Finch, 1992; Wyatt,



Newcomb, & Riederle, 1993). Although not all victims of violence will suffer every negative effect listed above, the physical, psychological and emotional trauma experienced by abused women is alarming<sup>1</sup>.

One Quebec study (Chenard, Cadrin, & Loiselle, 1990; cited in Canadian Panel on Violence against Women, 1993) found that "women from violent relationships were five times more likely to exhibit psychological problems than women from the control group" (p. 13). Other studies reported that "20 percent of women admitted for emergency surgery are victims of violence" (Dupuis, 1985); one in four suicide attempts are by battered women; 40 percent more battered women use drugs to sleep compared to other women; 74 percent more use drugs to relieve anxiety (Groeneveld & Shain, 1989; both cited in Canadian Panel on Violence against Women, 1993). Unfortunately, changes in beliefs and attitudes which support and perpetuate violence against women lag well behind general knowledge of its presence and consequences.

### **Etiology of Male Violence against Women**

#### **Gender Inequality**

The treatment of women, their labour, their reproductive capacity and their sexuality as commodities is certainly not just a product of modern industrial and capitalist society; it has been that way since long before the creation of Western civilization. Over time, women became a resource and a form of property acquired and controlled by men. Today, the modern state and its supporting bureaucracy have broadened the locus of power from the patriarch in the family to a patriarchal state that reflects and sustains gender inequality. (Canadian Panel on Violence against Women, 1993, p. 16)

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<sup>1</sup> Some of the physical effects related to physical and sexual abuse (e.g., physical trauma, unwanted pregnancies) will not be experienced by victims of emotional abuse.

The historical overview of domestic violence as summarized earlier illuminates how patriarchal structures in our society make violence available and legitimate to men. Patriarchal family structures give men both the right and obligation to govern their wives behaviour. Feminist analyses of rape also point to gender inequality in our society as an etiological and supporting factor for this form of violence. Jane Caputi (1993) states that "rape is a direct expression of sexual politics, a ritual enactment of male domination, a form of terror that functions to maintain the status quo" (p. 7).

Michael Kaufman (1987), another theorist regarding men's violence, explains how the family serves as a societal agent for teaching and perpetuating gender inequality: "Years before the child can put words to it, she or he begins to understand that the mother is inferior to the father and that woman is inferior to man" (p. 10). Kaufman describes childhood in modern societies as a prolonged period of powerlessness, where attention and nurturance are sought from one or two parents, combined with feelings of deprivation and frustration. However, an escape from powerlessness is provided for young boys. They realize or imagine that as adult men they will wield privilege and power.

Finally, cross-cultural research suggests that rape and sexual assault are not innate tendencies nor universally prevalent. In her review of 156 societies, Peggy Reeves Sanday (1981) proposes that rape "is part of a cultural configuration which includes interpersonal violence, male dominance, and sexual separation" (p. 25). In 'rape-free' societies, Sanday reported that women and their reproductive and productive roles are thought of with respect. Division of labour by sex is minimal,

and men and women have equal say in decision-making. Interpersonal violence is uncommon, and “people’s attitude regarding the natural environment is one of reverence rather than one of exploitation” (p. 16).

Sanday concludes that “in societies where males are trained to be dominant and interpersonal relations are marked by outbreaks of violence, one can predict that females may become the victims in the playing out of the male ideology of power and control” (p. 19). Societies that value violence as a way of solving problems and esteem competition, individual success, and hierarchical social organization encourage exploitive behaviour.

### **Gender-role Socialization**

Statistics which show that overwhelmingly men are the perpetrators of violence seem to demand an investigation of the idea of masculinity and the socialization practices used to teach this concept. Gender-role socialization encourages men and women to adopt different attitudes, behaviours, and positions. Women are taught to be passive and compliant. Men are taught to be aggressive and dominant, to expect control of sexual activities, and to fear being feminine and/or homosexual. In their analysis of the rewards of rape, Diana Scully and Joseph Marolla (1993) propose that the act of rape grows out of normative male behaviour:

[Rape is] the result of conformity or overconformity to the values and prerogatives that define the traditional male sex role. That is, traditional socialization encourages males to associate power, dominance, strength, virility, and superiority with masculinity, and submissiveness, passivity, weakness, and inferiority with femininity. Furthermore, males are taught to have expectations about their level of sexual needs and expectations for corresponding female accessibility that function to justify forcing sexual access. (pp. 28-9)

Kaufman (1987) proposes that the "construction of masculinity" within our society results in "surplus aggressiveness" (p. 2). He explains that masculinity is associated with forms of pleasure sought actively, and the repression of the ability to experience pleasure passively. "Masculinity is a reaction against passivity and powerlessness and, with it comes a repression of all the desires and traits that a given society defines as negatively passive" (p. 11). Kaufman suggests that "the repression of certain impulses and the denial of certain needs aggravate other impulses" (p. 4).

Kaufman (1987) does not try to argue that violence is an innate human tendency or whether men are more aggressive due to biology, but rather looks at how human societies are used to shape and control human tendencies. He points out how violence is tolerated, rewarded, and institutionalized within the foundations of modern society. War, a history of conquering aboriginal peoples, policing, exploitation of the environment, industrialization of work, racism, sexism, ageism, and heterosexism are all forms of domination and control which produce violence and, in turn, are nurtured by violence.

Kaufman (1987) believes there is a triad of men's violence: men's violence against women, men's violence against men, and violence against oneself. "The three corners of the triad reinforce one another. The first corner--violence against women--cannot be confronted successfully without simultaneously challenging the other two corners of the triad" (Kaufman, 1987, p. 2).

Another theorist regarding masculinity, Stan Taubman (1981), proposes that male socialization practices prohibit men from engaging in "any type of sensitive, non-

competitive, sharing interchanges with other people” (p. 13). He believes that as children, men experience tremendous pressure (through shaming, humiliation, threat of withdrawing love) to disassociate from what are thought of as feminine qualities (e.g., nurturance, passivity, dependency, emotionally expressive). Taubman states that this process "creates a lingering sense of shame, powerlessness, self-alienation, isolation from others, and retaliatory rage, which inhibits the adult male's capacity for intimacy and mutuality” (p. 13).

Taubman does not suggest that socialization as a male within our culture excuses men's exploitive behaviour nor cancels out the disadvantages experienced by women in our culture. However, he believes that male socialization, the culture's acceptance and exaltation of male dominance, and in some cases specific trauma creates certain attitudes and tendencies in men. Taubman believes that although individual men must be held responsible for managing these tendencies in prosocial ways, a modification of gender-specific socialization and gender-segregated roles might reduce or eliminate men's aggressive characteristics.

### **Attitudes which Support Violence against Women**

Men have perpetrated violence against women and children throughout much of history. Although intimate violence has become a “talked- about” issue, many men still believe that it is their right to dominate and abuse those who are less powerful. In their chapter, Diana Scully and Joseph Marolla (1993) attempt to discover some of the motivations and rewards that rapists gain from sexual aggression. Not surprisingly,

the data collected from interviews with 114 convicted rapists reveal themes related to power, control, male prerogative and objectification of women.

Scully and Marolla (1993) found that some men had used rape for revenge or punishment. Sometimes the rape of a woman was perpetrated as retaliation against her male partner. Some rapists reported believing in "collective liability", that is holding any woman accountable for actions of other women. In some cases the men had raped because they were angry at their partners. In other cases, because they were angry at women in general. Other rapists used violence to gain access to women who were unavailable. From the rapist's point of view rape is, in part, sexually motivated: "The attitude that sex is a male entitlement suggests that when a woman says no, rape is a suitable method of conquering the 'offending object'" (Scully & Marolla, 1993, p. 36).

Many rapists were not concerned with the potential consequences of committing a crime because they had not defined their behaviour as rape; others knew that women often do not report rape. "These men perceived rape as a rewarding, low-risk act" (p. 43). The men in this study not only felt free to act out their dominant position in violent ways but many seemed oblivious or uncaring toward their victim's terror and trauma.

Patricia Yancey Martin and Robert A. Hummer (1993) describe how male peer groups may institutionalize forms of sexual oppression. These authors explain how fraternities create an environment in which coercive sex is considered normal and where few mechanisms to inhibit this type of behaviour are present. For example, members of fraternities subscribe to "a narrow conception of masculinity that stresses

competition, athleticism, dominance, winning, conflict, wealth, material possessions, willingness to drink alcohol, and sexual prowess vis-a-vis women" (p. 117).

Fraternities often influence their members "to view the sexual coercion of women, which is a felony crime, as sport, a contest, or a game" (p. 128).

A university-based study of admitted date rapists provides support for the argument that "insensitivity to women's feelings and pro[-]rape attitudes are supported by male peer groups, which are, in effect, microcosms of the larger patriarchal social order" (Kanin, 1985). Eugene Kanin (1985) found that 93 percent of rapists believed that "their best friends would definitely approve of using coercive and forceful tactics to have intercourse with some women, whereas only 37 percent of the controls reported the same type of support" (p. 230).

Studies which have investigated acquaintance rape amongst high school students reveal that young men tend to assume that women's behaviour invites or provokes sexual activity. Terry Davis and his colleagues (1993) found that twenty-four percent of young men compared to one percent of young women thought forced sex was acceptable in 6 or more of the 11 presented situations (e.g., "she gets him sexually excited", "she gets drunk or high and passes out", "she agrees to go home with him", "they have had sex before", "she's wearing revealing/sexy clothing" (Davis, Peck, & Stormont, 1993). Michelle Blumberg and David Lester (1991) found that young men in high school agreed with rape myths, such as "only bad girls get raped" and "women secretly want to be raped", more strongly and blamed victims of rape more often than young women. Rape-supportive attitudes were stronger amongst high

school compared to university students. Blumberg and Lester suggest that maturity, experience, and broader knowledge may help to decrease adherence to rape myths (1991).

### **Education to Prevent Violence against Women**

In North American culture, educational institutions play a major part in young people's development of cognitive, physical, and social skills as well as in their socialization experiences. "Students are highly influenced and shaped by the structure of the system, by curriculum content, by attitudes and behaviours of educators, by learning methods, by peer relationships and by overall institutional environments" (Canadian Panel on Violence against Women, 1993, p. 69). Additionally, according to Lueptow (1984), school can be viewed as a major agent of socialization outside the family which may be able to exert a limiting influence on the acquisition of gender roles. The prevalence of violent experiences and attitudes that support intimate forms of violence found amongst high school students (as reviewed above) suggests that prevention programmes for adolescents are highly warranted. Teachings on the injustice of gender inequality, a raising of young men's consciousness around violence (especially intimate violence), and a challenge to our culture's definition of masculinity appear to be necessary parts of these educational programmes.

### **Adolescent Development**

Adolescence is a developmental stage that marks the transition from childhood into adulthood. During adolescence young people engage in a search for identity that involves an increased level of independence and a greater focus on intimate



relationships and peers. Unfortunately, coercive sexual experiences and other forms of violence may often accompany an exploration of dating relationships.

Gender role socialization exerts a large influence on sexual relations between adolescent men and women. Young men feel pressure to prove their masculinity by "scoring" sexually and expect to control the dating experience and sexual activity. The peer group, which is of great importance during adolescence, often lends support to coercive sexual behaviour. Sol Gordon and Jane Gilgun (1987) state that young men who are supported in misrepresenting their feelings to convince girls to have intercourse risk losing touch with their own feelings of loving and caring. Young women, on the other hand, feel pressured to have and keep a boyfriend, often by agreeing to engage in sexual activity. These cultural scripts for gender behaviour coincide to leave young women in a vulnerable position for abuse and pregnancy, and young men in a position to abuse power, feel less commitment, and feel less responsible for birth control.

Adolescents also develop new cognitive skills which affect their interactions with others. Piaget's theory of cognitive development suggests that adolescents acquire new abilities to reason in a logical manner and about abstract ideas. Therefore, adolescents are able to reflect on their own thought processes and to conceptualize the thought processes of other people. However, they often surmise that their own thoughts and others' thoughts are directed toward the same concerns (e.g., physical appearance, bodily changes). This form of egocentrism has been defined by Rolf Muuss (1982) as a "lack of differentiation between one's own point of view and

those of others" (p. 249) and typically decreases in later adolescence and adulthood. Muuss believes that to improve adolescents' perspective-taking ability, education should include "systematic learning opportunities that would require them to project themselves into the psychological situation of another human being" (p. 262). A more sociocentric orientation which includes the ability to take another's perspective, to cooperate, and to emphathize could help to counteract tendencies toward coercive and violent behaviour.

### **Past Programming on Sexual Assault**

Much of the literature on sexual assault programmes has recommended using a lecture format to convey information about the prevalence of assault, supporting myths, contributing factors (e.g., alcohol or drug use), treatment referral sources, and communication styles. Most prevention interventions have been directed at women with the aim of teaching avoidance of sexual assault, or supporting friends who have been assaulted (Briskin & Gary, 1986; Sandberg, Jackson, & Petretic-Jackson, 1987; Miller, 1988). As Judy Gould (1994) explains, this style of prevention programme focusses on changing the victim's behaviour as opposed to the potential perpetrator's.

Informational programmes which have included male participants have had mixed results (Gould, 1994). For example, a study with high school students (Feltey, Ainslie, & Geib, 1991) used a date rape prevention lecture to illustrate gender role socialization and how it relates to dating and sexual behaviour. Causes of date rape were presented as a) lack of communication, b) lack of respect for females, c) male peer pressure to be sexually active, d) male aggression compared to female

passiveness, and e) situations conducive to sexual behaviour. Kathryn Feltey and her colleagues found that, before the lecture, men were significantly more likely than women to support sexually coercive behaviour. Following the lecture men reported less support for sexually coercive behaviour in most situations. However, a woman's willingness to go into unsupervised settings (e.g., man's house with parents absent) or relationships involving a high level of commitment were situations where sexual coercion was still supported by young men. The authors of this study conclude that different interpretations of sexual interest between men and women and male assumption of sexual prerogative within relationships were still underlying themes in the students' responses (Feltey et al., 1990). Lucienne A. Lee (1987) believes that "men can be presented with the shocking statistics on rape, but until they recognize the responsibility of men for rape and until they can empathize with some of the fear, pain, and anger resulting from a rape, rape prevention efforts will have limited success" (p. 100).

In her presentation of a stakeholder approach to sexual assault programming, Judy Gould (1994) questioned whether the limited involvement students experience in a lecture format is the most effective approach to learning. Drawing from Paulo Friere's writings on critical pedagogy (1970), Gould (1994) suggests that collaborative education where students are encouraged to reflect on or critically challenge information can provide a more meaningful experience.

A closely related concept, empowerment, is identified by Geoffrey Nelson (1983) as an important element for avoiding unintended negative effects of school-

based interventions. An empowerment approach seeks to support and facilitate people to control their own lives and solve their own problems rather than relying on experts. In traditional education, students have very little involvement in the process or content of their learning. Interventionists within the school system need to empower participants if they hope to develop abilities for solving future problems. The concepts and ideas emphasized by researchers in prevention of violence against women and primary prevention in general, suggest that the encouragement of empathic understanding, collaborative/active learning, and processes which facilitate empowerment are important elements to consider within school-based interventions.

### **Drama in Education**

Many educators assert that drama provides a method for learning that is both active and encourages self growth and empathic understanding of differing viewpoints. For example, Richard Courtney (1989) has suggested that direct participation in drama may serve to counteract the "increasing mechanism of our pseudo-scientific society" (p. 17). He argues that modern technological society does not focus on "essential human qualities", such as empathy and perspective taking, and, therefore, people are becoming "dissociated from their humanness" (p. 17). Courtney (1989) believes that the ability to take another's perspective destroys stereotypes, counteracts dissociation, and enables individuals to work together with trust. Similarly, George C. Mager who uses dramatic improvisation in his work with high school teachers and students believes that "drama has enormous potential for freeing people to develop capacities

they might not have known they had and teaching them to relate honestly and intimately to other people" (Gray & Mager, 1973, p. 2).

The use of drama and theatre in education (TIE) has also been used as an effective method for tackling social issues. TIE "refers to the presentation of plays in schools or theatres by a trained team of actor-teachers who prepare ways to relate the experience of theatre to the regular classroom curriculum and to the lives of the students" (Landy, 1982, p. 7). TIE practitioners value experiential learning and perceive education as a two-way process in which a student's involvement is as important as the teacher's (Schweitzer, 1980). Theatre in Education often tackles complex moral, social, and political issues (e.g., sex stereotyping, racism, and violence) which teachers would find difficult to raise with their students either due to lack of research time or confidence (Landy, 1982).

### **Drama-Based Peer Education**

STARR (Students Talking About Responsible Relationships) is an adolescent sex education troupe sponsored by the Department of Health in Toronto. Founded in 1982, STARR has been well received in the community and within high schools. Performances have been given in grades seven and eight and grades ten through thirteen. Deborah Foster (1987) explains that the idea for STARR grew out of the realization that traditional education regarding sexuality has minimal impact on rates of adolescent pregnancy and other sexual problems. Furthermore, adolescents list their peers rather than school-based education as their primary source of sex-related information.

Foster (1987) states that very little research on the effectiveness of peer sex education troupe's effectiveness has been undertaken, although "there are indications that drama, especially when performed by peers is an effective teaching medium that seems to have an impact on adolescent behaviour" (p. 77). Foster (1987) claims that live performances offer advantages over a video or lecture: a) the immediacy of theatre encourages students to become actively involved and to ask questions, b) a real-life portrayal is easier to relate to than a textbook example, and c) interactive theatre allows for questions not answered in texts (e.g., What does it feel like to be gay? How do you disclose sexual abuse to your family?).

### **Summary of Literature**

In light of the research which documents the widespread prevalence and damaging consequences of violence against women, a focus on primary prevention appears critical. Furthermore, because men are overwhelmingly the perpetrators of intimate violence, prevention endeavours need to engage young men in an exploration of gender inequality, gender-role socialization, and attitudes which support intimate violence.

Adolescents comprise an important audience for prevention interventions for a number of reasons. For example, adolescents are in a developmental stage of increasing independence and awakening sexuality which brings a greater focus on intimate relationships. Gender roles which encourage young men to be aggressive and young women passive support the potential for intimate violence. Research shows that

the experience of sexual violence and attitudes which support this type of violence are prevalent within high school populations.

Educational efforts to prevent sexual assault which have included young men have had mixed results. Prevention educators suggest that active, collaborative learning which encourages critical reflection on the status quo and empathic understanding of others might be effective. Additionally, an empowerment approach that supports people as experts in solving their own problems may help to avoid unintended negative effects in school-based interventions.

Educational drama provides an active medium which involves emotional as well as cognitive and physical learning. Additionally, participating in drama activities may facilitate empathic learning, and understanding of others' perspectives, self development, and empowerment. A drama approach may be especially effective in working with young men in the prevention of violence against women. The development of empathic and caring responses to women's trauma may help to counteract the socialization young men have received and may provide a way to avoid defensive reactions due to feeling blamed.

Because of an increased focus on peer groups during adolescence, peer-based drama education may provide an effective means of promoting change in adolescent beliefs and attitudes. Investigation of prevention interventions that use a peer-based drama approach for raising young people's consciousness around gender inequality and violence and for challenging their understanding of gender roles seems highly warranted.

## **Overview of Thesis Research**

The launching of a primary prevention project in Waterloo Region when I was planning my thesis research provided me with the unique opportunity to observe and participate in an exciting new initiative: a drama-based project for high school students used to facilitate an exploration of violence in relationships. As a member of the project's evaluation team I was able to integrate my research with various parts of the project's activities. To provide parameters for my research and to allow a deeper exploration of my personal point of interest and concern, I decided to focus my research efforts on the young men who participated as actors and crew at two different high schools. Although I hoped that young men who were involved in other areas of the project (i.e., workshops and performance audiences) would be favourably impacted by the drama intervention, it was the more intensive experience of the drama troupe that intrigued me.

The opportunity to base my thesis research on a primary prevention intervention was both exciting and challenging. I struggled to incorporate my thesis activities within the project with a minimum of disruption to the student participants and to the other project team members. Additionally, I found it difficult to maintain a focus on my research topic (i.e., young men's experiences) as a separate entity from the larger project. My thoughts and reflections about day to day activities with the project naturally included more general ideas and often focused on the troupe as a whole. Finally, my undergraduate training in experimental research, my lack of prior experience with drama, and with adolescents in a high school setting hampered my



ability to anticipate and to react quickly to unexpected developments both within the project and my specific research.

I originally planned to use my participation at the first school as a way to gain experience with drama, adolescents, and community-based interventions. I thought I would then focus my research efforts on the second school in which we worked. However, during negotiations with the second setting I was informed that very few young men were enrolled in the drama class in which we were to work. Therefore, I returned to the first setting to supplement the data collected from the young men during evaluation activities. I also spoke to several teachers and staff members about their perspectives on the first project. During the second intervention, I collected parallel information from young men and teachers who participated. The inclusion of the first two drama interventions in my thesis provided me with a rich data base and allowed me to compare and contrast between the two settings.

I believe that along with a new respect for community-based work, I was able to glean information which sheds light on the impact of this type of drama intervention with young men. The findings of my research efforts provide at least partial answers to most of my original thesis questions: What are young men's reactions to this type of educational experience? Will drama provide a way for young men to explore issues of violence without raising their defensiveness? Is this approach effective for educating young men about violence against women? Will young men's beliefs and thoughts about violence against women shift, based on their experience? Will

participation in this type of drama experience lead to changed gender relations between young men and their female peers?

## **CHAPTER 2: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

### **Research Approach**

My research strategy was based on a naturalistic inquiry approach. Naturalistic inquiry is research carried out in real-world settings. The researcher as the primary data-gathering instrument depends on the use of tacit knowledge (i.e., intuition, felt knowledge) and qualitative research methods, because they are more adaptable to dealing with multiple realities (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Furthermore, qualitative methods allow a researcher to study and describe selected foci in depth and detail. "Approaching fieldwork without being constrained by predetermined categories of analysis contributes to the depth, openness, and detail of qualitative inquiry" (Patton, 1990, p. 13). Finally, a naturalistic, qualitative design is emergent, allowing for continuous and unexpected changes within the environment.

### **Research Techniques**

To increase the quality of my research endeavour, I used a combination of three techniques during my data collection: participant observation, qualitative interviews, and review of documents.

#### **Participant Observation**

I was present as participant observer during both drama projects described in this thesis. Throughout my participant observation I wrote field and reflection notes which described not only day to day activities but also my personal thoughts and reactions. Keeping reflection notes is a method of accounting for the researcher's perspective in research.

Sandra Kirby and Kate McKenna (1989) explain that "through participation the researcher appropriates new information and new meaning. Even though perfect understanding is impossible, a measure of assurance about understanding can be gained from 'standing in the shoes of another' and /or immersion in the setting of another. The sense of belonging, however temporary, gives the researcher some claim to status as an insider... with a brief measure of insider's knowledge" (Kirby & McKenna, 1989, p. 78).

### **Interviews**

In addition to my participant observation, I conducted a combination of individual and group interviews with young men and teachers who participated in each project. In the first school, I obtained permission to use information from individual evaluation interviews with the young men. Questions about, "Why they first became involved with the drama project?", "What they liked and disliked about the project?", and "What was difficult about the character or role they played in the troupe?" had been suggested by the students as part of the general evaluation of the project. When I reviewed these interviews I found the young men had made some interesting comments regarding the project. However, I felt concerned because reflections about the impact of the project (e.g., changes in attitudes/behaviour) and why it had an impact were limited. Therefore, I decided to conduct a second interview with the young men.

Discussions with my thesis advisor and committee members alerted me to the possibility that adolescents, and especially young men, might not engage in a lot of

self-reflection and might find it difficult to articulate such thoughts at length. We also contemplated that an evaluation interview between an adolescent man and an older woman might have been intimidating to the young men and might have limited their tendency to talk freely. Therefore, I chose to use a group format for the second interview to encourage discussion amongst the young men. I also invited the male drama facilitator from the project team and my contact person<sup>2</sup> from the first setting in an attempt to increase both the young men's and my comfort level.

My contact person at the first setting booked a room for the group interview and made arrangements so that the young men who wished to participate could be absent during regular class time. The interview was attended by five young men (one actor was absent), the project's male drama co-facilitator, my contact person, and me and lasted approximately three and one half hours.

In the second setting I held group and individual interviews with the three young men involved. I explained the thesis briefly to the class and separately invited each young man to participate in a group interview. The drama teacher at the second setting found an available meeting space and gave permission to the young men to leave during regular class time. This interview was held shortly after performances were completed at the second school. Unfortunately, time was somewhat limited

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<sup>2</sup> My contact person in the first setting was a male teacher who is also Head of the Performing Arts Department (i.e., dance, drama, music). He knew the majority of students in the drama troupe and had developed prior relationships based on teaching them within courses or working with them on other dramatic productions. The project team, myself included, observed that this teacher had good rapport with the students that seemed to be based on a high level of trust and mutual respect.

during this interview (approximately 45 minutes). Additionally, one of the young men had to leave the interview early, and another spoke very little. Therefore, I invited the young men to participate in individual interviews. These were booked during lunch and after school hours and took approximately one hour each. The interview questions I asked the young men during both interviews focused on their general experiences with the project, changes in attitudes and behaviour, and parts of the project that facilitated change. (See Appendix A for interview schedule.)

I also collected information from several teachers and/or staff members involved in the project at each school. Two men and two women volunteered to participate in interviews at each setting. Unfortunately, due to equipment failure, one male teacher's interview from the second setting was lost. Teacher interviews lasted approximately 60 to 90 minutes and were held at a time and location that was convenient for the interviewer. Interview questions focused not only on teachers' experiences with the project but also on attitudes toward violence and gender relations (pertaining to students and teachers) at their school setting. (See Appendix B for interview schedule.)

During all interviews, I used semi-structured interview schedules consisting of open-ended questions to provide some consistency across participant responses. During the actual interviews, I probed for further information that seemed pertinent to the participants' experiences. All of the interviews were audiotaped and transcribed verbatim in preparation for analysis.

### **Analysis of Interviews**

Although my earlier review of literature on violence against women most likely shaped my understanding and interpretation of my interview findings, I attempted to engage in as pure a form of inductive analysis as possible. Therefore, I did not review the interview transcriptions looking for examples and illustrations of preformed categories or issues. As described by Glaser and Straus (1967), "inductive analysis begins with specific observations and builds toward general patterns" (cited in Patton, 1990, p. 44-45). Inductive analysis allows the important dimensions to emerge from patterns within the data rather than deciding in advance what the important dimensions will be.

To begin my analysis, I read through and coded all interviews from each school (nine individual and two group interviews with young men; seven interviews with teachers). The preliminary coding consisted of short phrases in my words (notated in the transcript margins) which described specific properties or issues mentioned within the interviews. I grouped codes which appeared linked into subcategories and then into larger categories which were generally based on my interview questions (e.g., Things they liked/disliked about the play/project, What it was like to play an abusive character).

To compare themes between the young men's individual and group interviews, I made separate listings of my initial codes. At the first school, the information collected during individual interviews was mostly factual and did not include more involved personal reflections or detailed descriptions. During the group interview

similar topics were mentioned, but they were expanded upon and described more fully. Additionally, comments about the school milieu that were not mentioned during individual interviews spontaneously arose in the group context. At the second school, the types of information shared during group and individual interviews were very similar; however, two of the three young men seemed reluctant to talk at length in the group setting. Because of the similarity of content between the group and individual interviews, I decided to integrate the findings when presenting my results.

I also compared the themes found in the young men's and the teachers' interviews from each school to check for similarities and differences across the two settings. I found that very similar themes had arisen within each data set. Therefore, I used identical larger categories to organize the quotes at each school with some variation in subcategories.

During the next stage of analysis, I worked with actual quotes which were pulled from the young men's and teachers' interviews at each school. I used a computer-based word processor to cut and paste quotes into groups which corresponded to the subcategories and larger categories which had arisen during my initial coding. I then reviewed the quotes to see how well the category names captured their content and shifted quotes to different categories where necessary. I proceeded to write my interview results section by composing short descriptions for each category and subcategory and writing introductory statements for each quote within the categories. I edited quotes to remove repetition (missing dialogue is



indicated by a sequence of periods) and omitted those which were redundant or difficult to understand .

The presentation and interpretation of my research findings have undoubtedly been shaped by interaction with my colleagues on the project team and the members of our advisory committee as we shared our frustrations and successes on a regular basis. I believe that this interaction enriched and deepened my understanding of what my thesis data had to say, and I am grateful to everyone who gave time and energy to the project and my thesis.

### **Documents**

The description of the origin of the drama projects is based on my own involvement with the community-based committee which completed a proposal for government funding in December 1993. I also referred to the proposal document itself and used my personal knowledge (supported by minutes taken at meetings) accumulated through my ongoing work with the project and its advisory committee.

### **Informed Consent**

At each setting, I informed all troupe members of their rights as research participants (i.e., voluntary participation, right to withdraw, right to omit questions, right to anonymity/confidentiality, feedback). The evaluation interviews (approximately 20 minutes in length) were a voluntary part of the drama projects and did not affect students' opportunity to participate or their marks. I distributed information letters and consent forms to each member of the drama troupes and to their parents/guardians (unless the student was over eighteen years of age).

At the first setting, I explained my thesis project at the final wrap-up discussion and obtained separate consent from the young men to use their evaluation interviews as part of my data. I also obtained consent to contact them again to invite them to participate in a group interview. At the second setting, I included information regarding my thesis in the evaluation letter and consent form used for the project. Therefore, separate forms were not needed. (See Appendix C for information letters and consent forms.)

I gave teachers who participated in interviews at each setting an information letter and consent form that described the project and explained participant rights. These forms explained that information might be used in theses or course work. I told all participants that I would make quotes that I wished to use from their interviews available to them for editing and comment before it became public.

### **Feedback Procedures**

Feedback to research participants can play a part in establishing egalitarian relationships as well as provide for validation of information collected and an opportunity for offering additional information (Reinharz, 1992). Therefore, I made drafts of my interview results sections (including my introductory comments and participants' quotes) available to participants at each setting. I asked them to validate whether the quotes and descriptions captured their experiences within the project. I also invited each participant to edit his or her own quotes and to make comments on my organization of the quotes and my introductory statements. I then incorporated their suggestions or changes in my final document. I also sent each participant a

summary document based on my research at both schools. A summary was also given to the administration at each school and to contact persons at the school boards.

### **Case Study Reporting**

The results of my research are presented in the following sections. Following a brief history of the projects, I have constructed a case study based on information collected at each setting. Each case study includes a narrative description of day-to-day activities within the project based on my participant observations and reflections. I have also presented findings from individual and group interviews with young men who were involved in the drama troupes. Additionally, I have included perceptions of the project and the young men's experiences from teachers and/or staff in each setting. I also incorporated contextual information provided by the young men and teachers, which helps to give a picture of the circumstances surrounding each intervention.

### **CHAPTER 3: CASE STUDIES OF THE DRAMA PROJECTS**

#### **History**

The idea for a community-based project to prevent violence against women in Kitchener-Waterloo and surrounding regions was conceived in 1993-94. The terms of reference for this project's funding, issued by The Ministry of Education and Training, requested collaboration between educational institutions and community-based agencies, the inclusion of documentation/evaluation components and administration/research consultation from an academic setting. A previously established inter-agency committee in Kitchener-Waterloo (i.e., Community Education Committee for the Prevention of Violence against Women - CECPVW) was joined by students, faculty, and staff from Wilfrid Laurier University and staff from the University of Waterloo, to develop a proposal describing a drama-based intervention and concurrent evaluation plan (submitted in December, 1993). Dr. Richard Walsh-Bowers, Psychology Department, Wilfrid Laurier University, agreed to serve as the project's supervisor and evaluation-consultant. When funding was received in March of 1994, CECPVW formed a subcommittee to hire the personnel necessary for the project (i.e., Darlene Spencer, Holt Sivak, Judy Gould, and me). Additionally, an advisory committee (i.e., Wellness and Drama Initiatives Advisory Committee - WADIAC) made up of representatives from local institutions and agencies was formed to oversee the project.

The goal of this education and intervention programme was to help young people change their attitudes and at-risk behaviours regarding violence in relationships.

The project was intended to provide education on the issues surrounding violence against women with a focus on changing the value base which has allowed and promoted this violence in the past. The overall programme focused on two overlapping groups and issues: (1) primary prevention of violence against women with high school students, and (2) preventive programming with adolescent women who are outside the mainstream school system and deemed at risk of violence. The project included an ongoing evaluative component which documented and assessed the effectiveness of the interventions with various groups of people.

The programming within the high schools consisted of drama-based activities coordinated by Darlene Spencer, a Visiting Artist with the drama department at the University of Waterloo. Holt Sivak, a master's student in the Community Psychology programme at Wilfrid Laurier, served as both a co-facilitator for the drama programming and a field assistant for the evaluative component of the project. Judy Gold (a doctoral student and the project's evaluation coordinator) and I (a master's student in Community Psychology at Wilfrid Laurier and the project's evaluation assistant) were the other members of the evaluation team. The evaluation and drama personnel worked collaboratively in the schools, under the supervision of Dr. Walsh-Bowers.

During the summer of 1994, Darlene and Holt made preliminary contacts with administrative personnel and teachers at high schools in both the public and separate school systems. During fall term of 1994, the first project was initiated at a high school within the Separate School Board. In the following school term (i.e., Winter

1995) a second project was implemented at a high school within the Public School Board. The first two high schools were located in the city of Kitchener. Since then drama interventions have been launched at a rural high school within the Waterloo Region and an elementary school in the city of Cambridge. The final drama project within the prevention initiative is currently being planned for Fall, 1996 and will most likely be based at a high school in the city of Waterloo. If funding is continued into 1997, the project team will shift their focus to testing a manual and supporting training sessions so that similar drama projects can be implemented by elementary and high school teachers as part of their curriculum and by workers within the community who are interested in the use of drama to prevent violence against women.

### **The First Drama Project**

#### **Description of the Setting**

The first drama project took place at a Catholic high school located in downtown Kitchener. The school campus covers most of a city block and is contained in three different buildings. The 1380 students who attend this school are drawn from a large geographical area which includes both core areas and city suburbs (due to small number of Catholic schools in city).

The school population consists of students from varied ethnic, religious, and socioeconomic backgrounds. My contact person in this setting estimated that his school had one of the largest percentages (in Kitchener- Waterloo) of students from families who had recently immigrated and who spoke English as their second

language. Although the students who attend this school practice a variety of different faiths, the school is predominantly Catholic in its focus and its philosophy

Historically this high school was attended by young women only. It became co-ed in 1990 when it was joined with a nearby school for young men. Our contact person who had taught at the school for fourteen years witnessed the transformation from a gender-segregated to co-ed school. He recounted that many of the original staff from the women's school had remained and were joined by several teachers from the young men's school. This transition naturally brought some upheaval with it. My contact person surmised that some of the initial attitudes and reactions to the drama intervention could have been related to this part of the school's history.

### **Description of Project Activities and My Reflections**

The following description of the various parts of the project is based on the field notes and journal that I kept of my visits to the project in the first setting. I have interspersed personal reflections (in italics) from my journal throughout this section. My intention is to give the reader an insider's perspective of the day-to-day activities experienced by the students (especially the young men) and the context within which the project took place. I have used pseudonyms for participants to protect individual's anonymity while maintaining some continuity to information which is specific to key participants (i.e., Brad, Andy, Sean, Doug, Gord, Dick, Nadia, and Ruth).

### **Entry**

My contact person at the first school became aware of the project through a newspaper announcement. He was interested in the project because he believed it fit

well with the philosophy followed by his drama department. For example, over the last five years grade 10 drama students had created dramatic experiences (e.g., monologues, interviews, scenes) based on social issues which were presented collectively at the end of the year. Violence and abuse were frequent topics. Additionally, he saw the project as a way to offer students a drama experience which required little time commitment by an already overloaded staff.

The project was implemented at the first high school using a co-curricular model (i.e., majority of activities held outside class time). To create interest in the drama project, team members attended a fair organized by the school in September to inform students of various co-curricular activities. We were pleased with the response from a variety of students.

### **Auditions**

Darlene and Holt (i.e., the drama facilitators) held school-wide auditions for drama troupe positions during October 1994. I participated in an audition on October 3rd where I joined students in several warm-up exercises and observed them engaging in improvisational drama activities. During warm-up, the facilitators asked us to develop fictional characters including their voice, posture, and name. Holt and Darlene then asked students to portray their character on stage and to improvise situations where they interacted with other students in character and/or switched from character to character on demand.

*The students seemed to have lots of excitement and energy for the project. Because of my lack of experience with drama, I felt quite intimidated by some of the*



*improvisational activities. I was impressed by the students' willingness to take risks and by their spontaneous creativity.*

From auditions the drama facilitators selected fifteen troupe members to form the drama troupe. The group consisted of nine young women and six young men. Six students volunteered for acting roles (three women and three men). The other troupe members took on roles as stage managers, assistant facilitators, videographers, promotional aide, and so forth. Darlene and Holt chose students based on their acting ability and their willingness to interact with others during drama exercises. Additionally, the facilitators chose students who were from different grade levels, different groups of friends, and who presented different views on violence and other topics. The students in the troupe ranged in age from 14 to 18 years of age, and were enrolled in grades 9 to 13.

### **Preparation for Workshops**

After the auditions, the troupe began to meet Monday and Wednesday afternoons from three to six. The first several meetings were focused on getting to know each other and preparing for upcoming workshops with various classes within the school. I attended a meeting on October 17, 1994. After playing various drama games, which served as warm-up and preview for upcoming workshops, the project team and troupe talked about the definition of violence and types of violence that were apparent at the school.

*In general, the students were very open-minded and articulate. The young women were better able to verbalize supportive attitudes for date rape victims during*

*a debating exercise. However, all troupe members seemed to be aware of rape myths and to disagree with them. I wondered if their behaviours were congruent with these attitudes. One of the young men, Andy, seems to be supportive of violence. I thought that watching him for changes, if any, would be very interesting.*

### **Workshops**

The project entered its next phase which involved the facilitators and troupe members visiting classes to hold workshops. The workshops consisted of drama exercises, intended to encourage interaction amongst the students, and discussions on violence within relationships (e.g., date rape, domestic violence, sexual abuse). The thoughts and ideas expressed by students during workshops were later used by the troupe to inform the content and focus of their script. Workshops were held in eight to ten different classes. Approximately 350 students participated in workshops.

I participated in a workshop in a "Society, Challenge, and Change" class on October 24, 1994. The students joined in the drama exercises fairly easily with lots of laughter and applause for volunteers who were especially energetic in their portrayal of opera singers. During the discussion the majority of students spoke little. However, there were approximately one quarter of the students who were very vocal and articulate.

The discussion touched on power in the home, physical and emotional violence, and date rape. Students talked about the cliques at the school and how people would be hassled if they acted differently than what was expected or popular. A conversation about date rape started with several young women making comments which were

supportive of victims. One young man said that he felt that rape should not happen, but that sometimes guys were falsely accused. This comment sparked agreement from other young men and some women. One young woman said she felt guys were in a difficult position wondering whether girls mean "yes" when they say "yes".

*I marked how the conversation shifted after the first young man's comment on false accusations. It seemed that the victim was somehow forgotten or brushed aside and that both the young men and women focused on the difficult situation that young men now face regarding sexual interaction. I couldn't help feeling disappointed.*

At the troupe meeting later that afternoon, the students discussed the various ideas that had come out of the workshops. They were quite shocked by some of their school-mates' comments. For example, members remarked on one young woman who said that physical abuse stops hurting after a while. Other students talked about a young man who said if he respected a girl he would wait to have sex, but that if she was a tramp and said "no", he would probably go ahead. Andy thought this same workshop participant had said that if the girl said "no", he would get rid of her. Finally, some troupe members talked about going to a class with a high proportion of Italian-Canadian and Portuguese-Canadian men who believed they should have more power than women and expected girlfriends to understand that. The drama facilitator instructed the troupe to write character sketches and plot-lines based on the ideas that had been raised during workshop discussions.

*I was impressed with the impact that hearing other students' stories had on the troupe members. I found it very interesting that Andy's interpretation of the young*

*man's comments in the workshop had differed quite drastically from the young women in the drama troupe who had also been present.*

One week later the troupe returned to talk about possible script sequences and character sketches. Andy had prepared two different sketches of a character based on the young man who had talked about girls saying "no" to sex. One sketch described an exaggerated stereotype of a "psychopathic pervert" who had an extensive pornography collection and who would rape for his own sexual pleasure. The second sketch described a "nice guy" who had some of the same characteristics as the first. For example, he had a few Playboys lying around. This guy was irritated when girls sexually teased him and turned him down, and when this happened he told the girl to get lost. These two characters sparked some interesting discussion amongst the troupe members.

*Andy seemed to believe that we "politically correct" types (i.e., people who believe in prevention of violence against women) come down too hard on everyday guys. He seems to feel that we assume the average guy is a rapist, psycho, jerk, when actually he's a nice guy: a little rough around the edges, but he wouldn't rape anyone. I wondered whether Andy discounted the whole idea of violence and rape. Maybe he doesn't understand the terror because he hasn't experienced it. He told us he gets a rush from watching violence; he doesn't feel terrified. The comments of the young women in the group seemed to indicate that they understand feeling controlled, coerced, frightened, and threatened.*

### **Script-Writing and Rehearsals**

The next phase of the project was taken up with decisions regarding plot-lines, script-writing, and rehearsals. The drama troupe members decided on four plot-lines to portray different types of violence: a controlling boyfriend who eventually stalks his girlfriend, a husband who verbally abuses his wife, a mother who physically abuses her son, and a young man who forces sex on a woman friend. The troupe members felt it was important to break stereotypes (e.g., women do not commit violence) and to show how the cycle of violence perpetuates abuse (i.e., people who experience or witness violence in their homes often become violent themselves).

All of the young men who had acting roles were playing abusive characters. Andy was the date rapist. Brad was playing the controlling, manipulative boyfriend. Sean played both an abusive husband and a son who was beaten by his mother. The other three men in the drama troupe took crew roles (i.e., stage manager - Doug, two videographers - Gord and Dick).

During rehearsals, the date rape scene was challenging for Andy and the young woman he played opposite. They understandably felt awkward with the physical intimacy in the scene (i.e., kissing, lying on the floor together). Darlene and Holt worked closely with the actors in the date rape plot-line. At one point the facilitators modeled a date rape which involved a fair amount of force and physical intimacy. This seemed to help free up the students, so they could go ahead with a similar version of the scene, but something they felt comfortable with.

Initially, Andy expressed concerns around portraying the date rapist as a "bad guy". He wanted to focus on the young man's confusion and the ambiguity of the situation. However, over the rehearsal period Andy's position seemed to shift. He later identified an information talk on facts related to violence against women<sup>3</sup> as a turning point. During a question period following a practice rehearsal for school administration and members of the project's advisory committee, Andy shared that he first got involved in the project because he needed an Arts credit. However, he now realized that the issue of violence against women was important and much larger than he imagined.

*During the rehearsal phase, I sat in on a run-through of the date rape plot-line. Darlene checked with Andy several times to see if he was satisfied with how the date rapist was portrayed (i.e., did he want to show more confusion). I noted that Andy had changed his stance on the date rapist. At the time I wondered whether he felt pressured to give in to please the facilitators. I was gratified to hear at the rehearsal that Andy had, in fact, started to feel differently about the issue of violence against women.*

### **Performances**

Performances were held for the general student body at the first setting and were taken to three other high schools within the Separate School Board from

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<sup>3</sup> A woman from the K-W Sexual Assault Support Centre was invited to visit the project to inform the students of the statistics on violence against women and to share a systemic analysis of the oppression experienced by women and other minority groups.

December 6 to 14, 1994. The final performance was also presented at a local Peer Mediation Conference during that time. Approximately, 1050 students in total attended performances. I was present for performances at the Peer Mediation conference on December 7. The shows were well accepted, and during the question and answer periods following the performances we received positive feedback from the audience regarding the realism of the language, topics, and acting. The audience was made up of a mixture of students and teachers who were involved in peer mediation at various high schools throughout the region.

*I was very impressed with the drama troupe members. They did a great job during the performance and seemed genuinely proud to be part of the show. During the question and answer period after the shows the troupe members made comments that indicated they felt ownership of the project and had learned new things about violence in relationships.*

Between the two shows the project team joined the students for lunch in the cafeteria. I sat at a table with Andy and Brad, the two drama facilitators, and several other troupe members. Much of the conversation revolved around the show and other topics related to violence. Brad talked about how frustrated he felt because a group of guys were harassing his girlfriend (i.e., whistling at her, making suggestive comments). He felt they would not listen to reason and the only option left to him was to use physical force. Darlene challenged him to find another way, but he felt nothing else would work. Andy who was listening to his story commented that he would like to watch the fight.

*I found this interchange very interesting. Andy and Brad seemed to be thinking and talking about violence and its prevention a great deal because of the project. They seemed to be struggling with how to apply new awareness regarding violence to their everyday life. On an intellectual level violence wasn't okay; however, what else could you do in some situations? Brad seemed to be struggling with a need to assert himself in a protector role. Maybe he wanted to feel that he had some power over the situation. I can identify with this need, and I imagine that men feel it more strongly because of their socialization to be in charge, active, able, and protective.*

A wrap-up party/discussion was held after the performances at the host school during which the troupe members commented on their experiences with the project. The troupe said that they had enjoyed the collective drama approach and felt that different perspectives from students in workshops had improved the script. They also mentioned a feeling of ownership for the project, because their thoughts and words had been reflected in the play. The troupe also commented on the collaborative, respectful relationship between the drama co-facilitators. Additionally, troupe members thought the support they received from the facilitators and the balance between direction and freedom had helped them to feel the project was their own.

*At the wrap-up of our first project, I felt very proud and happy to have been involved with this group of people. There seemed to be lots of cohesion amongst the troupe members and between the troupe and the project team. The students were very accepting of the team members, though we were older, outsiders, and seemed to feel real ownership for the project.*



### **Interviews with Young Men in First Project**

The following section is based on comments made by the young men in the first drama troupe during individual evaluation interviews (held Dec. 3 and Dec. 14, 1994) and a group interview held on March 7, 1995. The findings from the young men's interviews are presented under category headings which are based on the questions asked during the interviews: Things they liked about the project; What it was like to play an abusive character; Which parts of the project had an impact; Changes they noticed in themselves; Message of the play; Thoughts about other young men getting involved. (See Appendix A for interview schedule.) Within each category the young men's quotes are organized by subcategories which arose through inductive analysis.

#### **A. Things They Liked About the Project**

##### **i. Collective drama process.**

The young men's comments about things they liked about the project suggested that the collective drama process had provided them with a unique and positive opportunity to work with their peers and learn new things. For example, one young man appreciated that every member of the troupe had been involved in writing the script:

**The fact that everyone helped write the script was unique. I think it was good because someone might have a good idea, but it didn't matter because they were only a videographer.**

Another young man from the drama troupe mentioned the collaborative approach used by the facilitators and felt that students' wishes and ideas had been respected and listened to:

**I liked that everyone's ideas were accepted.... Some directors are like, "Well, I like this", and "This goes this way", "I don't care what you have to say". I mean, the very dictatorship kind of director.**

Finally, a young man commented on the opportunity to learn from peers rather than the traditional lecture format:

**Being involved with the [project], we had a lot of talks with everyone and you seem to get a lot more different views that everyone has other than in class sometimes. If it's a presentation... you don't hear it [peers' perspectives] because teachers, they're the presenters.**

## **ii. Realism.**

The young men liked that the play they had created was based on real-life situations:

**A lot of things, a lot of the date rape, and even watching the performance, it's very realistic. That's what I like about it.**

They also liked that the characters portrayed in the play were not stereotypical. For example, several young men stressed the importance of making the "bad guys" more human and realistic:

**He [the date rapist] was someone who looks like he could be your average Joe. And not some stereotypical big, dark, withdrawn demon. It brought the light out that it could be anyone in that role.**

**I like how we portrayed villains as humans, that we're extremely affected by other people. Like my person was affected when Andy talked to me.**

Other troupe members felt that breaking stereotypes helped to capture people's attention:

**It broke stereotypes or made people think about stereotypes. Like the rapist [not being the guy behind the bush]. And Sean's character, the kid who was beat up by his mother. That one broke stereotypes because it's usually Father beating daughter. I liked that because I've seen too many things where it's... "This is what happens. This is what you must believe."... It made people listen.**

**When they saw that things weren't the classic good guy, bad guy. When the good guy was flipped around and actually turns out to be the bad guy, a little bit, they kind of said this is interesting, and they said "Wow, that happens? Really I didn't know that."**

### **iii. Impact on others.**

The young men enjoyed being involved in a worthwhile project that impacted other people. For example, one young man felt that the play had challenged the audience to think:

**I liked the way we did it and it made people think. It wasn't handed to them on a plate. They actually had to sit there and think about what we were trying to say and interpret it for themselves.**

Others talked about the sense of accomplishment and pride they felt because the project had been well-received by their audiences and peers:

**Cause we went over it so many times we didn't know what people would think of this. We could have been totally retarded for all we know and we'd just been working on a piece of crap for the last 2 months... But when we went out and we got the reaction from the audience. They told us that it affected them, and it was realistic, and that they enjoyed watching it. Then I felt it was really worthwhile, that we got some kind of message across.**

**Actually I do think that we got through to quite a few people. Because for quite a while after they were still saying. Like three months after they were still coming up to you and saying that was a great play or something like that.**

However, the young men seemed to realize and accept that not all members of their audiences would be open to this type of play:

**It touched most civilized people. But then there were the odd people, like dinks in the back. And they were, "Hey, that was a funny line." And then they would miss the whole next part.... Maybe they just went to the play because they were forced to and got out of class.**

Finally, one young man mentioned positive feelings regarding the play's potential for helping other people:

**I guess I never really had a big concern about violence in relationships because, like, it didn't really affect me all that much. But now I know how serious a problem it is and how it's kind of a burr on society. It's not necessary and too many people are doing it or experiencing it. It's just a bad experience that I wouldn't want anyone to have, so, if this helps a few people get out of violent relationships or not be in one to begin with, then I guess I'm gratified.**

#### **iv. Relationship building.**

Comments were also made about the group dynamics and relationships that had been built through participation in the project. For example, Brad felt the project had allowed him to develop friendships with and a better understanding of people from different social groups:

**I liked the variety of students. They're not all the same grade, and pretty much none of them are in the same social group. It's given us a chance to intermingle a little and understand the other people, and we're probably all better friends now, and we probably never would have been if it hadn't been for this project.**

Brad also thought he had developed a new openness to different types of individuals:

**Like after the play was over, Sean's character seemed all the more appealing to me.... Like maybe cause he was sort of funny in a nerdy sort of way. And I realize that some of my friends and some**

**of the people who I wouldn't consider my friends are funny, but they're also sort of nerdy. And I'm not really afraid to hang around with them anymore.**

Another young man talked about how the cohesion developed in the troupe had encouraged members to share on a more personal level:

**Some of the students are afraid to say anything,... but after awhile everyone in the [project] got really together. Everyone like really got to know each other well and everyone was a lot more open, so you got to hear a lot of the stuff that was out there.**

## **B. What It Was Like to Play an Abusive Character**

The young men who portrayed abusive characters in the play made several comments about their concerns and reaction to this experience during the group interview (only two of the three were present).

### **i. Differentiating self from character.**

Both of the young men reflected on needing to differentiate between their own identity and that of their character. For example, Brad expressed concern that audience members would think he was actually like the manipulative boyfriend he was playing:

**It's been hard for me to get into character because... I'm scared that people who see the play will think that I'm like that.**

Brad was also worried that he might pick up some of his character's negative traits and consciously worked at being different in his day-to-day life:

**As an actor I'm sort of impressionable and by playing this part I may become more like the character.... [How will you prevent that?] Just knowing the difference between what is wrong with what my character's doing and what I should be doing to counteract that or why what I'm doing is better.... Like I'll try to say really nice things**

**to people now just to distance myself, just to keep myself that much farther away from my character.**

Sean, on the other hand, enjoyed playing someone whom he felt was quite different from himself:

**Yeah, cause I know I wasn't really like that, so I could play a mean person.... I just thought it was fun to bad-mouth Ruth and Brad and get away with it.**

### **C. Changes They Noticed in Themselves**

When I asked the young men to reflect on changes they noticed in themselves, they mentioned an increased awareness of violence and how it could affect others. Additionally, they talked about changes in their attitudes and behaviours.

#### **i. Raised awareness.**

Some of the young men who participated in the drama troupe mentioned an increased awareness of violence in the world and in their more personal environments. For example, Andy noted how the topic of violence within relationships now seemed more important to him:

**Before I didn't really care too much about violence in relationships... because it didn't really concern me: I wasn't a victim, or not a perpetrator.... But there are people who I guess need advice and this is an important thing that people need to hear about.**

Sean, on the other hand, felt that his awareness of violence in the world had not really changed; he felt that verbal teasing at school was different from other forms of violence:

**I think I always knew there was a lot of violence or as much as there already was.... There actually isn't that much in the hallways. Not violence as physical violence or verbal violence. People yell, call**

**each other names, but it's not really directed at them personally.  
It's not really a mean thing, it's just sort of the way people are now.**

One of the other young men, Brad, commented on how his role had given him a new understanding of a school-mate's behaviour toward him:

**There was girl who thought I was stalking her last year.... I think it was more personal to play that role [boyfriend who stalks girlfriend] because of this real life thing that had happened.... Because of [the play] I could see what this girl was feeling a year ago... she probably still is scared of me.... It gave me a lot better understanding of why she wouldn't talk to me.**

When the group talked about why Brad's character had such an impact on people, his response seemed to indicate a new awareness of how women might experience controlling behaviour:

**When I put my arm around Nadia [girlfriend in play] in the car all the girls did shudder. Maybe cause it brought up that I was directly violating her space. And it wasn't rape. It wasn't sexual assault, but it was something psychological. It was still the mental torment. And I think all the girls could experience that.**

## **ii. Changed attitude/behaviour.**

Several of the young men talked about how their attitudes and behaviour regarding violence had changed after being involved in the project. For example, one young man believed he had become more sensitized to violence at school:

**Before I think I saw it. I knew what it was, but didn't think anything about it. But now I see it, think about it, and realize that it's not something that I like.**

Additionally, comments by some of the young men indicated that they were trying to change various aspects of their behaviour because of a new understanding of violence. For example, Brad noticed that he was editing comments he felt were hurtful to others:

**Like some of the violence still is here, like the particular kind of violence that I was doing. I can see things that I'm going to say, I'll stop, and I won't say it because I think what'll this do to someone's subconscious when they figure out what I'm saying one week, two weeks down the road.... So it's helped me a lot.**

One of the other young men, Dick, was consciously trying to be less controlling in interactions with his girlfriend:

**Yeah, well I've recently just got my first girlfriend. So it's kind of weird for me, but I've noticed that sometimes I feel like I'm a little bit controlling. So I kind of say, "Whoa...". I kind of try not to do that, but sometimes I do it, force of habit.**

#### **D. Which Parts of the Project Had an Impact**

When I queried the young men about aspects of the project which had the most impact on them, they mentioned the power of hearing other students' stories about experiences with violence. They also talked about relating situations from the play to their own lives and about peer reactions toward the project.

##### **i. Hearing others' stories.**

One of the young men mentioned the specific impact that hearing other students' stories regarding violence had on his awareness:

**The stories of how students say that they were beaten as children. The scary part was they're still being beaten, and they're in like grade 9 and up.... That hit me pretty hard because I find it hard to believe that even at their age they would still be intimidated by their parents and getting beat by their parents.**

##### **ii. Related play to self.**

Brad felt that relating the play to his own life had caused him to be more cautious of his behaviour with his girlfriend:



**It's hard to explain. Like I'm not saying anything at all, and I'll feel like I'm in the same situation as [in the play]. Like I'm following her [his girlfriend] around all the time.... It scares me probably more than it does her because of what happened in the play. I saw what happened and heard the stories behind what happened, and she only saw the play.**

Sean contrasted his role in the play as a verbally abusive husband with his own attitude toward others:

**Even before the play I'd never be a mean person, I don't think. But I think that [the play] reinforced it.... The scene wasn't strong, and Darlene asked me to rewrite it. So I just had fun rewriting it by adding an insult in every second line.... It was just such a strong dose of insults.... It seems unlikely that someone could be that mean even though I'm sure there are some people who just roll all the insults off.**

### **iii. Peer reaction.**

Brad also mentioned how peer reactions toward his character had an impact on him:

**I guess having the response after every single one [performance] like people coming up and saying, "Yeah, you played a jerk, and you did it really well".... They realized that I'm not this person, but they knew that I had the capability of being this person, and with experience perhaps becoming more [like him].**

## **E. Message of the Play**

During the group interview, I asked the young men to tell me in their own words what the message of their play had been. Some of their comments touched on the premise that violence is an innate part of human nature. Others talked about wanting to show some of the consequences and factors of causation related to violence.

**i. Violence is part of human nature.**

When I asked the young men about the message of their play, some of their answers seemed to reflect a new awareness of the potential for violence in most humans:

**Violence is human and that we all have to strive to avoid violence in certain circumstances. There are circumstances that you can involve yourself where violence is totally beyond your control. But when at all avoidable you should avoid it.**

**It doesn't take some creep weirdo in some back alley.**

**What goes around, comes around is basically a pretty good message. Because everyone in the play had a little violence in them whether it be a little or a lot.**

**ii. Causes and consequences of violence.**

Another young man talked about the cycle of violence and how it touches many people:

**I didn't find there was one message.... It seems like there was a whole bunch of them.... The one that everyone had talked about before: Violence is a kind of chain of events, chain of effects. You know, it starts out here with this guy, and it's carried out through this person and this person. What did we look at the father to the son and the son to the friend.**

Another young man's comments captured the major themes behind most violence prevention work:

**Could be a large one like, "Don't be violent". "Violence is bad". "Violence affects everyone". "Violence hurts someone". Maybe something like that in general, but there were a lot of little themes too.**

## **F. Thoughts About Involving Other Young Men**

When I asked the young men if they would recommend this type of project to their male friends, they mentioned both potential benefits and doubts.

### **i. Potential benefits.**

One young man felt participants could enjoy themselves and acquire knowledge:

**Because it's not only fun, but you actually do go out with something. You do learn something in the end.**

Another troupe member felt that young men who participated in the project could learn about women's perspectives and develop relationship skills:

**I think I'd get guys to go out for it even if they weren't into acting.... You learn a lot about the way females think, what they go through. And it will help your relationship with other people too.**

Another commented on the potential for learning to interact with different types of people:

**It gives you people experience too.... You get a little bit of experience with people that you aren't used to dealing with.**

### **ii. Doubts.**

However, one of the troupe members felt that other young men would need to have a preliminary interest in the subject and be willing to commit their energy:

**If they were interested in the subject definitely. But if they're the type of person who doesn't like the commitment or doesn't like to go out of their way to do stuff like this then I wouldn't.**

## **G. Milieu/Other Issues**

During the group interview at the first setting, the young men spontaneously raised topics that were related to violence, but not directly linked to my questions.

The young men seemed to feel that the media had a large impact on perpetuating violence in our society and some of their comments seemed to reflect a belief that violence was inevitable. For example, Sean remarked that the verbal abuse he saw at school was just "the way people are now" and not really that serious. Brad stated that although violence was not "the way to be", hoping for peace in the world was unrealistic.

The young men also talked about several topics which were related to gender relations at the school and in the larger society. In reaction to my explanation for focusing on young men in my thesis research (i.e., majority of perpetrators of violence are men, men are socialized to be more violent), the topic of conversation became focused on the current inclusion of women in violent media roles (e.g., female Power Ranger). One of the young men believed that the producers of television shows had to include female characters to avoid "politically correct" criticism. This comment led to a discussion of current "feminist" influences. For example, both Brad and Gord described "feminist" discussions they had experienced in classes where they felt blamed and "picked on" for causing gender inequality. Gord explained that he believes in women's rights and feminism, but that he does not believe in male-bashing. Brad expressed frustration that his job opportunities as a white male were limited because of quotas which encourage hiring women and other minorities.

The young men also talked about the prevalence of violence at their school and in their personal lives. For example, several participants thought that the "zero tolerance" policy had moved physical fights away from the school, but had not

actually decreased the number of fights. Additionally, the drama troupe members recounted stories of aggressive interactions amongst young men which still occurred at the school. For example, Doug described being forced off the sidewalk by another male student while walking between buildings on campus. Brad mentioned that he had been challenged to fight by other young men who know he takes martial arts. Finally, most of the young men described play-fighting with friends or brothers which they stressed was different from confrontations with strangers; however, they felt this rough-housing could often become quite violent.

### **Interviews with Teachers in First Project**

In addition to interviews with the young men in the first project, I also held individual interviews with staff and teachers. The interview questions focused not only on the teachers' perceptions of the project but also on attitudes toward violence and gender relations within the school setting. (See Appendix B for interview schedule.)

#### **A. Teachers' Perceptions of the Project**

When I asked teachers and staff about their perceptions of the project and its impact, they mentioned initial concerns about the focus of the project. They also talked about the project's approach (i.e., drama and peer education), student reactions they had noticed, and doubts about the intervention's effectiveness.

##### **i. Concerns regarding male-bashing.**

Before the project was accepted at the first setting, the project team was faced with some negotiation regarding the identity of the project. The teachers and

administrators raised concerns around the potential for students and teachers to perceive the project as male-bashing, if it was overtly labelled as prevention of violence against women. Therefore, we agreed to label the project Prevention of Violence in Relationships. During interviews with teachers and staff in the first setting the concern regarding potential male-bashing was revisited. My contact person in the first setting referred to the initial decision process around the title of the project:

**Initial reaction to the project was a lot of caution on, "Is this a male- bashing kind of thing?", from some students. These are students that might be interested in getting involved, and I think it was very smart on our parts to promote it not specifically as violence against women because there's a defensiveness that happens with a lot of males.**

Another teacher felt that prevention projects which focus on teaching young men new behaviours related to violence are lacking. This teacher did not seem convinced that the current project had accomplished that:

**I think parts of your play had some male-bashing in it.... There was a study that was just released from the University of Waterloo that dealt with violence, and it said that males in our society are by and large far more likely to be victims of violence than females.... Something is going on in their socialization... that leads them to get into these predicaments, or their inability to solve conflict.... We should target males in a big way because... they're getting punched in the face in bars and hotels and kicked on the playgrounds.... If they're learning violence as a potential solution to a problem, they're going to perpetuate that into their own families, into their own lives with friends.... We really single the females out in the nineties: Stand up for yourself. Be assertive. You're not second class. You're equal... and rightfully so. But what happens to our boys?**

ii. Comments on project approach.

When I asked teachers at the first setting what strengths this type of prevention project offered for reaching young men, they talked about drama as an educational tool and peer-based education. For example, one teacher described the experiential learning and perspective-taking opportunities in drama:

**Through role play I think that students get a chance to try on someone else's shoes, so to speak, and to ponder values and attitudes and morals and all those things that are almost impossible to teach.... Traditionally, boys and young men don't get some of those experiences. I don't know whether it's what we do to them as children or what it is.**

**There's much more of a process that goes on up there where you synthesize information, and you apply it to different situations in everyday life. And I think that drama takes it to that higher plane or higher level, and you can deal with just about any attitude or any issue in the world through drama to get people to look at other sides.**

Another staff person commented on the importance of the peer group during adolescent development of an independent identity:

**The fact that you have peers teaching peers is very attractive, and I think they do a really wonderful job. I think they get sick of adults saying, "Thou shalt not" and "This is the way it is".... I think that they sense that maybe we're removed from their lives by a generation, and we're not in touch. We don't really know what the issues are, and what is really happening. They feel misunderstood. The whole teen years that they're going through, the crisis of self-identity is really real for a lot of them.**

iii. Student reactions to the project.

Several teachers in the first setting talked about the reactions of students to the project. For example, my contact person mentioned that some students who had participated in the project had talked to him about their new awareness of violence:

**It did change their outlook on the way they looked at violence and issues in everyday life... A couple of students said it really focussed them and made them aware of the subtleties that we sometimes just dismiss and the abuse that can go on emotionally or sometimes verbally.... So I think that a few people saw that we're not always talking of physical abuse or sexual abuse of a grand scale involving police... that's been an eye opening thing for them. And maybe they will speak out more frequently. And maybe they will not do some of that stuff themselves cause it's very easy to fall into.**

Another teacher was impressed by what she saw as positive changes in the young men who participated in the drama troupes:

**What I found interesting was the reaction of some of the guys that were in it saying, "I've started now to confront my dad and ask him why he treats my mom the way he does"... I knew that guy who said that as well and I thought, "Oh that's, that's really neat that he's becoming aware of that". You know, this has obviously changed him and made him look at his family in a bit of a different light.**

**And I know that one of the other fellows who was also acting in that... he had also been in one, in my ... classes the year before. And he had a very hard time talking about issues affecting gender relationships... He was very defensive and had a really hard time, and he was having a hard time with his mom. I know that 'cause she talked to me on the phone about that. I thought, "Well, he's come a long way if he's able to do this and deal with it". So I was happy to see him involved.**

Finally, one interviewee reflected on resistance by some of the young men who attended drama performances:

**Certainly there were some males within the audience that were having difficulties with what was up there. And my guess is that they felt uncomfortable because they know that that does happen in their homes or they've done it themselves and so they were acting inappropriately. But they were responding out of their own sense of unease, I think.**



**iv. Doubts regarding impact.**

Many comments by teachers and staff seemed optimistic regarding the project and its potential for impact. However, doubts regarding long-term change were also raised. For example, one teacher mentioned the difficulty of evoking long-lasting change in attitudes:

**We have to keep trying to get the message out there. But I'm not so sure that they're listening or that they even want to listen. Or if they're listening... it doesn't have any staying power.... It's heavily ingrained into their lives apparently, really unfortunately. It's a hard cycle to break.**

**B. Milieu/Context**

Teachers and staff from the first setting were also asked to comment on attitudes toward violence and gender relations at their school. Their comments regarding these issues provide some sense of the context which surrounded the project.

**i. Prevalence of violence.**

One teacher mentioned the increase of violence at the school over the years he had been teaching. During the interview, he shared that he had been involved in a violent confrontation with students at his school that day:

**I admire and applaud your efforts in tackling this problem, but it is so serious in our society.... Just today at lunch time, I was in a situation where I was fearful for my life, and the Vice Principal as well. There was a scuffle going on in the parking lot.**

Additionally, he emphasized the increase in young women who use physical violence:

**When I started teaching 14 years ago... it was extremely rare... I never saw two females physically fighting one another. Now... if there's a fight, you don't know whether it's male or female.... So what females are doing, more and more, is becoming like the males**

**in terms of handling their problems in a violent kind of a way: punching, hitting, kicking... the language, the spitting.**

The teachers and staff also talked about the zero tolerance policy implemented at their school to decrease and control violence. For example, one teacher believed the staff and administration did a great job of responding to issues related to violence:

**So I think there's always been an attitude here, especially heightened in the last several years, that the school needs to be a safe place to be. We have zero tolerance towards violent behaviour of any sort. And administration that really backs that up, who will take action instantly to investigate and deal with any issues related to violence.**

However, another teacher had concerns that the zero tolerance policy was not effectively applied to all situations:

**Well, the school's policy is zero tolerance, you know. I don't know if that's completely enforceable. Because things do happen. I mean people get in fights. And there are girls who are being harassed. I know of one instance where a girl who had been raped ended up in the same class with the guy who raped her, and they refused to remove him from the class.**

This same teacher mentioned several cases of gender-based abuse:

**There's a great amount of guys using their power over girls.... I have a girl right now in my English class who is in a very abusive situation, and I received a letter. This guy has a court order against him that he is not supposed to be near her.**

**Well there's girls that have come to me and said "All the guys lift my skirt". You know these are harassment issues. And I'm sure it's only the minority of girls who ever tell. Most girls probably put up with it.**

## **ii. Students' gender relations.**

Many analyses of the etiology of violence against women point to traditional gender-role socialization that teaches young women to be passive, emotional, nurturers

and young men to be aggressive, rational, bread winners. Several of the high school teachers and staff whom I interviewed felt that gender-based socialization experiences were reflected in relations amongst students. For example, one male teacher talked about the general expectations and peer pressures that push young men to be competitive and aggressive:

**Their weekends activities, if they have bush parties or if they have bashes, I mean they always tell about the fights, and it was almost like it's a really cool thing too, "Oh yeah, man, you should have been there, it was really cool, and all these cop cars came".**

**Most of the boys don't want to fight... but what happens is they get egged on. Male macho pride kicks in, and then of course they act on emotion, not reason, so they're listening to the emotions associated with being angry. And they're really forgetting the content kinds of things. They're not dealing in a rational manner.**

This same teacher remarked on the gender-roles depicted within the project's play and how relationships between males and females seemed similar to when he was an adolescent:

**And I know that play evolved from their experiences, and it came from their lives, so it was real. It had this element of reality to it. And yet I could relate, if I went back in my life when I was a teenager and looked at that thing. And it could have easily been 1976 or 1977. Scary, you know. The guys still want to hunt the girl. You know, once he's made a conquest, dump her and find someone else. The relationship is based more on sex or a status thing.**

A woman on staff verified how many young women feel pressured by young men in relation to dating and sexual activity:

**There's anger among the girls that there is this expectation that if you like a guy and you really get involved that right away they think you want to have sex. And we talk about where that comes from. It's in the media. It's in the magazines, in advertising....**

**Guys just get the idea that it's okay. And to convince them that that's not their right is difficult.**

However, she believed that most young women attending high school today are more aware of a need for independence than women in the past:

**The girls are probably a little more aware today... of their rights. Then it was, ... "What do you want to do when you grow up?" "Well, I'm going to get married". And there wasn't "I'm going to be a doctor, and I'm going to get married", like most of the guys would say.... But they also are aware that... you definitely need an education, you need to be able to stand on your own two feet.**

One teacher commented that although young men and women appeared to interact on an equal basis in many of their school activities, it was the young men who wielded power in relationships outside of school:

**But appearances can be deceiving. When they work and cooperate I rarely rarely rarely hear a sexist comment from a male directed toward a female or vice versa. They seem to be getting along and seem to want to communicate in ways that are healthier.... When they're outside of school and they're in their jobs and they're at their social events, the concerts and the house parties and the bashes that they go to, I think you still have a lot of the traditional minglings or interactions, where .. the guys tend to want to exercise control and dominance.**

Finally, one teacher talked about how young men react to classroom discussions about feminist issues and the effect their reactions have on the class:

**I find when we talk about it in class, when it comes up in literature or in issues, the guys get very defensive, and they immediately say, "Oh, it's male-bashing". You know and you try very hard to say, "No, we're just looking at the facts and we're looking at what's happening in society and this is not male-bashing."**

**They just get really angry... Well, I think the anger affects the class in the way that... it sort of cuts the conversation short. You can't really continue with it. The girls... don't want to feel that they're**

**blaming the guys. They like the guys, and they want the guys to like them.**

**iii. Teachers' gender relations.**

I also asked the teachers and staff at the first setting to comment on the gender interactions and relations they experienced at the school. Most of their responses to this question revolved around gender equality in work. Both of the women I spoke with believed that strides had been made toward gender equality in the workplace, but they felt that true equality had not yet been reached. One interviewee commented on examples of women who had attained administrative positions. However, she felt that women teachers have more discipline difficulties with students (especially young men) and are less respected than men (especially men involved with school sports teams). An interviewee believed that sexual harassment had generally decreased (compared to five or ten years earlier) because of informational workshops on the issue provided by the Board of Education. However, she also mentioned a resistance or back-lash by some male colleagues against the movement toward gender equality.

When I asked the men about gender relations at their school, one replied that the teaching profession did a good job of maintaining gender equality. He felt that pay and promotions were based on qualifications and not gender. Another interviewee reflected on how his male students and colleagues felt blamed and discriminated against by some policies intended to support gender equality (e.g., hiring quotas).

## **The Second Drama Project**

### **Description of the Setting**

The second drama project took place at a high school located in Kitchener and under the jurisdiction of the Public Board of Education. Approximately 1400 students attend this school. It was described by an interviewee as a core school with a fair proportion of students coming from single family homes. This interviewee estimated that ten percent of the school population might be experiencing violent situations in their homes and/or communities. The school provides anger-management groups for students who tend to deal with their problems by directing violence toward others.

This school also offers an Arts Package programme as part of its curriculum. The Arts Package programme draws students who are interested in drama, fine arts, dance, and literature from all areas of the city. Arts Package students are usually very familiar with each other, because they take most of their classes together and are involved in many activities after school. They are expected to maintain high marks even though they miss classes due to Arts Package activities (e.g., performances, recitals). Regular students see the Arts Package students as different and do not tend to associate with them.

### **Description of Project Activities and My Reflections**

The description of the project in the second setting is based on field notes and journal writings. I have interspersed personal reflections (in italics) from my journal throughout this section. Because the majority of project activities are very similar across settings, I have tended to focus on differences which arose during the second

intervention. Additionally, I have highlighted situations which involved the young men in the second troupe. All names used are pseudonyms (i.e., Patrick, Gerald, Hal, Annie, Hannah, Lily, and Lynne).

### **Entry**

The second project's contact person was a female drama teacher. She first heard about the drama intervention at a presentation made by Holt and Darlene during the summer of 1994. At follow-up contact, she expressed enthusiasm for "issue-oriented theatre" and thought creating a script based on real-life situations would be a challenging experience for her students.

The drama activities at the second high school were facilitated by Darlene and Holt in collaboration with the drama teacher described above. A curricular model was used which included eight weeks of regular classroom time for a grade 10 drama class within the Arts Package programme. The class met for a 72-minute period Monday through Friday. The actors and supporting troupe members were drawn from the 32 students enrolled in the class and ranged in age from 13 to 17 years of age. Only three of the students were young men. Approximately 24 students (including all three men) were involved in acting roles. Students who preferred not to act were involved as stage managers, assistant facilitators, and/or evaluation assistants.

Our first visit to class was on February 6, 1995. For the first three days, Darlene and Holt had the students do various warm-ups and improvisation exercises (e.g., death scenes, script lines from Hamlet used in different context such as newscast, sports cheer, etc.). These activities allowed the facilitators to develop a preliminary

idea of the students' drama experience and encouraged the facilitators and students to get acquainted.

*These students were very energetic, expressive, and imaginative. They also seemed highly emotional. They often expressed themselves by singing and/or dancing around the room or hugging one another. Several students seemed resistant during improvisation exercises. Darlene and I discussed the difference in motivation levels between students who audition for a project and those who participate in a curricular model. Being picked through audition might increase motivation and positive attitude. In the curriculum-based model, the project team might seem more like outsiders, and students might feel they have less choice. Darlene also thought that students specializing in drama are inclined to become personally and emotionally involved when engaged in drama activities.*

### **Preparation for Workshops**

February 9th Darlene led the students through a sample workshop. They started with warm-up exercises and debating, which led to a discussion about the use of physical discipline for children. Gerald talked about an experience he had as a child when he was beaten by a baby sitter. The group then talked about who had the power in their families and their definition of violence. Most of the class thought that violence consisted of verbal, physical, emotional, or sexual actions which hurt others.

*This group of students seemed very sophisticated in their analyses of violence. Several had experienced violence in their own lives and were quite reactive to the discussion. Some of these students talked to us about wanting to share their personal*



*experiences in the class so others could learn from them. Two of the three young men in the class had interests and/or characteristics which seemed non-traditional. For example, Patrick is an accomplished ballet dancer and quite emotionally expressive. Hal seems quiet and passive.*

On February 10th, a public education worker from K-W Sexual Assault Centre visited the class to speak about different forms of abuse. This talk was intended to give the students some background facts and to help them prepare for conducting workshops in their school. As the talk progressed some of the students became visibly upset (i.e., crying, agitated), and some eventually left the room. Team members later discovered that some students felt rushed through the "cold, hard facts" with no time to process their emotions. Others expressed concern and confusion about what they were expected to do during the upcoming workshops.

At the next meeting, Darlene apologized to the students for not properly preparing them for the talk. She also reassured the class that they could choose the level of leadership they were comfortable with for workshops. The next several days were taken up with students preparing and running practice workshops with their classmates.

### **Workshops**

Workshops were conducted by students and facilitators over the next several days (February 21 to 24) in approximately six to eight classes. The high school students who participated in workshops ranged from 14 to 19 years of age and were

enrolled in grades 9 to 13. The workshops at the second school totalled 360 participants.

I sat in on four different workshops. Generally, students seemed to enjoy the drama exercises and discussions touched on diverse topics such as physical discipline, definition of violence, school cliques, date rape, inevitability of violence, the cycle of abuse, and the impact of the media. Several classes felt that young men were inclined to use physical violence against others whereas young women used verbal abuse. Some of the young men seemed resistant to the topic of violence in relationships. They felt it was an overworked issue. However, they did join the discussion to express their opinions. In one class, students felt that women and men commit and experience violence in equal proportion. Both young men and women mentioned that abused men have it especially rough because they feel ashamed to report violence.

*The students' comments in workshops seemed similar to those made in our first setting. Many of the young men and women seemed eager to share their opinions and experiences. I was struck by the number of students who felt violence was inevitable.*

### **Scriptwriting and Rehearsals**

On February 28th we met with the drama class to discuss the thoughts and ideas that had been raised during workshops. Several troupe members thought that grade nine students tended to define violence as strictly physical more often than other grade levels. They also remarked on young men's focus on maintaining their reputation as tough, cool, or macho by using violence. Other troupe members noticed

that sexual violence was mentioned much less than other forms. One young woman in the drama class surmised that date rape and other forms of sexual abuse occur in private and are more difficult for most people to talk about. Drama students also remarked on comments by some workshop participants that actions are not violent if they occur because of retaliation, revenge, or because a "person asks for it". They mentioned the comment made by several young men that they would kill someone who raped their sister or girlfriend. Finally, some of the troupe members shared their shock regarding workshop participants' stories about verbal and physical abuse that they received from their parents.

The students in the drama class decided to work on four different plot-lines (which were very similar to first school) in the development of their script: date rape, physical violence in a family, verbal abuse in a romantic relationships, and peer pressure to use alcohol and drugs. All of the young men became actors with abusive roles. Hal volunteered to play the date rapist. Gerald was an abusive father who beats his daughter, and Patrick portrayed a controlling boyfriend who verbally abuses his girlfriend. The troupe members wanted to break stereotypes and depict the cycle of violence in their play. Therefore, they included a wife who was verbally abusive to her husband. This couple's son was also the boyfriend who was insulting and controlling with his girlfriend.

*I thought the students in the drama class had made some very astute observations during workshops. I concluded that most of them were converted. They already believe violence exists in many forms and that it is hurtful and wrong. Some*

*of the young women in the class mentioned that young men they know feel blamed for date rape and other violence against women. They felt that young men were sometimes defensive around these topics. However, they also felt that sometimes "guys get a bad rap" and that it is harder for men to report abuse if they are victims.*

The month of March was taken up with scriptwriting and rehearsals. Because of the larger number of students, Holt and Darlene decided to each work with two plot-line groups. Darlene spent extra time working with the date rape plot-line because of the sensitive nature of this topic. A fight choreographer who had worked with Darlene in the past dropped in over several days to help the family violence group make their physical abuse scene safe and believable. During the last few days of March, the facilitators worked with the students to weave the four plot-lines together.

*During rehearsals, Hal seemed uncomfortable with the physical intimacy in the rape scene and was having trouble projecting his voice and being forceful enough to be believable. Once again, Holt and Darlene demonstrated a plausible date rape scene for the students. Gerald who played a lawyer who beats his daughter seemed challenged during the stage choreography. He seemed to have difficulty putting enough emotion into his character and looked like he felt awkward during the physical abuse. However, both of these young men worked hard at their roles.*

### **Performances**

The performances of the second project ran from April 4 to April 11. The troupe put on four shows for Grades 9 through 13 at their own school. The high

school audiences included 1450 students. The students were invited to comment on the play and ask the troupe questions during question and answer periods following each performance. Most comments from the audiences indicated that they felt the show was well-done. There were a number of students who were disruptive during shows and/or critical during discussion periods.

The performance was also toured to several junior high schools for Grade 7 and 8 students. The junior high audience members ranged in age from 11 to 14 and totalled 550. During question and answer periods the junior high students said they were able to follow the play's message easily. They also talked about the peer pressure and verbal put-downs they experienced at their school.

*I was very impressed with the troupe members' comments during question and answer periods. They really seemed to think of the script and play as their own. They stressed that they wanted to show how rape doesn't necessarily happen with a "weirdo stranger who jumps out of the bushes", but that confusion and not listening can lead to violation by a person close to you, someone you trust. They also commented on their wish to portray the cycle of violence -- how Patrick's character grew up with a mother who was abusive to his father. He in turn put down his girlfriend because it seemed normal to him.*

The wrap-up discussion at the second school revealed that students felt they had not been given a choice whether or not to participate. However, they expressed satisfaction at doing a good job on a worthwhile project. They thought violence was a

difficult topic and they felt they had needed more time for processing emotions during the work.

### **Interviews with Young Men in the Second Project**

The categories used to organize the interview findings from the young men at the second school are identical to those used with the first set of data: Things they liked and disliked about the project; What it was like to play an abusive character; Which parts of the project had an impact; Changes they noticed in themselves; Message of the play; Thoughts about other young men getting involved. The subcategories used to describe data within each category vary slightly between the two settings.

#### **A. Things They Liked and Disliked About the Project**

When I asked the young men in the second setting to comment on the things they liked about the project, they mentioned the collective process, the realism in their play, the impact the play had on others, their sense of accomplishment, and critical responses from some audience members.

##### **i. Collective drama process.**

One of the young men commented on the collective process used to write their script. He seemed to value that everyone in the class had the opportunity to contribute ideas. The following comment, made by Hal, captures the spirit of collaboration in the project:

**I like the way we made up the script.... Like we acted out how we thought the scene should go and then we wrote down the good points and then we went over and over the scene....We had lots of**

**chances to get the good points.... And everybody switched roles so we got everybody's ideas into it.**

**ii. Realism.**

The young men in the second project thought the realism of the play was one of its strong points. For example, Gerald thought that the lack of resolution in each plot-line was closer to real life situations than "fairy tale" endings:

**Like we didn't try and make it some fairy tale ending with each skit. We wanted to make it believable. So not all of them ended in a... lived happily ever after in a big castle made of ice up in the North Pole.... We just wanted to show that... there was something you could do about it. Like we didn't actually show it happening because you can never tell for sure if that something is going to work, but you can hope.**

Patrick also talked about the realism of the characters and the potential for the audience to relate the issues portrayed in the play to themselves; however, he felt more resolution could have been explored:

**The play was at many different levels depending on your own experience. The date rape was very heavy, and depending on your experience you could laugh it off... or you could take it more to heart if that's been your personal experience. And say, "Gee, that's happened to me. Maybe this is what I should do about it". And the fact that... Hannah was saying that her character wasn't crazy because she didn't want to go see a counsellor. That was very realistic, and I think that could have explored a bit more... Well maybe she did get help afterward, but it didn't show it in the play.**

**iii. Impact on others.**

The young men at the second school also talked about the impact their play could have on people who watched it. Their comments reflect their investment in the play and in the message they hoped to communicate. For example, Gerald mentioned comments made by audience members which reflected a new awareness of violence:

**And I think people got the message, you know. Because a lot of people came up... said "You know, that was really good". "Like I didn't realize... I mean sure I knew people went home and got beaten up and stuff, and I think it's terrible. But I didn't realize they went home and they got yelled at by their father or their boyfriend or girlfriend...and that makes 'em feel like crap." You know, all the different things that we tried to portray.**

Hal, on the other hand, expressed concern that the elementary school students would miss the message the troupe was trying to portray:

**I thought for the younger kids it would be even harder because they would be laughing and... I really felt like I wanted to get the point across, but I felt like they wouldn't understand the real meaning of everything.**

Gerald hoped that the play might help people who were experiencing violence in their lives:

**I'm pretty sure because of statistics and stuff, that there were quite a few people out in our audience at our school that are getting that kind of crap when they go home from school.... So, it was kind of like a way of telling them, "Hey, we might not all have been through what you're going through now, but we do know for a fact that somebody can help you and get you out of this problem".... Like I don't know actually if anybody's actually come to the guidance office and talked about their problems or anything... but I hope somebody has if they're having a problem, that's what I wanted to happen.**

Patrick recounted how two students in an elementary school audience actually did seek help after watching the play:

**At that one school... two girls came up to the teacher and said that they had been having problems, but they never told anyone. That was because the show helped them to open up.**



iv. Sense of accomplishment.

One of the young men, Hal, talked about the sense of accomplishment and pride he felt because of various aspects of the project. He felt proud that his class had been chosen to work on a project that was unique and exciting:

**This is something new... and I felt important that our class was...going to be doing it. Like most schools can do Hamlet or whatever. It's kind of boring, but this was new and we travelled and stuff.**

He also explained how the project and the topic had grown in importance to him during the development of the play:

**At the very beginning when you started out doing the improv. and making a script up, I didn't think it was going to be that big of a deal. I thought it was just going to be like this show about violence and we'd show it and people would like it. But then... I realized that people were watching this and things go on and like it felt more important.**

Hal also talked about the challenge of portraying the date rapist in the plays and his sense of accomplishment in fulfilling a difficult role:

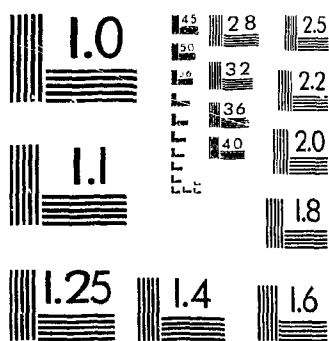
**I thought [playing the date rapist] would be a really good challenge.... I said, "Yeah, I want to do this", and I thought it would be fun.... [Then] we were like a quarter of the way through and I was like, "Oh, I can't do this. I just want to drop out."... And now I'm like so happy I can't believe I got through it and all the performances, and I thought it was really good, and I'm so happy that I did it. I couldn't imagine myself doing another part.**

v. Things they disliked.

Although most of the comments made by the young men in the second setting were positive, some difficulties and frustrations were also mentioned. For example,

2 OF 2

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PRECISION<sup>SM</sup> RESOLUTION TARGETS

Gerald made several comments about audience members who had been critical of the show during question and answer periods:

**We just worked our asses off for six to eight weeks to finish this thing for you [students in audience] so you could get out of class and learn something about the real world. And what do you have to do? Criticize us!**

Gerald felt some audience members had misunderstood what the play was intended to portray:

**The least they could do is have a little bit of courtesy and watch it and try and pick up on it and not criticize problems that weren't really there.... She [one audience member] said, "You contradicted yourself."... "You say violence is wrong and yet you showed Gerald there hitting Annie"... and I just looked at her. I wasn't even mad at that point. I was so confused I wanted to laugh hysterically at her and just tell her she was an idiot. I was like, "That's so dumb, like we were doing that to portray violence and try and show the audience that this is what it's like."**

## **B. What it Was Like to Play an Abusive Character**

The young men in the second school also talked about their emotional reactions to portraying abusive characters in the play.

### **i. Differentiating self from character.**

Gerald, who played a physically violent father, talked about his fear of getting carried away with playing his character and actually hurting someone on stage:

**All of a sudden for about a five-second period on that stage, I was a father standing there. Like I wasn't exactly the lawyer father. I was like a father with a very severe drinking problem and I was really mad because I was drunk.... And then right when I grabbed her hair, all of a sudden I was Gerald again, and I was on stage, and there were like five hundred kids watching me, and I didn't want to hurt Annie, and it was like, "Okay, reality check!"... After I got through, I was sitting there, I was like ... "I could have killed her."... because we had such a small stage area, if I hadn't gotten**

**control of myself. I could have very well thrown her off of that stage, and she could have broken her neck.**

After the performances were over, Gerald stated that he was proud of how he had handled his role:

**At first with the abusive father role, I was afraid I'd make it too believable. Like when I was doing the abuse scene itself, because of my temper, I thought I'd actually grab the person, like throwing them around, like really throwing Annie around the stage and really slapping her, I thought I'd get that mad. But in the end, I was really proud of myself because I could control myself.**

Patrick, however, felt more able to separate himself from his character, an emotionally abusive boyfriend:

**I'm not the character that I was playing, and I never left with the character. But when I was acting, and when I was up on stage, I was that character.... It didn't become a part of me because I don't really want to be like that, so I tried to keep it separate.**

## **ii. Other reactions.**

Although Patrick did not struggle to separate himself from his character, he did experience other quite diverse reactions to playing his role. As illustrated in the following comments, Patrick felt both a release of tension in portraying an abusive boyfriend and guilt and concern for Lily, his girlfriend in the play:

**It's just really weird being on the other end. Instead of receiving it [abuse] because of dance, being the person dishing it out was completely unreal.... It was a release because there's tension in me that's always been building up.... It's not me saying it, it's them[his character]. So it was a release because it got out my frustrations, and I didn't mean anything by it.**

**I didn't like it afterward. I always went up and said, "Sorry" every single time. And I felt awful doing it [verbal abuse] to Lily because she's my friend. And I don't want to feel like I'm saying that to her**

**and I don't know if she's going to be able to separate that in her life.**

### **C. Changes They Noticed in Themselves**

When I asked the young men in the second setting to talk about changes they noticed in their views on violence or changes in their behaviour with family and friends, they mentioned several things that would indicate an increased level of awareness regarding violence. Additionally, the young men noticed that their attitude and/or behaviour related to violence had changed.

#### **i. Raised awareness.**

For example, Patrick remarked on his new awareness of the prevalence of violence and the many actions which can be classified as violent:

**Well, one thing I think the project did for me was that it really opened up the world to me, showing me how prevalent violence is in our society.... It's amazing going into classes and seeing how much violence exists and seeing how it is a part of people's everyday lives. That was a real eye opener for me.**

**It was completely a new thing and I'm still trying to learn, figure out what I took from it.... In the beginning I had no clue what exactly was violence. I knew that it was mentally or physically hurting somebody, or emotionally hurting somebody, but I didn't know what, how many things constitute violence. I've found it amazing how many different aspects to violence there are.**

Hal commented that although the content of the play had not been new to him, his personal awareness had somehow shifted:

**I think I'm more aware. Even though... the content of the whole show wasn't really that new. We all knew that it happens, but you just seem more aware of it.**

Gerald mentioned two areas where he had gained new awareness. He felt that playing a lawyer who beats his daughter made it clear to him that violence is not limited to certain levels of socioeconomic status:

**It was probably playing the character that brought light to it so to speak. Like I used to see it and think, "Oh, this only happens in low income families."**

Gerald also felt he had a new awareness of reasons behind why some people abuse others:

**[They] think that that may be the only way that they're gonna survive... They've always been on the other end, and so they think it's just natural to be abusing people.**

**ii. Changes in attitude/behaviour related to violence.**

Additionally, several of the young men believed that their attitude toward violence around them had changed. For example, Patrick found that he was reacting differently to comments that were made to him:

**Well when people say things to me, I don't try to think of things in my head to say back to them. I think that they have a problem and it's nothing to do with me.... and so I should just ignore it.**

He also felt more cautious and alert regarding how he was speaking to others:

**It's definitely made me a lot more cautious and look at what I'm saying and what other people are saying.**

Gerald noted that his reaction to violence in television shows and books had changed:

**When I see a TV show with violence... before it was like, "Oh, that's cool", "Check that out". Now I look at it from two viewpoints. Like the one is, "Hey that looks real."... But then there's the other half. It's like, "That's terrible." Like especially when I'm seeing abuse and stuff like that. And I've noticed in a lot of books lately that I've read and stuff just creeps me out now. Before it would be like, "Whoa, that's so cool, man, abusive family." ... And last night**

**that book just got so damn creepy. I just didn't want to read it any more for a little while.**

Additionally, some comments by the young men indicated that they were trying to change various aspects of their behaviour because of a new understanding of violence. For example, Gerald talked about changes in his attitude and his reactions to his younger brother:

**I do have a terrible temper, like it's unbelievable. Like if I'm at home and my brother says something that puts me off, he's a dead man.... But this has kind of helped me calm down a bit. It's like I don't want to any more.**

Patrick believed that how he treats people, both in his class and more generally, had changed:

**There are a few people in our drama class... who have had very troubled lives and I've tried to be more sensitive to them and talk to them more. It probably won't help anything, but it will let them know that I'm trying to be there.**

**I'm more careful with myself in what I say, so as I don't offend anybody.... I just am a lot more careful of what I say and what I do and how I treat people.**

### **iii. Increased self-confidence.**

Gerald and Hal also commented on a new sense of self-confidence they had developed since being involved in the project. During the group interview, Hal remarked on how he had become more assertive since he played an important role in the play:

**Yeah, I have been more assertive with the things that I do. It just came from kind of being the main person, the bad guy, well not really the bad guy, but in a sense the person that did the bad thing in our plot-line. So it kind of made me feel important and I guess**

**that kind of made me look down on others or something. Well not really like that, but I just felt more important.**

Gerald responded by saying that he had noticed an increase in confidence in Hal too:

**I think that happened to a lot of people actually that had aggressive roles in this thing. Because well I did notice that with you. It was kind of like he's really passive. He's never violent towards anything at all, but it's not that I'm saying you're violent now....It's kind of like a confidence builder.**

#### **D. Which Parts of the Project Had an Impact**

When I asked the young men in the second setting which parts of the play had affected them, they talked about the impact of hearing their peers' experiences with violence, the way they could identify with and relate parts of the play to their own lives, and the reactions of other students who came to watch their play.

##### **i. Hearing others' stories/Statistics.**

Patrick remarked on the power of listening to individuals' stories about violence in their lives:

**In the workshops and after the show when we went into classrooms. That and also hearing stories of people in my class. Because I don't know these people's background. I know them on a one to one basis at school, but I don't know anything about them out of school.... And it was amazing to look at them and say, "Wow that's happened to you." I think what they've been through and possibly what I've been through. And it's just incredible how cruel people can be and what it is like in the world.**

Gerald also mentioned the impact of hearing his peers' perspectives on topics related to violence such as physical discipline:

**Well I think a lot of it had to do with other people's thoughts in the workshops. Hearing you know, "Well, I'm from a different country, and this is how my parents disciplined me, and this is how I'm going to discipline my kids."**



Finally, Patrick commented on the impact of the project's informational session which illuminated the widespread prevalence of violence in our society:

**I know that it happens but to see the statistics and being in a class where so many people had been abused... It's an eye opener; you know that it happens, but you don't see it. It's so well concealed.**

**ii. Related play to self.**

Some of the young men mentioned how the impact of the play was increased because they felt they could relate the issues and situations to their own lives. For example, Gerald related his character's abuse toward Annie in the play to his own behaviour with his younger brother:

**I guess the way Annie was trying to portray feeling.... I guess that might be how my brother's feeling.... a little kid you know. Like "Oh, my dad just came and beat the crap out of me."**

He talked about how he wanted to be different from his character with his own family some day:

**Regardless of whether I'm poor, rich, or a billionaire... I don't want to give my kids a bad family life and want my wife to leave me.... You can't replace a human life, and you can't replace their soul either once you take it away by abusing them their whole life.**

Gerald also talked about the impact of watching the abusive relationships in the play because they seemed so different compared to the interaction between him and his girlfriend:

**Patrick's part was really interesting for me. The way he could yell at Lily like that. It really had an impact on me because I guess Lynne, my girlfriend, I never yell at her. Like we won't yell at each other or anything like that.**

Patrick felt he had learned to improve his relationship with his sister by watching the abusive family interact in the play:

**The two parents' relationship in the drama wasn't working very well. And I applied that to my sister's and my relationship which was still pretty good, but it's improved now which is good.**

**iii. Peer reaction.**

When I asked which parts of the project made a difference, some of the young men mentioned the impact of performing for their peers. For example, Hal commented that he was quite nervous acting in front of people he knew:

**I was pretty nervous because I was wondering what other kids would think of it and how they would react.**

Gerald, on other hand, seemed quite astounded when his friends were impressed by the physical abuse he was portraying in the play:

**Being on stage itself and just seeing and hearing people's reaction at the end. It was kind of sick. Like they're going, "Whoa man, what was making you knock Annie on her ass." ... And I'm just like, "What, you liked that?" And [they'd say], "Yeah, it was really good, like you looked believable." Well that's scary, you know.**

Gerald also mentioned the reactions of friends who knew him quite well and who were shocked to see him play an abusive role:

**One of my really good friends was in the audience for first period....He seen when I grabbed Annie's hair and pulled her back. And he was so shocked because.... I've known him for ten years, and he'd never seen me do anything like that and he just kind of went... "Whoa!" ... That's probably what made me... think to calm down a bit because if it can make that much of a reaction on people.**

iv. **Intensity.**

Finally, some of the young men mentioned how the repetition of rehearsal and watching the scenes over and over had affected them. Hal found the process of watching and acting out violent behaviour numerous times made the topic very real for him:

**Like certain parts of them [plotline], like the father beating his daughter because she's wearing clothing that wasn't acceptable.... I never really saw stuff like acting up that close. I wasn't really exposed, so it was kind of an eye opener. But I knew stuff like that happened. It just was kind of right in my face.**

Gerald also mentioned how the repetition and realism of certain scenes had an impact on him:

**I've seen it so many times with Patrick acting it out... and seeing the way that Lily tried to portray the fact that she was whipped by him. Like she would do anything for him even though he put her down constantly about everything she did.**

E. **Message of the Play**

When I asked the young men in the second project what message they thought their play had communicated, their comments reflected that they wanted people to know that violence is an important issue. Two of them talked about the cycle of abuse and the unhappy consequences of violence. Another hoped the play had empowered both victims and perpetrators to change.

i. **Violence is an important issue.**

Patrick commented that the play's message was centred on raising the awareness of audience members regarding violence in the world:

**I think the audience took away that there is violence in the world and it's not just going to hide in a closet till they come looking for it**

**or it comes out to grab to them.... It [the play] put a crack in the door to open it up to show people what the world is like.**

Hal thought the play challenged stereotypes and illuminated some of the subtler or more secretive areas of abuse:

**They're [abusers] not just your stereotypical people. They can be anybody. Like nowadays you can't really tell who will do everything, because there's a lot of it in society.**

**And I just think that people have to be aware. Like not just necessarily physical, but there's a lot of abuse that's just not really noticed, because it's on the lower levels, like sexual abuse and verbal abuse.**

**ii. Causes and consequences.**

Hal mentioned how the play illustrated the cycle of abuse and how violence is passed on from generation to generation:

**Well I think some people, the majority I think got the message, because we did it kind of effectively with the Mother kind of verbally abusing the Father and then the circle kind of connection how the children did the same thing.**

Patrick thought the play had reflected the reality that abusive situations often have unhappy endings:

**I think the play's message was saying that not every situation is going to turn out happily. You're not going to have a whole bunch of "Disney" happy endings here. This is life, and it's not always happy.**

**iii. Change is possible.**

Finally, Gerald hoped that people experiencing or committing abuse might feel motivated to seek help after seeing the play:

**What I wanted the play to say and I think it did a pretty good job of portraying it was, "You don't have to put up with people's shit,**

**and you don't have to do this.... There are other options, like you can go talk to someone if you need to. You can get help if necessary, or you can just stop it where it's at."**

#### **F. Thoughts About Involving Other Young Men**

When I asked the young men in the second setting what they thought about other young men getting involved in similar projects, they expressed both optimism for potential benefits and doubts.

##### **i. Potential benefits.**

For example, Patrick thought that the project could help young men raise their awareness regarding violence and how they wanted to deal with it

**I'd say that it's a very good project. It makes you aware of what's happening, and it... makes you look at life and what you want to live and it... makes you re-sort your priorities.**

Gerald was also optimistic that it might help some of his friends to find new ways to deal with their problems:

**It might help them a little bit because a lot of my friends are really angry about a lot of stuff. Like life isn't going so well for them and, basically, the way they like to sort things out is with violence... And I mean this might help them realize that it's not helping at all. It's just making the problem worse.**

##### **ii. Doubts.**

Although Gerald thought the project experience might help some of his friends become less violent, he expressed concerns that other young men might actually become more violent:

**With some guys it would be like, "Hey, you know, maybe I should calm down about hitting my brother."... But then you've got those dominant male monkey guys and they come in and they're like, "Oh**

**yeah, I just smacked this chick on her ass", and they're all proud of it you know. So it can affect people in different ways.**

Hal thought that most young men were not interested in drama and would not be open to using it to explore a topic like violence in relationships:

**Most of the people I know, they wouldn't even go up for a role like that.... They're not into drama playing and they're not I guess open about stuff like that.... They just don't seem like it's an issue they really want to deal with.... But if it's something like an Arts Package class, I think we're a lot more open to these things with each other, to be able to work with each other to do something like that.**

Hal also raised doubts about the effectiveness of the project with audience members who just watch the play and are not directly involved.

#### **G. Milieu/Other Issues.**

During interviews at the second school, comments were made one of the young men talked about other issues related to violence in his life. Gerald thought he had developed a temper from witnessing violence in his neighbourhood as a young boy and because he was bullied in Grade 7 and 8. He also believed that violence was the only effective response in some situations. He stated that if someone raped his girlfriend he would use physical violence in retaliation.

### **Interviews with Teachers in the Second Project**

#### **A. Teachers' Perceptions of the Project**

Interviews with teachers in the second setting provided comments on the project itself and the school context which were very similar to those reported by teachers involved in the first intervention. I have presented these comments in the following sections which are based on themes that were revealed in the first setting.

Where results were very similar I have paraphrased teachers' comments. In areas where comments differ from those at the first setting, I have provided direct quotes to illustrate participants' thoughts in more detail.

**i. Concerns regarding male-bashing.**

Concerns regarding negative reactions to the project if focused explicitly on male violence against women were also raised at the second school. One teacher suggested that focusing the project on violence in relationships had effectively circumvented this type of response from male students.

**ii. Comments on project approach.**

When teachers in the second school were asked about the strengths and weaknesses of the project's approach, they mentioned the potential of drama-based education for exploring emotions, opportunities for personal connection, and the impact of using language and situations that students could relate to. The drama teacher affiliated with the project commented on the self-exploration involved in drama:

**I ask the kids where their feelings come from that they fit into a character... I said, "Aren't they feelings of yours that you're borrowing from somewhere inside yourself?"...we have to recognize that it's coming from somewhere in us.... This is why the reflection is so key.... in terms of beginning to get a knowledge of yourself and how you and other people interact with each other.**

She also thought the project facilitated a sense of community and connection amongst students both in workshops and in troupe discussions:

**I think that happened in the group here and when they went into classrooms. That sense of, "Gosh this isn't only happening to me"... which is really crucial to being okay with yourself.**

Another teacher commented on how the language in the play increased the sense of realism and identification in the audience members:

**This was an event that was supported, sponsored by the school. Somehow they were saying these words on stage. So I suspect that they were getting a tingle out of it, but they also realized that it was trying to say something important. I think that probably to a good number of those kids in the audience it was holding a mirror up to them and showing them a little bit of how ugly they can be themselves.**

Finally, one teacher thought a peer education approach is especially effective with high school students.

### **iii. Student reactions to the project.**

The teachers' comments regarding student reaction at the second school touched on issues which were similar to those raised in the first project. Several teachers commented on instances where students had shared that their awareness of violence had increased or their identification with the play had helped them realize or change things in their own lives. Some of the teachers also talked about resistance of male audience members. They concluded that these students were feeling uncomfortable, because they recognized their own attitudes and behaviours in the abuse portrayed in the play. Finally, the drama teacher who worked closely with the project commented on resistance by some of the drama students to working on the topic of violence. She expressed a belief in drama as an educational tool, but felt there had to be a willingness to explore a topic before change and growth could occur:

**Clearly people felt threatened by the idea of doing a project on violence. So I don't think drama always does that [encourages self-growth]. I think sometimes people go the other way. But I think it can.**



**iv. Doubts regarding impact.**

The teachers at the second school also raised concerns about the level of impact the project would have on participants. For example, one teacher felt the effect of the project might be lost or overshadowed in the midst of numerous other student activities and experiences. Because of some audience response, another teacher thought the topic of violence was too difficult to be effectively tackled by peers:

**If we had to do it again, I don't think we would present to [our school's] students. It's too touchy a subject that I don't think it'd be carried off by peers. We were finding in all age groups, seniors not as much, but especially the age group that the class was in. That particular assembly heckled them, didn't take them seriously. Really the point, I don't think got across.**

**B. Milieu/Context**

Teachers and staff at the second school were also asked about their perceptions of attitudes toward violence and gender relations at their school. Similar to the first school, their comments touched on the prevalence of violence at their school and gender relations between students and between teachers.

**i. Prevalence of violence.**

One staff person at the high school reflected on the general rise of violence in schools that had occurred over the last decade. Another teacher remarked on the increase in the number of girls who were involved in physical fights. Finally, the "zero tolerance" policy was mentioned as a policy implemented to address this increase in violence.

**ii. Students' gender-relations.**

When I asked teachers at the second school to comment on students' gender relations, they reflected on the presence of traditional gender roles and equality between the sexes. One teacher felt that, although traditional gender roles are limiting for both men and women, they were still quite prevalent among her students:

**I mean it astounds me that young women don't realize that ultimately they are responsible for their own income and that means their own education and their own development and where they're going. The number of young women that become pregnant or drop out of school or choose not to continue astounds me... there's kind of an expectation that I'll get married, that everything will be alright.... It astounds me that there's not more awareness among more men... how limited they've chosen to allow their humanity to be and their behaviour to be toward other men and towards women, because ultimately I think both groups are losing out.**

This teacher felt that both young men and women acted as if the man's plans and activities were more important:

**But I think often there is a power relationship between young men and women.... that somehow what he's doing is more important, what he thinks is more important, his time is somehow more important.**

However, another male staff member at the school felt that gender relations amongst students had improved in recent times:

**I think there's enough sexual harassment, physical harassment information going around that kids are starting to realize that "Hey, it's not okay". They're seeing it on TV now that it's not okay.... We have... very few cases of girls being ridiculed by guys anymore. Girls are being treated more as equals than they ever have been, which is great to see.**

**iii. Teachers' gender relations.**

In North American society, inequality between the genders in the workplace and at home has played an ongoing part in allowing and perpetuating violence against women. The men and women I interviewed at the second school had somewhat different views regarding the gender relations at their school. The women I interviewed felt that issues of gender equality in their workplace had improved compared to the past, but they felt that true equality had not yet been reached. However, the man I interviewed at this school felt there were no gender differences, at least not related to work, and mentioned the equal opportunity policy within the Board of Education

## **CHAPTER 4: DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS**

### **Overview**

When I engaged in this research project, I hoped that a peer-based drama intervention might provide an approach to working with young men that would facilitate raised awareness and attitudinal or behavioral changes regarding violence and violence against women. The findings I have reported based on my participant observation and interviews with young men and teachers provide many indicators that the project had a meaningful impact and facilitated the hoped-for changes. The information I collected revealed that the young men's experiences and reactions were very similar across settings. Additionally, many of the young men's comments about the project were echoed in teacher interviews and my observation notes. This cross-validation lends added credibility to the young men's self-reported changes.

Young men at both schools liked that the play had been created collectively and that it was based on real-life situations that they and their peers could relate to. They also mentioned feelings of pride and accomplishment arising from fulfilling difficult roles and from being part of a worthwhile project which impacted on others (i.e., made audience think, helped some audience members). Finally some of the young men remarked on the relationships that had been developed amongst troupe members and the appreciation of diversity and sense of personal sharing that arose with these relationships.

Young men at both schools reported that their consciousness of violence and its effects had increased because of their participation in the project. Several young

men mentioned the impact of a presentation on the prevalence of violence and the links between violence and different forms of inequality and oppression. The young men were also touched by stories that students shared in workshops and felt that their eyes had been opened to the fact that violence affects people in very real ways. Some of the young men reported that they had an increased understanding and empathy for women's experiences with violence. Several reflected on their own abusive tendencies because of the characters they played. Reactions to the play and characters by audience members (peers) seemed to intensify the self-reflection engaged in by the young men.

The young men also reported that their new awareness of violence had led them to change their attitudes and behaviour toward others. Several young men mentioned feeling more sensitized to violence at their schools and in the media. Several stopped making abusive comments to others. Some of the young men were consciously less controlling in their relationships with young women. Others had changed their behaviour (i.e., less physical fighting, better communication) with siblings because of the project.

The young men also thought the project had been worthwhile and had an important message to convey to their audiences. Several young men hoped that victims and/or perpetrators who saw their play would be motivated to seek help. Finally, most of the young men said they would recommend that other young men get involved in this type of project. They were not convinced that the majority of young men would be comfortable participating in drama; however, they mentioned potential

benefits for those who did: understanding women better, improved relationships with women and people from different social groups, and learning non-violent alternatives for solving problems.

Teachers at both schools commented on the raised awareness and changed attitudes they observed in the young men during question and answer periods following plays and in conversations separate from the project. They also stressed the power of experiential learning and the development of perspective-taking skills provided by drama. Finally, some teachers commented on the effectiveness of peer education and the benefits of building personal connections amongst students.

In the early stages of thought about this research project, I mostly focused on the impact that this type of intervention would have on young men and what attitudinal and behavioral changes it could facilitate. I was also curious to discover which processes the participants would identify as important in the facilitation of these changes. After some initial experience within the settings, it became apparent that the projects' contexts were important in the interpretation of apparent successes and shortcomings.

### **Discussion of the Project Contexts**

The interventions studied within this thesis took place within a larger societal context, in a more specific school environment, and with individuals who brought a personal history to their participation. These three contexts are interrelated and interdependent. For example, the attitudes and values which are apparent in the larger society will to a large extent be reflected in the school milieu through policy,

curriculum, and informal mores. In addition to the socialization which occurs within the school environment, individuals are shaped by experiences within their families and other societal structures. All of these contexts will affect how an intervention evolves and the impact it will have on the individuals involved.

### **Factors which Support Violence against Women**

Factors which are thought to support male violence against women, as reviewed earlier, were apparent within the school contexts: gender inequality, gender-role socialization and prevalence of interpersonal violence.

#### **Gender Inequality**

The presence of inequality between the genders was reflected during some of the students' discussions and in teachers' reflections on gender relations at the schools. There was initial caution about the project being perceived as male-bashing. During some workshop discussions patriarchal and rape-supportive attitudes were voiced by students. Also, when young men commented on false rape accusations or male victims of violence, both male and female students switched conversation topics to focus on their concerns. When teachers were asked about gender relations amongst students, they reported that although many young women seemed more aware of their rights, traditional attitudes regarding gender roles were still apparent. Some teachers noted that young men still played a controlling role in social situations (e.g., parties, dating). At one school several instances of sexual harassment directed at young women by male peers were described. Finally, several male students expressed frustration with feeling blamed for gender inequality and felt discriminated against by hiring quotas.

When teachers were asked to comment on relations among staff at their school, inequality between genders was raised again. Women teachers thought progress had been made toward gender equality in their workplace, but that equality had not been reached. Men teachers reported more equality in the workplace compared to woman. Some male teachers expressed frustration with structures and policies regarding gender equality. Finally, several women teachers believed there was a backlash attitude from some male teachers and students.

Susan Faludi (1991) believes that "antifeminist backlash has been set off not by women's achievement of full equality but by the increased possibility that they might win it. It is a preemptive strike that stops women long before they reach the finish line" (p. xx). Although current structures in the workplace (e.g., equal opportunity legislation) help the movement toward gender equality, attitudes which support male dominance are difficult to change. Men may be resistant to change because they fear a loss of power or status. Additionally, many men feel unfairly blamed for gender inequality and violence against women or discriminated against by measures that are intended to support gender equality. These feelings and attitudes increase men's tendencies to resist and resent the movement toward gender equality.

Backlash reactions seem to be more prominent during tougher economic times. Faludi (1991) proposes that the feminist drive for economic equality directly threatens the definition of masculinity as prime breadwinner. She marks blue collar workers and younger baby boomers, two groups most affected by job losses and lower earning power in a struggling economy, as the loudest voices amongst backlash reactions.



Media campaigns, as described by Faludi (1991), which promote antifeminist sentiment impact on all levels of society including adolescents.

Although many of the adolescents I came in contact with seemed to be aware of and supportive of equal rights for both genders, they were still faced with pressures and expectations that reflect traditional gender roles. One teacher believed that both young women and men acted as if the man's time were more important. Others reported that young men still feel pressure to prove themselves as masculine, often through aggressive sexuality. Although gender roles appear to be in a state of flux, a large proportion of adolescent attitudes and behaviour still reflect socialization practices that prepare men to be in dominant roles over women.

### **Gender-Role Socialization**

Different expectations regarding roles, positions and rights based on gender are learned through socialization practices in families, at schools, and in the larger society.

The young men and teachers whom I interviewed reported many experiences and instances that seem to reflect traditional gender learning. For example, young men at both schools talked about aggressive encounters with other young men at school or in their communities. Most of these situations seemed to reflect a jockeying for dominant position or a need to prove masculinity. The young men in the troupes also talked about rough-housing with male siblings which was described as both affectionate and quite violent. Several young men mentioned feeling excitement and enjoyment from watching violence in the media or during fights at school. Students in the first troupe talked about negative attitudes toward homosexuality. One woman

teacher commented on young women who feel pressured by young men to engage in sexual activity.

Dominance and aggressiveness in sexual and other interactions can be viewed as part of how North American culture defines masculinity. Donald Mosher and Silvan Tomkins (1988) describe a macho script or set of rules that are used for "interpreting, directing, defending, and creating the scenes" which make up the life of the macho man. Mosher and Tomkins describe how young boys are socialized to favour "superior, masculine" emotions such as excitement and anger over "inferior, feminine" traits such as distress and fear. Furthermore, these authors argue that adolescent rites of passage and other processes of enculturation continue this "hypermasculine" socialization (p. 60). The macho man lives in a "dangerous, adversarial world of scarce resources, his violent sexually callous, and dangerous physical acts express his manly essence" (p. 60).

According to Mosher and Tomkins (1993), men's experience of danger may differ drastically from women's. Men may tend to discount their own and others' fear, because it is unmasculine to admit pain or hurt. Mosher and Tomkins describe how the expression of fear is inhibited in young boys through socialization that teaches them to experience disgust and shame at their own "cowardice". Young boys are often forced to face a fear until they habituate to it or confront the fear-inducing stimulus.

Taubman (1986) believes that the psychosocial violence used against young boys to socialize them into the male sex role creates a "lingering sense of shame, powerlessness, self-alienation, isolation from others and retaliatory rage". Coupled

with apparent legitimization of dominance over women these feelings fuel high levels of exploitation. It is interesting to note that the young men at each school who seemed less typically masculine struggled less with differentiating themselves from abusive roles compared to those who were more masculine.

The young men at the second school were seen by others as less masculine because of their connection to the Arts Package programme. Patrick discussed some of the abuse he experienced from other young men because he was a ballet dancer. Additionally, some of the teachers at the school mentioned that young men who were in the Arts Package were generally thought of as strange or gay by other students. Several authors (Segal, 1990; Taubman, 1986) claim that the tremendous pressure exerted on men in North American culture to disassociate from feminine qualities is reflected in homophobia. Lyne Segal writes that "although persecution of homosexuals is most commonly the act of men against a minority of other men, it is also the forced repression of the 'feminine' in all men" (p. 16).

Increased female violence in high schools may be viewed as resulting from widespread valuation of male characteristics, societal acceptance of hierarchical dominance and interpersonal aggression, and a double standard regarding gender-specific behaviour. Diane Kravetz and Linda E. Jones (1981) found that mental health professionals valued traditional masculine characteristics more highly than feminine traits. Furthermore, although an androgynous (both masculine and feminine characteristics) or traditional masculine sex-role orientation was considered healthy for both men and women, a feminine sex-role orientation was not considered healthy for

either gender. These authors concluded that feminine characteristics are not valued unless balanced by an equivalent or greater presence of masculine traits. They further suggest that clinicians may feel it is "more appropriate for women to add culturally-valued male characteristics to their repertoire than for men to add female ones to theirs" (p. 506).

### **Acceptance of Interpersonal Violence**

Both of the high school contexts described in this paper contained actions and attitudes that reflect the acceptance and prevalence of interpersonal aggression. Students at both schools talked about cliques that used violence and verbal abuse to intimidate and harass outsiders. Teachers at both schools talked about the rise in physical violence over the last decade. Additionally, both schools had instituted specific policies in an effort to contain and reduce violence. Teachers also mentioned an increase in fighting among young women. Quite a number of young men believed that physical violence was an effective response to problems and conflicts, or if used in retaliation (e.g., if girlfriend was raped). Many students felt violence was an inevitable part of human nature.

These findings are consistent with Sanday's (1981) description of rape-prone societies based on cross-cultural research. Cultures which contain high levels of interpersonal violence, male dominance and separation of the genders show a high incidence of rape. Rape-free societies minimized interpersonal violence, revered their environment, and treated women with respect. Sanday concludes that "it is not that men are necessarily prone to rape; rather, where interpersonal violence is a way of life,

violence frequently achieves sexual expression" (p 18). The contextual factors described above work to maintain and support male violence against women. Prevention efforts must appraise and counteract these forces to bring about effective change.

### **Discussion of the Intervention Process**

When the young men who participated in drama troupes were asked what they liked about the project and which parts led them to change attitudes and behaviours, their answers reflected several themes: experience of empowerment, drama as a way of learning, and peer-based education.

#### **Experience of Empowerment**

In an overview of the various meanings of empowerment in practice and theory, Isaac Prilleltensky (1994) defined the values underlying this approach as self-determination, distributive justice, and collaborative and democratic participation. These values were achieved in the project through a collaborative process between the students and intervention facilitators. The plays were based on situations that were chosen by the students through collective decision-making and portrayed a message about violence which the students thought was important. The scripts were written collectively with all troupe members given opportunity to participate. The language in the scripts reflected the everyday conversational habits and slang used by the students. All of these factors facilitated the students' feelings of ownership in the project that were reflected in their comments during question and answer periods and wrap-up discussions.

An atmosphere of equality, mutual respect, and fairness was maintained during troupe activities and was modeled in the relationship between the co-facilitators. A respectful, shared leadership between male and female co-facilitators provided a model of an alternative way for genders to interact and be in relationship. Additionally, the facilitators, a decisive, strong woman who commands respect, and a caring, empathic man who values collaboration, modeled nontraditional gender roles. As Lueptow (1984) proposes, nontraditional role models outside of the family may exert a liberating influence regarding gender specific socialization. This example may be especially important for young men who are socialized to be dominant, competitive, individualistic, and in control.

An empowerment approach is based on a belief in the inherent capacity of individuals to select their goals and defend their interests which contrasts with "paternalistic models of intervention which have traditionally operated from an expert-knows-best point of view" (Prilleltensky, 1994, p. 14). This type of experience may be quite unique within a hierarchical school system where teachers are typically the experts and students the passive recipients of knowledge. When students learn to challenge accepted beliefs in an atmosphere of reciprocal learning rather than receiving lectures the results can be expected to be longer lasting (Friere, 1992).

One of the original goals of the interventions described within this thesis was to effect changes in young men regarding violence against women without raising their defensiveness. I believe the empowerment approach used within the project helped to accomplish this goal. The facilitators respected and validated each individual's

viewpoint, while they challenged the students to critique the status quo and look for alternative ways of doing things. This no-blame approach and openness to all opinions allowed students to challenge themselves and each other in an atmosphere of safety and respect.

Several of the personal changes reported by the young men in the interventions are consistent with other research findings on the process of empowerment. For example, John Lord and Peggy Hutchinson (1993) identified increased self-esteem, increased knowledge, pride in accomplishment, more control of living circumstances, a feeling that one's opinions count and are valued, experiencing more equal relationships, and being more empathic and understanding toward others as experiences related to empowerment. This sense of accomplishment and work well-done was expressed by the young men in both drama troupes.

### **Drama as a Way of Learning**

The literature on drama in education claims that drama encourages emotional learning, self-reflection, and empathic understanding of others' viewpoints. Additionally, the active, experiential nature of drama activities may deepen their educational impact (Courtney, 1989; Gray & Mager, 1973). Therefore, drama may provide an especially effective method to counteract socialization for the male gender role within our culture, which focuses on aggressive competition, individualism, dominance and rationalism.

Many of the comments made by the young men, when describing their experiences and reactions to the projects, suggest that the learning described above

was taking place. Some of the young men who participated in the projects reported a greater empathy for women's experiences of violence and a greater ability to take others' perspectives. Those who played abusive roles engaged in self-reflection. Some struggled to differentiate themselves from their abusive characters. Others felt the repetition and intensity of the abusive language and behaviour in the play strengthened their desire to interact kindly and respectfully with others. Several young men remarked on the positive experience of working collaboratively with their peers and expressed appreciation for the relationships they had developed. Finally, some of the young men believed that the opportunity to role-play and act out various situations helped them to develop new skills such as temper control, and assertiveness.

The findings mentioned above are consistent with other research on drama as a learning tool. For example, a study by Michael Chandler (1973) found that a group of chronically delinquent young men (aged 11-15) showed a lesser ability to adopt the roles or perspectives of others compared to non-delinquents of similar intelligence and socioeconomic levels. Chandler (1973) states that this type of egocentrism is related to tendencies to misread others' actions and intentions and to act in ways which are callous and disrespectful to others. Chandler's intervention which employed the use of drama and video-making was found to increase the young men's ability to role-take. Additionally, an 18-month follow-up showed improvements in role-taking to be associated with reduced delinquent behaviour.

Two studies (Johnston, Healey, & Tracey-Magid, 1985; Walsh-Bowers, 1992) with quite dissimilar groups of early adolescents (i.e., white, rural, junior high



students; Summer Theatre with Black, foster-care youth) found that drama interventions successfully facilitated the development of interpersonal skills such as listening to one another, waiting one's turn, understanding others' feelings, solving interpersonal disagreements, criticising constructively, and taking responsibility for tasks. Janis Clark Johnston and her colleagues believe that "the drama situation helps group participants learn about themselves and their relationships with others through interaction in taking roles and experiencing a sequential set of circumstances in terms of their prescribed role" (Johnston, Healey, & Tracey-Magid, 1985, p. 241).

Although the majority of participants in my thesis study were somewhat older than the participants described above, it is fair to assume that their drama experience with the project provided them with similar opportunities to interact with others and enhance interpersonal skills. Additionally, many of their comments on changes in themselves and the parts of the project that brought about these changes directly follow from claims regarding drama's potential for learning.

### **Peer-Based Education**

Peer influence may be seen as another agency of socialization that becomes especially important during adolescence (Gordon & Gilgun, 1987; Lueptow, 1984; Muuss, 1982). For example, adolescents list their peers rather than school-based education as their primary source of sex-related information (Foster, 1987). Foster explains that peer education regarding sexuality was developed because traditional education has minimal impact on rates of adolescent pregnancy and other sexual problems. Adolescents turn to their peers in an effort to develop independence and an

identity that differs from adults (Coleman, 1979). Because of these developmental tendencies, educational efforts using peers may be more effective compared to traditional education.

Several of the comments made by young men in my thesis research focussed on the peer-based nature of the interventions and are consistent with adolescent proclivities. For example, many of the young men stressed that the play was effective because the situations and language were based on situations that they and their peers could relate to. They also mentioned their anticipation and acute awareness of peer reaction toward the play and toward the characters they played. These findings suggest that peer education is an effective approach in interventions with adolescents.

### **Feminist Critique**

Analysis of power differentials and structures that maintain inequalities (i.e., patriarchy) are important foci within feminist critiques of violence against women. The project's decision to identify itself as prevention of violence in relationships rather than violence against women might be viewed as clouding or ignoring the fact that violence is most often committed by men. However, I would argue that this decision allowed the project team to gain entry and effect positive results, including attitudinal and behavioural changes in young men.

Based on my experiences working with men in various prevention efforts I believe that face to face work must moderate intellectual analyses of power and oppression to get the message across without raising defensiveness and totally losing the audience. Taubman (1986) emphasizes that, although men who are exploitive and

violent must be held accountable for their abusive acts, a blaming approach may set off a bravado reaction. Taubman states, "a punitive attitude toward these men is no more likely to promote growth and positive change in them than it is with other clients. Indeed, these clients identify the role of shame and humiliation as a motivating factor in interpersonal exploitation and, therefore, additional shaming and resultant isolation from others can only add to the problem" (p. 16). Because adolescents are not yet fully ensconced in an adult role with its accompanying power, I believe this approach holds especially true when working with younger men.

### **Summary**

The collective peer-based drama process used in the interventions described in this thesis provided the opportunity for young men to work with other young men and women in an atmosphere of equality and mutual respect to accomplish a goal that they shaped. The approach of the project provided young men with experiences that counteracted their traditional male gender role socialization. The chance to interact with women in a collaborative, respectful manner provided an experiential model for gender equality.

Drama focuses on emotional as well as cognitive learning and may facilitate the development of empathy, perspective-taking, and other interpersonal skills. This type of learning helps to counteract male socialization which stresses individualism and avoidance of emotions. Active, experiential learning leads to greater change, self-growth, self-reflection, and less defensiveness.

An approach which is peer-based and empowering leads to student ownership of the project with increased learning and increased potential for change. An empowering, respectful, collective approach involves less blaming (and therefore less need for defensiveness) and invites students' own critiques of gender roles and inequality.

## **CHAPTER 5: CONCLUDING REMARKS**

### **Contributions**

One of the main contributions of my thesis research is the systematic description of peer-based drama interventions with adolescents within their contexts. As mentioned in my review of literature on Theatre in Education and drama-based peer education, there has been very little documentation and/or evaluation of this type of education. Additionally, adolescence seems to be an important developmental stage for educational efforts of this type because of the focus on identity formation and intimate relationships. The intervention approach I have described appears to be an effective method for supporting adolescents in the exploration of sensitive issues.

The information I collected in interviews with teachers and students, combined with my own participant observation, provides a picture from multiple perspectives which validates and strengthens my findings. Additionally, by focusing my research efforts on young men's experiences, I have provided some insight into processes that might be especially effective in reaching young men without raising their defensiveness. Because statistics reveal that the majority of perpetrators of violence are men, it seems especially important to develop methods that facilitate young men in counteracting their socialization. Finally, by sharing the findings of my research with participating schools and school boards, I hope to broaden the potential impact.

### **Weaknesses of Research/Future Directions**

No matter how carefully research is planned and implemented, there always seems to be missing information or an alternative approach that might have yielded

different findings. With the clarity of hindsight I am able to identify several weaknesses in my own research. First, my decision to focus exclusively on the young men in the projects was somewhat artificial and not fully in line with a naturalistic paradigm. The natural unit of inquiry would logically include all participants in the drama troupe (both men and women). It is reasonable to assume that discussions with both genders might differ from talking to young men alone. A comparison of mixed interviews and interviews with young men might have revealed interesting differences; however, this comparison was outside the scope of my thesis.

The fact that my gender and age were different from my participants most likely also impacted on my research findings. The young men who were my participants might have shared different information with a male researcher or someone closer to their age. Additionally, some participants might have anticipated the type of responses I was hoping to hear and provided them rather than sharing their actual reactions. Some young men may have felt inhibited or shy because I was an older woman. Finally, my own biases and perspectives affected my choice of questions and how I asked them, which in turn would impact on participant answers. The interpretation of participant responses and the things noticed and reflected on during participant observation would also change with a different researcher.

My research would have been improved by collecting more information on the school contexts and on gender relations from students' perspectives. Additionally, follow-up interviews with the young men could have helped to ascertain whether reported changes were maintained thereby allowing more confidence in the findings.

Similarly, alternative measures of change such as observed changes based on peer, teacher, and parent reports, would have also strengthened my conclusion that the interventions had the intended effect. Finally, the participants in my research were self-selected to a certain degree, because they were interested and willing to participate in a drama project on violence in relationships. Future research focused on different populations (e.g., young men who are known to be abusive) could provide interesting results with which to compare and contrast.

Although interventions with adolescents and especially young men seem highly warranted, prevention efforts need to be comprehensive. The young men in my study and their male school mates had already experienced a great deal of socialization toward masculinity. If traditional masculinity is related to the tendency to enact violent behaviour, young men may need to be reached in earlier developmental stages. Additionally, education regarding different parenting practices might help to reduce the need to counteract destructive socialization experiences. Continued work to change the systemic structures which maintain gender inequality is necessary. Finally, a shift from individualized, hierarchical, social structures which encourage and support competition and interpersonal violence could work to reduce violence against those in positions of lesser power.

### **How My Perspective Changed**

As mentioned in the introduction to this thesis, I believe that my life experience as a woman within North American culture and my personal encounters with male violence allowed me to bring an important perspective to research on

violence against women. My research experiences have also had a great impact on my outlook and attitudes surrounding this issue. The opportunity to immerse myself in these interventions, to hear my colleagues' perspectives and those of the students and teachers who participated with us has convinced me of the complexity surrounding violence in our culture. I am painfully aware of how slow things change on a systemic level while at the same time I am inspired and elated by the changes I saw on an individual level.

When I first started reading the literature in this area my heart resonated with the feminist analyses of gender inequality and the attitudes which support male violence against women. However, as I worked closely with the young men in the drama troupes, I felt compelled to exercise compassion and patience. In the final phases of my research I realized a new openness and understanding to men's experiences within our culture and the expectations and demands which shape them.

My experience within the projects gives me hope that people of different ages, genders, and personal perspectives can interact and share knowledge in meaningful ways. I believe that the young men and women in the interventions felt safe enough to challenge us (i.e., the project personnel) and supported enough to challenge themselves. I found my experience with the interventions to be exciting, enjoyable, and an important part of my healing process. The people I worked with instilled me with hope and inspiration.



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**APPENDIX A:**  
**Interview Questions for Young Men**

## **INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR YOUNG MEN IN DRAMA PROJECTS**

I appreciate your taking the time to participate in this discussion. I'd like to tell you a little bit about why I'm talking to you and not the young women involved in the projects. I believe that as young men your thoughts about the project are really important. For one thing, the majority of prevention projects about violence have been run for young women. Also drama projects on most topics have fewer men involved than women. So there is less information about what men think about this kind of project. Although attitudes about how men and women should act are changing, I believe that our society still holds expectations that men and women should be different. Historically it has been men who were expected to fight in wars, play physically rough sports, and defend their honour by fighting. It's probably still more acceptable for men to be physically rough than for women. Each one of you grew up with these attitudes around you to some extent. So each one of you has different ways of thinking about and dealing with violence. Because of that I think that the thoughts and personal reactions you have about the drama project are really important.

1. What did you like and dislike about the drama project?
2. What was it like to play the role you did?
3. How did your views about violence change from being in the project?
4. How did being in the project change how you act with your family, your male and female friends, or in your romantic relationships.
5. Which parts of the project had the biggest impact on you? Why?
6. What was the play's message in your words? How do you feel about the way it was conveyed?
7. Would you tell your male friends to get involved in a project like this? Why?
8. How do you think being in a drama project would affect other young men?

**APPENDIX B:**  
**Interview Questions for Teachers/Administrators**

**INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR TEACHERS/STAFF RE: DRAMA PROJECTS**

1. Could you please describe your involvement with the violence prevention project.
2. What are your thoughts and feelings about the violence prevention project? (e.g., workshops, performances, project personnel)
  - a) From your point of view what were the strengths and weaknesses of this violence prevention project?
  - b) What would you change if you were involved in a similar project?
3. What kind of impact did this violence project have on students?
  - a) Were there repercussions that you are aware of? (e.g., personal disclosures)
  - b) What do you think of drama compared to other formats for educating students about violence?
  - c) How did young men in the school feel about this project? (i.e., did they feel blamed for violence)
4. What kind of impact did this violence prevention project have on teachers and administration at your school?
5. What attitudes about violence in relationships are you aware of at your school?
  - a) amongst students
  - b) amongst teachers/administration.
6. Could you please describe gender relations at your school.
  - a) formal guidelines
  - b) day-to-day basis, amongst teachers/administration
  - b) day-to-day basis, between teachers and students
  - c) day-to-day basis, amongst students
7. Do you foresee any barriers or difficulties for this type of intervention within the school system?

## **APPENDIX C**

### **Information Letters and Consent Forms**

### **ADDITIONAL CONSENT FORM FOR DRAMA TROUPE AT FIRST SCHOOL**

I give consent to the Community Education Team members (Holt, Tammie, Judy, Darlene, and Richard) to use information from video and audio-taped portions of the drama rehearsals (e.g., improvisations for script development) and performances (e.g., question and answer period) in write-ups and or presentations related to the project. I understand that this information will be kept confidential, and that I will not be personally identified. I also understand that I will receive write-ups based on this information before it is made public.

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Participant: \_\_\_\_\_

I give consent to Tammie Brunk to use information from the drama project rehearsal/performance tapes (as described above) and from the evaluation interviews in her Master's thesis. I understand that this information will be kept confidential, and that I will not be personally identified. I also understand that I will receive write-ups based on this information before it is made public.

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Participant: \_\_\_\_\_

I give consent to Tammie Brunk to contact me about further involvement in her thesis project. I understand that, if I am contacted, I can decline to participate.

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Participant: \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_

**COMMUNITY EDUCATION TEAM**  
**WILFRID LAURIER UNIVERSITY**  
 funded by  
**THE MINISTRY OF EDUCATION AND TRAINING**  
 884-1970 ext: 4169

**INFORMATION LETTER FOR DRAMA TROUPES**

**COMMUNITY EDUCATION TEAM  
WILFRID LAURIER UNIVERSITY  
(884-1970 ext. 4169)  
funded by  
THE MINISTRY OF EDUCATION**

**Tammie Brunk (Evaluation Assistant)  
Judy Gould (Principal Investigator)  
Holt Sivak (Drama Facilitator)  
Darlene Spencer (Drama Coordinator)  
Dr. Richard Walsh-Bowers (Project Supervisor)**

Dear Potential Participant,

The Community Education Team members, Darlene Spencer, Judy Gould, Holt Sivak, and Tammie Brunk, are involved in a drama project at your high school which is focused on preventing violence in relationships. This project is funded through the Ministry of Education and Training and is supervised by Dr. Richard Walsh-Bowers, Department of Psychology, Wilfrid Laurier University. The project consists of preliminary drama workshops, the creation and rehearsal of a script about violence and final drama performances. Students involved in workshops will participate in drama exercises which are intended to encourage interaction and discussion amongst the students. During the discussions, students will be asked about their thoughts on violence in relationships. The project's drama troupe members (i.e., high school students who are helping to run the workshops) will then write a script based on the information collected during workshop discussions. The final script will be performed by the drama troupe during school assemblies. Additionally, the Community Education Team members will evaluate the project by asking students which parts they liked and disliked and how things could be improved.

The goal of this project is to learn more about high school students' experiences and attitudes regarding violence and to aid in the prevention of violence. The project team members, Judy, Darlene, Tammie, Holt, and Richard, are aware that talking about violence can be upsetting. Therefore, we will conduct drama and evaluation activities with sensitivity to different experiences and perspectives. We do not expect students to share their personal experiences with violence unless they wish to. Additionally, the guidance counsellors in your school are aware of this project, and are there to talk if you wish. Finally, even though violence is quite common in our society, we believe that positive changes are currently taking place and that each one of us can make a difference.

Project personnel (Holt, Judy, Tammie, Darlene, and Richard) are interested in describing your experience as a member of the drama troupe. Your thoughts, feelings, and reactions give us valuable information about how the project is working and about things that we could improve. The drama coordinator (Darlene) and members of the evaluation team (Judy, Tammie, or Holt) will be present during all project phases and will be documenting and reflecting on the various components. With your permission, we would like to tape record some of the group discussions used to develop the script. Additionally, we would like to hold group and/or individual interviews

with members of the drama troupe. The information we collect from you will help us to make this type of programme available to others.

Group and individual interviews will take from one to two hours in total and will be held during rehearsal time or after performances. With your permission, we will also tape record interviews. Participation in interviews is voluntary and will not affect student grades. If there are any questions which you prefer not to answer, please feel free to decline. If at any time you wish to stop your participation, please feel free to withdraw. Only members of the project team (Judy, Darlene, Tammie, Richard, and Holt) will listen to the discussion and interview tapes. After the tapes have been typed up, we will erase them. We will securely store transcribed interviews/discussions and consent forms at the project office (232 King St., #110).

The project personnel might use the information from discussions and interviews in written reports to the Ministry of Education and Training, publications, and/or presentations; however, we will not use names to identify participants. Additionally, some of the team members might use information from discussions and interviews as part of their thesis or course work for university programmes. We will make documentation of discussions and interviews available to you for approval and editing. If there are quotes or descriptions that you do not wish included in write-ups, please let us know. Finally, if you have questions about the project, please feel free to contact the project supervisor, Richard Walsh-Bowers at 884-1970 ext. 6630 or anyone on the project team at 884-1970 ext. 4169.

If you are willing to participate in taped discussions and interviews as part of the project, please sign the attached consent form. This form indicates that you understand the purpose of the discussions and interviews and that your participation is voluntary. This form does not obligate you to participate in all interviews or to allow taping of all discussions.

Yours sincerely,

The Community Education Team



**CONSENT FORM - DRAMA TROUPES**

I understand the purpose of the evaluation interviews and the request to tape record group discussions as outlined in the attached letter. I also understand that my responses will be kept confidential and that I will not be personally identified in reports or presentations which include information from discussions and interviews. I understand that I can refuse to have discussions tape recorded and that I can decline to answer any interview question or to leave an interview at any time.

This consent form indicates that I understand that my participation in discussions and interviews is voluntary and that I have given my permission to have my responses tape recorded, unless I indicate otherwise.

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Participant: \_\_\_\_\_

Interviewer: \_\_\_\_\_

**COMMUNITY EDUCATION TEAM  
WILFRID LAURIER UNIVERSITY  
funded by  
THE MINISTRY OF EDUCATION**

Team members: Dr. Richard Walsh-Bowers (Project Supervisor)  
Darlene Spencer (Drama Coordinator)  
Judy Gould (Principal Investigator)  
Holt Sivak (Drama Facilitator)  
Tammie Brunk (Evaluation Assistant)

Telephone: 884-1970 ext: 4169

**PARENTAL INFORMATION LETTER - DRAMA TROUPES**

**COMMUNITY EDUCATION TEAM  
WILFRID LAURIER UNIVERSITY  
(884-1970 ext. 4169)**

**funded by  
THE MINISTRY OF EDUCATION**

**Tammie Brunk (Evaluation Assistant)  
Judy Gould (Principal Investigator)  
Holt Sivak (Drama Facilitator)  
Darlene Spencer (Drama Coordinator)  
Dr. Richard Walsh-Bowers (Project Supervisor)**

Dear Parent/Guardian,

The Community Education Team members, Darlene Spencer, Judy Gould, Holt Sivak, and Tammie Brunk, are involved in a drama project at your daughter's or son's high school which is focused on preventing violence in relationships. This project is funded through the Ministry of Education and Training and is supervised by Dr. Richard Walsh-Bowers, Department of Psychology, Wilfrid Laurier University. The project consists of preliminary drama workshops, the creation and rehearsal of a script about violence, and final drama performances. Students involved in workshops will participate in drama exercises which are intended to encourage interaction and discussion amongst the students. During the discussions, we will ask students about their thoughts on violence in relationships. The project's drama troupe members (i.e., high school students who are helping to run the workshops) will then write a script based on the information collected during workshop discussions. The final script will be performed by the drama troupe during school assemblies. Additionally, the Community Education Team members will evaluate the project by asking students which parts they liked and disliked and how things could be improved.

The goal of this project is to learn more about high school students' experiences and attitudes regarding violence and to aid in the prevention of violence. The project team members, Judy, Darlene, Tammie, Holt, and Richard, are aware that talking about violence can be upsetting. Therefore, we will conduct drama and evaluation activities with sensitivity to different experiences and perspectives. We do not expect students to share their personal experiences with violence unless they wish to. Additionally, the guidance counsellors in the school are aware of this project, and are there to talk to your daughter or son if needed. Finally, even though violence is quite common in our society, we believe that positive changes are currently taking place and that each one of us can make a difference.

Your daughter's or son's drama class will be participating in the project described above. She or he will be involved in drama workshops, script writing, rehearsals, and performances. Another part of the project, performed by the evaluation team, will involve description and evaluation of the various activities. We wish to learn about the experiences and reactions of people involved in the project. Therefore, members of the evaluation team will participate in and describe your daughter's or son's time with the project. If you and your daughter or son agree, we will tape record discussions used to develop the drama characters and script. Additionally, we

would like to interview your daughter or son about her or his experience with the project and how it affected her or him. Participation in interviews is completely voluntary and will not affect student grades. Your daughter's or son's thoughts, feelings, and reactions give us valuable information about how the project is working and about things that we could improve. The information we collect from students involved in this project will help us to make this type of programme available to others.

We will ask your daughter or son questions about her or his experience during group and/or individual interviews at scheduled rehearsals and after performances. The total time for evaluation will be approximately two hours. Interviews will be tape recorded if you and your daughter or son agree. Only members of the project team (Judy, Darlene, Tammie, Richard, and Holt) will listen to the interview tapes. After the tapes have been typed up, we will erase them. We will securely store transcribed interviews and consent forms at the project office (232 King St., #110). If there are any questions which your daughter or son prefers not to answer, she or he is free to decline. If at any time your daughter or son wishes to stop the interview, she or he is free to withdraw.

The project personnel might use the information from interviews in written reports to the Ministry of Education and Training, publications, and/or presentations. Additionally, some of the team members might use information from discussions and interviews as part of their thesis or course work for university programmes. We will not use names to identify participants, and we will make write-ups of discussions and interviews available to your daughter or son for approval and editing before the information is made public. Also, if you have questions about any other part of the evaluation, please feel free to contact the project supervisor, Richard Walsh-Bowers at 884-1970 ext. 6630 or the project team at 884-1970 ext. 4169.

The research reviewers at your school board have approved this project. We will conduct the evaluation according to Wilfrid Laurier University's ethical standards. If you are willing to have your daughter or son participate in this evaluation, please sign the attached consent form.

Yours sincerely,

The Community Education Team

## PARENTAL CONSENT FORM - DRAMA TROUPES

I give permission for my daughter or son to answer evaluation questions about her or his experience with the drama project. I also give permission to tape record my daughter's or son's responses during group discussions, if she or he agrees. I understand that her/his responses will be kept confidential and that she/he not be personally identified in reports or presentations. I understand that she or he can refuse to have discussions tape recorded and that she or he can decline to answer any interview question or to leave an interview at any time.

Name of Child: \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Birth: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Parent/Guardian

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

Address for copy of results:

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**COMMUNITY EDUCATION TEAM  
WILFRID LAURIER UNIVERSITY  
funded by  
THE MINISTRY OF EDUCATION**

Team members:      Tammie Brunk (Evaluation Assistant)  
                             Judy Gould (Principal Investigator)  
                             Holt Sivak (Drama Facilitator)  
                             Darlene Spencer (Drama Coordinator)  
                             Dr. Richard Walsh-Bowers (Project Supervisor)

Telephone:            884-1970 ext: 4169

**INFORMATION LETTER - TEACHER/STAFF INTERVIEW**

**COMMUNITY EDUCATION TEAM  
WILFRID LAURIER UNIVERSITY  
(884-1970 ext. 4169)  
funded by  
THE MINISTRY OF EDUCATION  
Supervisor)**

**Tammie Brunk (Evaluation Assistant)  
Judy Gould (Principal Investigator)  
Holt Sivak (Drama Facilitator)  
Darlene Spencer (Drama Coordinator)  
Dr. Richard Walsh-Bowers (Project**

Dear Potential Participant,

The Community Education Team members, Darlene Spencer, Judy Gould, Holt Sivak, and Tammie Brunk, are involved in a drama project at your high school which is focused on preventing violence in relationships. This project is funded through the Ministry of Education and Training and is supervised by Dr. Richard Walsh-Bowers, Department of Psychology, Wilfrid Laurier University. The project consists of preliminary drama workshops, the creation and rehearsal of a script about violence and final drama performances. Students involved in workshops will participate in warm-up exercises which are intended to encourage interaction and discussion amongst the students. During the discussions, students will be asked about their thoughts on violence in relationships. The project's drama troupe members (i.e., high school students who are helping to run the workshops) will then write a script based on the information collected during workshop discussions. The final script will be performed by the drama troupe during school assemblies. Additionally, the Community Education Team members will evaluate the project by asking students which parts they liked and disliked and how things could be improved.

The goal of this project is to learn more about high school students' experiences and attitudes regarding violence and to aid in the prevention of violence. The project team members, Judy, Darlene, Tammie, Holt, and Richard, are aware that talking about violence can be upsetting. Therefore, we will conduct drama and evaluation activities with sensitivity to different experiences and perspectives. We do not expect students to share their personal experiences with violence unless they wish to. Additionally, the guidance counsellors in your school are aware of this project, and are there to talk if you wish. Finally, even though violence is quite common in our society, we believe that positive changes are currently taking place and that each one of us can make a difference.

The project personnel (Holt, Judy, Tammie, Darlene, and Richard) are interested in you telling the story of what you did in relation to this project and how it affected you. Your thoughts, feelings, and reactions give us valuable information about how the project is working and about things that we could improve. The information we collect from you will help us to make this type of programme available to others.

We would like to conduct interviews with teachers and staff who were closely related with this drama project. The interview will take approximately one hour and will be tape recorded, with your permission. If there are any questions which you prefer not to answer, please feel free to decline. If at any time you wish to stop your participation, please feel free to withdraw. Only members of the project team (Judy, Darlene, Tammie, Richard, and Holt) will listen to the interview tapes. After the tapes have been typed up, we will erase them. We will securely store transcribed interviews and consent forms at the project office (232 King St., #110).

The project personnel might use the information from interviews in written reports to the Ministry of Education and Training, publications, and/or presentations; however, we will not use names to identify participants. Additionally, some of the team members might use information from discussions and interviews as part of their thesis or course work for university programmes. We will make write-ups based on interviews available to you for approval and editing before it is made public. If there are quotes or descriptions that you do not wish included in write-ups, please let us know. Finally, if you have questions about the project, please feel free to contact the project supervisor, Richard Walsh-Bowers at 884-1970 ext. 6630 or anyone on the project team at 884-1970 ext. 4169.

If you are willing to participate in an interview, please sign the attached consent form. This form indicates that you understand the purpose of the interviews and that your participation is voluntary.

Yours sincerely,

The Community Education Team

**CONSENT FORM - TEACHER INTERVIEW**

I understand the purpose of this interview as outlined in the attached letter. I also understand that my responses will be kept confidential and that I will not be personally identified in reports or presentations which include information from my interviews. I understand that I can choose to decline to answer any question or to leave an interview at any time.

This consent form indicates that my participation is voluntary and that I have given my permission to have my responses tape recorded.

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Participant: \_\_\_\_\_

Interviewer: \_\_\_\_\_

**COMMUNITY EDUCATION TEAM  
WILFRID LAURIER UNIVERSITY  
funded by  
THE MINISTRY OF EDUCATION**

Team members: Dr. Richard Walsh-Bowers (Project Supervisor)  
Darlene Spencer (Drama Coordinator)  
Judy Gould (Principal Investigator)  
Holt Sivak (Drama Facilitator)  
Tammie Brunk (Evaluation Assistant)

Telephone: 884-1970 ext: 4169