

SOCIAL ART EFFECT:
THE A/R/TOGRAPHY AND COMPLEXITY OF THEATRE EDUCATION
LEARNING SYSTEMS, DEVELOPMENTAL STAGES,
AND CHANGE MECHANISMS

by

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Abstract

This study examined how the *Compassion Project*, a collective theatre and social learning program, fostered positive youth and group development. The *Compassion Project* involved over 200 secondary students who participated in four theatre-making and social learning phases, where they inquired upon the topic of safe and caring schools. Through the process of collective theatre-making, students co-created two original plays (*The Flip Side* and *Focus*) about their social and emotional experiences in school. A/r/tography, the arts education research methodology for this study, emphasizes living inquiry and reflective practice through the examination of the in-between spaces of art-making/researching/teaching (a/r/t). Expanding upon the field of a/r/tography, this study introduces the *rendering of the fourth wall* as a theatre education research lens. By conceptualizing the theatre classroom as a stage, the *rendering of the fourth wall* directs attention to several perspectives: to the students, teacher-directors, players, and audience on both the classroom and stage sides; to the spaces in between the imaginary world of the play and the real life experiences of the inquirers; and, to the theatre-making and reflective practices. Based on observations, interviews, circle talks, and students' written reflections, stories, and scripts, the data are analyzed and presented throughout the dissertation. The findings are conceptualized as the *social art effects*, which are the benefits that result from students' social and theatre-making actions and interactions. The conceptualization also combines psychological, pedagogical, and theatre-based theories, such as positive psychology, complexity in education, and collective theatre. As a way to organize the data, the findings on the *social art effect* are categorized into three components: *learning systems*, *developmental stages*, and *change mechanisms*. This study illustrates how students' social conditions are critical, and precede learning conditions. Furthermore, this study emphasizes the importance of integrating social learning and complex systems theories into the curriculum as a way to optimize learning spaces and to foster positive youth and group development.

Preface

Ethics approval was required for this research.

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Chapter One Theatre as a Social Art

Compassion is the radicalism of our time.

The Dalai Lama

The *Compassion Project* engaged over 200 secondary students through a wide range of social and theatre-making experiences as a way to inquire on the topic of safe and caring schools. One core concept of a/r/tography is that arts-based inquirers are engaged in an ever-evolving process of becoming and *moving closer to an idea* (Irwin and Springgay, 2008). During my study on the *Compassion Project*, I realized that my overlapping theatre-based art-making/researching/teaching practices moved me towards a core idea: *theatre is a social art*. This is the foundation of my analysis.

Taylor (2006) argues strongly that writers of theatre education research need to integrate multiple voices, multiple interpretations, and multi-textual approaches. *The Compassion Project* addresses this concern by giving voice to students through discussions, expressions, and reflections of various theatre activities. As a way to enable the students' voices to be heard, excerpts of students' script work and written reflections are presented in this study and interwoven with my ideas and analysis in order to situate my findings within the research framework. As a snapshot into my study, below is an example of my students' theatre work (Beare and Writing Team, 2010a). In phase four of the *Compassion Project*, one relevant topic that students chose to explore was weapons in schools and its consequences. Deriving from their theatre-based inquiry process, students co-created an original script *Focus*, in which the central character, Tyler, brings a weapon to school with the intent to cause harm to his classmates.

[Data] *(The curtain opens. Lights up on over 50 characters in a typical high school cafeteria at lunch time. They are frozen, like statues. DEATH rises from the central table and stands in a spotlight. She wears jeans, boots, and a rocker shirt. She smiles. Electric guitar music begins.)*

DEATH: *(Singing.) Yesterday was plain; you think it's all the same
In one minute I'll change it, life is just a game
All of your silly actions, cause some kind of reaction
And everything leads back to me*

(Video image of TYLER in his bedroom speaking into his laptop.)

TYLER: *If you're watching this, then that means - that means that I did it. All that's left of me is this video. The human brain can last 4 minutes without oxygen, before the damage becomes irreversible. My sister was carried out of Wes's party in a coma. A month later she died. But you don't care. All you care about is partying, hooking up, getting drunk... You don't care about the girl passed out, slumped up against the basement wall. You just left her there, for hours. All you saw was some druggie passed out, but she was my sister. You have no idea how hard it was on her when my Dad fought in Afghanistan and came back all shot up. You have no idea what she was going through. But she was surrounded by all of you, and you did nothing. Well today, today I'm doing something so you never forget.*

MOTHER: *(Heard off screen.) Tyler, what are you doing? You're going to be late for school.*

TYLER: *Don't worry, I'll be on time.*

(Video image of TYLER closing his laptop screen. Blackout.)

[Scene excerpt from the play, *Focus*, Phase IV.]

A/r/tography is the research methodology of this study, which centers on the unfolding interactions, discoveries, and meaning-making that derives from art-making practices. In this study, my a/r/tographical practice is presented in two main ways: first, I share my observations and analysis of my students' social and theatre-making actions and intersections in the *Compassion Project*, and second, I present my students' theatre creations and their written reflections based on their inquiry process on safe and caring schools.

In general, this study is most interested in the change process of secondary theatre-makers. Canadian researchers on complexity, Westley, Zimmerman, and Patton (2007), explain that the study of relationships is key to understanding the change process of organizations. They state that by carefully studying the unpredictable dynamics of relationships, researchers can better understand how ideas and actions are expressed, mobilized, and transformed. The core intent of my research is to study how the social and theatre-making actions and interactions of theatre-makers foster positive youth and group development. As a way to synthesize my analysis and ideas, I conceptualize the *social art effect*.

The term *art* is defined "as beauty or emotional power, works produced by human creative skill or imagination, subjects of study primarily concerned with human creativity and social life" (Oxford Dictionary, 2011). Art derives from the Latin word *ars* which means "skill method" or "technique", and has a connotation of beauty. The term *social* is defined as

“relating to society or its organization; relating to rank status in society; needing companionship and therefore best suited to living in communities” (Oxford Dictionary, 2011). *Social* derives from the Latin words, *socialis*, meaning ‘allied’, and from *socius*, meaning ‘friend’. In this study, ***social art*** refers to the act of engaging in theatre-making actions and interactions by a community of theatre-makers.

As a theatre-maker/researcher/teacher I carefully inquire on the *social art* components that unfold within my secondary theatre classrooms. I work eclectically, and as a consequence, I am not entrenched in any specific theatre technique. After 25 years of co-constructing original theatre with youth, I feel very comfortable dwelling in the unpredictable and ever-changing elements of the creative process. I trust that human development, the *collective theatre-making process*, and the theatre curriculum will unfold and interconnect organically from the strengths, curiosities, and efforts of the students. With each new theatre group, the theatre process takes us, as inquirers, towards new and unexpected pathways; since no two groups are alike, no two theatre experiences are alike. As a result, my writing does not concentrate on producing theatre education templates and curriculum plans; instead, I offer a conceptual framework of the *social art effect*. In this study, the ***social art effect*** refers to the positive benefits that result from the theatre students’ social and theatre-making actions and interactions. Before I provide a research overview on the *social art effect*, first I present my background as a theatre artist/researcher/teacher and how I situate myself in this study.

My Background

Westley, Zimmerman, and Patton (2007) explain that the development of a powerful social program often begins with an individual person’s life calling. For some, a life calling is to raise children, to travel the world, or to feed the homeless, while for others it is to climb the corporate ladder, to make money, or to paint a breath-taking landscape. I am compelled professionally and spiritually to combine my love for theatre, education, and psychology. For the past 20 years, I have taught theatre in both secondary and middle schools, and currently I teach part-time theatre at a secondary public school in the Greater Vancouver area, which is also the site for my study. The majority of the students at this school are Caucasian, with the second largest population coming from the Iranian community. There is also a large community of international students from all around the world. The school is located in an affluent neighbourhood with strong parental and community ties. Typically, I teach the senior

theatre courses such as acting, directing, and scriptwriting. Using a co-curricular model, I co-direct original plays with a cast and crew of 100 to 200 students per production, which usually combines between four to ten sections of secondary theatre, film, dance, and production classes. Since 1988, I have co-created over two dozen original plays with youth: four years at a university and in blue-collar schools in Windsor, Ontario; four years in inner-city schools in Toronto; and fifteen years in a Greater Vancouver school. For the past six years, my school has participated in the Regional High School Drama Festival, and four times we advanced to the Sear's BC Provincial High School Drama Festival. Also, I coach competitive high school improvisation in the Canadian Improv Games, where we advanced to the national games in Ottawa six times, and placed first nationally once.

For the past ten years I have been researching *theatre for positive youth and group development*. In addition to my training and experience in theatre education, I have a master's degree in counselling psychology, and I am trained to counsel individuals and groups. Overall, I understand how theatre, education, and psychology intersect with one another. In this study, I integrate the following concepts: a/r/tography, secondary theatre education, collective theatre, complexity in education, positive psychology, social and emotional learning, and therapeutic enactments (a branch of psychodrama). At a later point, I present my complexity in collective theatre-making approach to highlight my philosophy and practice of facilitating youth and groups.

Chiefly, my writing does not focus on critical theory, performance theory, or other critical-based theatre methods, such as devised theatre, forum theatre, applied theatre, popular theatre, theatre of the oppressed, or theatre-based action research. My purpose is to examine the social components of theatre-making, and vice versa; as such, I stand outside the realms of social justice, social theatre, social work, sociology, and social constructivism. At no point in this study do I focus on social transformation, power, oppression, marginalization, classism, or socialism. While these concepts are, arguably, highly interconnected to my work, my research on the *social art effect* is rooted in psychological and pedagogical theories that are systems-oriented and focused on the enhancement of human strengths.

In order to illustrate some of the complex social issues explored by students in their theatre-based inquiry process, another excerpt of Tyler's story is provided below. In this scene, students make connections between safe and caring schools and substance abuse.

[Data] *(Flashback scene: One year before school lockdown. There is a video image of TYLER'S sister, RAE, walking up to a house party. She is very nervous. She enters. Loud dance music is played. Feeling uncomfortable, she moves through the living room with people dancing, mingling, and drinking. She looks for CLIFF, but he is not there. After failed phone calls, she believes CLIFF intentionally stood her up. She is mocked by drunk peers at the party. Eventually, she hides in the basement, and then takes handfuls of her father's prescription pills. Video fades out. In a pool of light TYLER is seen in his bedroom doing homework on his laptop. The cell phone rings. He answers. Faint sobs on the other end of the line. Muffled dance music is heard nearby. Lights up on RAE in the basement at the house party. She slurs her words as she talks on the cell phone.)*

TYLER: *Hello?*

RAE: *I shouldn't have come here.*

TYLER: *Rae?*

RAE: *I'm making such a fool out of myself.*

TYLER: *What's going on?*

RAE: *No one even cares I'm here... like I'm some joke.*

TYLER: *Tell me where you are and I'll come get you.*

RAE: *You know what?*

TYLER: *What?*

RAE: *He was right. I took his pills.*

TYLER: *What?*

RAE: *I'm a horrible person, aren't I?*

TYLER: *No, you're not.*

RAE: *Sometimes, sometimes, I just wish Dad had died in the war.*

TYLER: *Don't say that.*

(WES and JESSE enter.)

WES: *What are you doing down here?*

RAE: *(Trying to stop herself from crying.) Leave me alone.*

TYLER: *Rae?*

WES: *You better not throw up on the carpet!*

RAE: *Screw you, Wes!*

(RAY tries to get up but falls.)

JESSE: *Wow she's wrecked. Hey, let me help you...*

WES: *Nah, man, leave her be. She's just going to pass out, I see it all the time.*

JESSE: *Maybe we should bring her upstairs.*

WES: *No way, she'll just ruin the party.*

JESSE: *But Wes...*

WES: *Come on, Jesse, let's go.*

(WES and JESSE exit.)

TYLER: What's going on? Rae, tell me where you are!

RAE: Tyler I have to go?

(Phone line goes dead. Lights off RAE.)

TYLER: Rae? Rae?

(Flashback end. Lights up on cafeteria. TYLER responds in present time.)

TYLER: Rae...

(TYLER turns and looks at WES sitting at the nearby cafeteria table. He holds his black bag more tightly.)

[Scene excerpt from the play, *Focus*, Phase IV.]

Through the process of co-creating scripts based on the strengths of students, significant social issues emerged organically during the students' theatre-based inquiry process. In my writing on the *social art effect*, I illustrate and conceptualize in great detail how the *collective theatre-making process* fosters positive youth and group development.

Rationale for Research

As illustrated in the scene above, adolescents work through a wide range of developmental issues which are unique to the teenage years: dependence/independence, conformity/individuality, acceptance/rejection, and need for approval/experimentation and risk-taking, and identity formation/identity crisis (Corey, 2011). Tolan and Dodge (2005) write that one in five youth suffers from developmental, emotional, and behavioural problems, and requires professional support. Hymel, Schonert-Reichl, and Miller (2006) report that one in five youth experience significant mental health problems and have trouble functioning in regular schools. Moreover, many of these youth who require mental health services remain undiagnosed. Youth who are unable to find success in school are at greater risk to negative influences such as peer rejection, discrimination, bullying, dropping out, substance abuse, sexually transmitted diseases, gang activity, depression, and suicide (Canadian Institute for Health Information, 2005; McDougall, Hymel, Vaillancourt, and Mercer, 2001).

[Data] *SCENE: Air*

*S.R.: i am pulled away by the vacuum of the tide
a tsunami engulfs the shores of my mind
and i have tears in my eyes
as I am lost drowning in the school system
i wont survive
failing, failing, floating
in the dark
saltwater stains upon skin as pale as a shark
and i desperately need to obtain this mark
but i have failed
left floating
breathless and blue
in a place cold and full of solitude
drowning desperate desolate
in oceans of incompletes
swimming with so many defeats
so throw me a life vest
because i need some air in my chest.*

[Scene excerpt from the play, *The Flip Side*, Phase III.]

Based on my own teaching and counseling practice in schools, my attempts at reaching the challenging one in five youth often failed. Due to limited time and resources, it was not practical to provide regular and ongoing one-on-one support for students. When I worked as a full-time teacher, I taught over 200 students. When I worked as a school counselor, I had a case load of 250 students. In general, the imbalanced adult to student ratio within the school system makes it very challenging for adults to provide adequate support for youth with serious socio-emotional needs. As a way to address this concern, I study youth groups and organizations. Instead of reaching students one at a time, I take a systems approach to facilitate groups of youth, and to guide groups to support individual members of the group.

Watson (2003), a researcher on attachment theory, writes that belonging is a basic human need, and we, as humans, are biologically wired to form emotional bonds and attachments with others. Research indicates that during the adolescent years, peer relationship is a key factor that fosters positive youth development. Shechtman (2007) writes, “For children and adolescents, positive peer relationships have been found to be the strongest protective factor and the most significant predictor of antisocial behaviour” (p.13). Bidy and

Posterski (2000) compared the data on 15,000 Canadian teens in the 1980s and 1990s to the data of Canadian teens in the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s, and they found that in all five decades, research showed that teens picked *being with friends* as their *most enjoyable* activity. This goes to show that the core value system of teens has been constant for 50 years, and like humans of all ages, teenagers are social beings who value significant relationships beyond anything else.

Nevertheless, while peer relationships are essential, friendship alone is often not enough to foster positive youth development as youth need support and guidance from caring adults. Bidy and Posterski (2000) report that Canadian youth most in need of support tend to avoid turning to professionals for help; instead, they turn to friends. Overall, adolescents have a strong need for privacy as well as connection with peers who provide privacy. Bidy and Posterski asked youth who they would turn to when they have *major personal problems*: 48% of teens turn to *friends*, 37% turn to *parents*, and only 2% turn to *counsellors*. Only 1 in 5 students turn to school counsellors for career/school concerns, and even more disturbingly, only 1 in 50 students turn to school counsellors for personal problems. When it comes to making major life decisions, such as choosing a college, a job placement, or a career choice, teens turn to parents first. When it comes to typical day-to-day adolescent problems and concerns, teens turn to friends first. In both cases, high school teachers and counsellors are often left out of the loop. While support from friends is highly beneficial for youth development, research indicates that most teens do not have the life experiences, education, or the resources to support friends who are struggling with serious psychological concerns, or who are engaged in destructive or anti-social behaviours (Offer and Schonert-Reichl, 1992). In other words, youth who most need support from caring adults are not getting it. Thus, it is essential that teachers and youth care professionals in the education system find social ways to reach youth in schools. One such alternative is through youth organizations.

Research on youth organization and positive youth development indicate strong correlations between youth participating in social and emotional learning programs, and increased academic achievement and pro-social benefits (Elias and Arnold, 2006; Goleman, 2006; Goleman, 1995; Hymel, et al., 2006; Larson, Hansen, and Moneta, 2006; Zins, Weissberg, Wang, and Walberg, 2004). Also, research indicates that youth organizations support youth development by providing safe avenues for youth to gather in social spaces

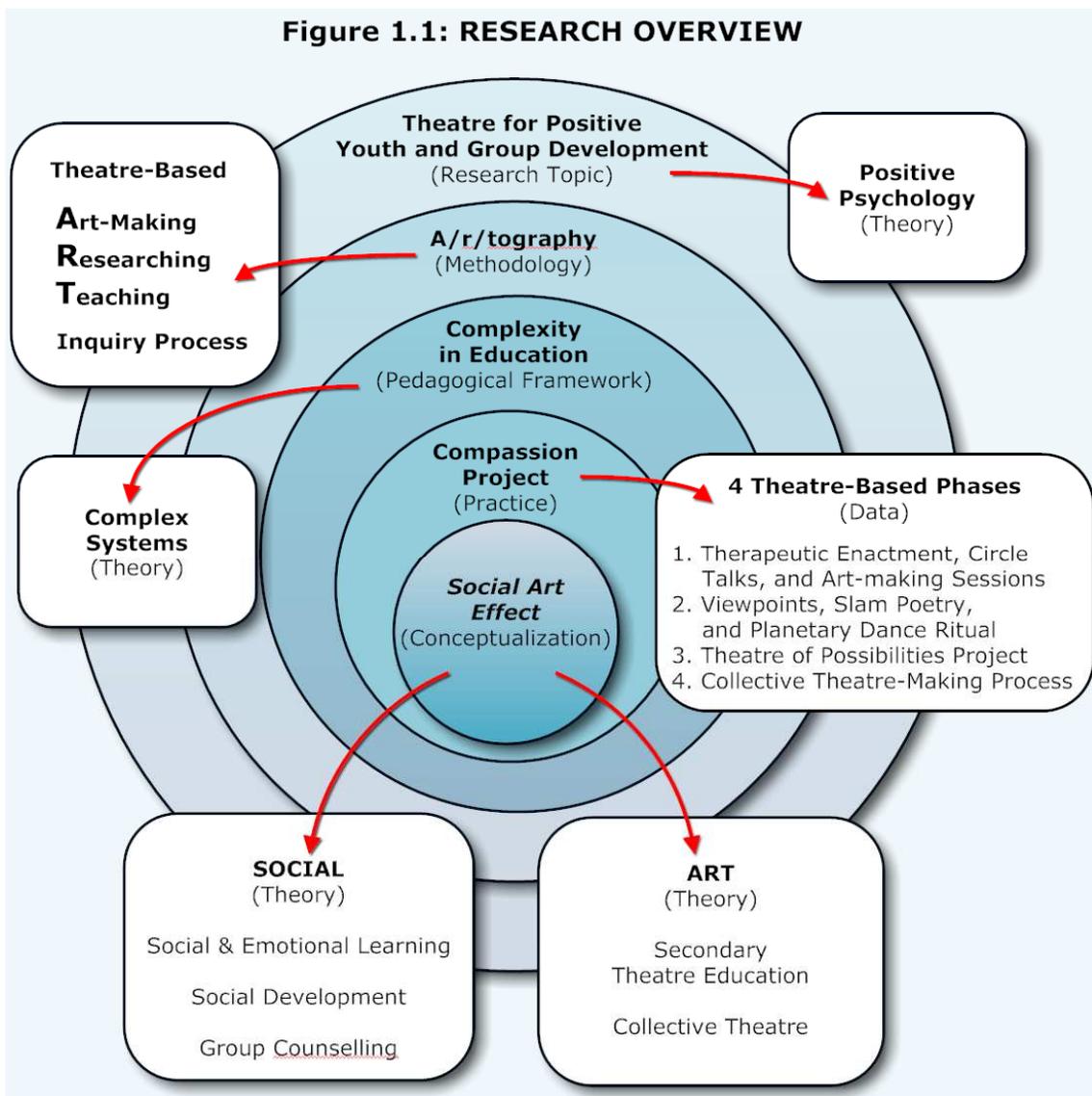
that are supported and supervised by well-trained caring adults (Elmen and Offer, 1993; Kaczmarek and Riva, 1996; Larson, et al., 2004; Offer and Schonert-Reichl, 1992; Santrock, 1996). Larson, et al. (2004), researchers on positive youth development, found five key benefits for youth that participated in organized youth activities. They found that youth in organized programs were better able to motivate themselves to participate in pro-social activities, to set goals and direct their lives, to bridge differences, to take on newfound responsibilities, and to acquire social capital. They noted that youth organizations were successful when leaders used the following techniques: follow the youth's lead, cultivate a culture of youth input, monitor youth individually and in groups, create intermediate structure, and stretch and push youth.

Overall, this study builds upon positive youth development research, and analyzes the connections between social and theatre-making practices and positive youth and group development; thus the *social art effect*. Some of the most current literature on positive psychology are presented in this dissertation, such as excerpts from the anthologies, *Positive Psychology as Social Change* (Biswas-Diener, 2011), and *Handbook of Positive Psychology in Schools* (Gilman, Huebner, and Furlong, 2009). Unfortunately, even though both anthologies are compiled with some of the most current publications on positive psychology, there is not a single reference to theatre or drama. Nevertheless, the literature review in chapter two of this dissertation highlights various examples of youth organizations that integrate drama and social and emotional learning programs (i.e., O'Toole, Burton, and Plunkett, 2005); thus, illustrating theatre for positive youth and group development. Furthermore, while there is some research that link theatre and social and emotional development (i.e., Larson and Brown, 2007), there is little research that specifically examines the social and theatre-making connections to positive youth and group development for theatre-makers in a secondary collective theatre-making program. This research aims to fill this gap. Below, I present my research questions and research overview.

Research Questions

My theatre-based inquiry process on the *Compassion Project* is based on five overarching research questions:

1. How does the *Compassion Project* foster positive youth and group development?
2. What are theatre-makers' social and theatre-making experiences in the *Compassion Project*?
3. How does *social and emotional learning* and *complexity in education* integrate into my collective theatre-making practice?
4. What is the *social art effect*, and what are its components?
5. What are the conditions of the *social art effect* that foster the change process in theatre-makers and stimulate positive youth and group development?



Research Overview

Figure 1.1 provides an overview of my research, which consists of five layers, each nested inside the other. The outer ring illustrates the generic topic of my study that is rooted in theatre and positive psychology principles: ***Theatre for Positive Youth and Group Development***. The second ring highlights **A/r/tography** as my qualitative research methodology. A/r/tography guides my arts education inquiry process, and provides a framework to examine the in-between spaces of my theatre-based art-making/researching/teaching practices. The third ring illustrates my pedagogical foundation, ***Complexity in Education***, which integrates the theories of complex systems into my collective theatre-making practice. The fourth ring highlights the ***Compassion Project*** and its four theatre-based phases: 1. Therapeutic Enactments, Circle Talks, and Art-Making Sessions; 2. Viewpoints, Slam Poetry, and Planetary Dance Ritual; 3. *Theatre of Possibilities Project* (and the students' original theatre creation, *The Flip Side*); and 4. *The Collective theatre-making process* (and the students' original theatre creation, *Focus*). In the centre ring, the nexus of my research, is my conceptualization of the ***social art effect***. The *social art effect* is the social and theatre-making actions and interactions that foster the theatre-makers' change process and stimulate their positive youth and group development. Extending from the centre ring, the *social art effect* is divided into two categories: *social* and *art*. The social component derives from the theories of social and emotional learning, social development, and group counseling. The art component is theatre-based and derives from the principles of secondary theatre education, and collective theatre.

Theatre for positive youth and group development. As a researcher, I have been exploring *theatre for positive youth and group development* for ten years. For my M.A. thesis, I examined positive youth development within my secondary theatre teaching practice, which I defined (and later published) as ***theatre for positive youth development*** (Beare, 2003; Beare and Belliveau, 2007). For my Ph.D. dissertation, I have expanded upon my M.A. research to include social learning and group development theories. My research topic, *theatre for positive youth and group development*, is based on *positive psychology*, which aims to provide *equal attention* to developing human strengths, health, and wellness. Gilman, Huebner, and Furlong (2009) write that too much attention in psychology is placed on labelling and fixing human weaknesses and illnesses. On the contrary, according to

Shechtman (2007), *positive psychology* directs professionals to avoid over-emphasizing maladaptive behaviours of the minority (mainly one in five youth), and increase more attention on the support and well-being of all people. Rather than simply examining and fixing problems, *positive psychology* examines how to enhance human strengths and foster positive development in people and organizations, such as schools. By focusing on fostering healthy systems, caring adults can build stronger networks to support youth struggling in schools.

The field of *positive psychology* provides a wealth of research on positive youth and group development. For example, developmental assets theory suggests that positive experiences, relationships, opportunities, and personal qualities are required for youth to grow up healthy, caring, and responsible within a complex world (Search Institute, 2011). The more developmental assets youth have, the less likely they are to engage in risky behaviors, and the more likely they are to engage in academic success, civic engagement, and positive pro-social choices (Lerner and Benson, 2003).

In regards to schools, Snyder and Lopez (2007) write that the core principles of positive psychology in schools are care, trust, and respect for diversity. Ultimately, the end goal of positive psychology in schools is to support students to understand and appreciate how they are part of a highly complex and interconnected society and social network. Snyder and Lopez write that education in the twenty-first century challenges the old mode of education derived from the orderly and predictable factory model developed in the industrial revolution era. Presently, the field of education is in a process of transformation as it responds and adapts to the digital era. Schools struggle to keep up with the digital demands where information, ideas, and perspectives are vast, diverse, fast, ever-changing, unpredictable, and complex. Overall, positive psychology reflects the growing emphasis in school to integrate the social components of education into curriculum. Instead of learning that is teacher-centred, fragmented, machine-like, passive, and isolated, learning, from a positive psychology framework, is interconnected, evolutionary, dynamic, interactive, social, and project-centred (Snyder and Lopez, 2007).

A/r/tography. *A/r/tography* is the arts education research methodology for my study. *A/r/tography* emphasizes living inquiry and reflective practice through examination of the in-between spaces of art-making/researching/teaching (a/r/t). Irwin (2004) explains that

a/r/tography is based on Aristotle's three realms of knowledge: *theoria* (knowing), *praxis* (doing), and *poesis* (making). While a/r/tography explores the domains of and interrelationships between art-making, researching, and teaching, defining a/r/tography is a difficult task because a/r/tography means different things under different circumstances. In general terms, a/r/tography can be described as a research methodology for researchers, artists, and teachers to inquire on their practice and the meaning-making process. Irwin and Springgay (2008) suggest that

[a]r/tographers, in multiple roles as researchers, artists, and teachers, give attention to the *in-between* where meanings reside in the simultaneous use of language, images, materials, situations, space and time... [and create] the circumstances that produce knowledge and understanding through artistic and educational inquiry laden processes. (pp. xix-xxvi)

In addition, the authors explain that a/r/tography cannot be limited to the study of the mechanics of doing art, nor can it be defined simply as multiple identities. Furthermore, a/r/tographers are connected to, not separated from, the researching, the teaching, and the art-making processes.

Derived from the works of Deleuze and Guattari (1987), a/r/tography is described metaphorically as rhizomatic, which allows for multiple, non-hierarchical entry and exit points in the art-making process. Rhizomes are horizontal stems of a plant that grow long roots under the ground and send out root stems for new plants to grow above the ground. The roots grow in all directions, with one point connecting to any other point. Like a mesh of lines on a road map, there are no beginnings or middles, merely in-between connections between points. Winters, Belliveau, and Sherritt (2009) suggest that, "In a/r/tography, process matters. This is because meaning is alive—always moving, always growing. A/r/tographers view constructions of knowledge as infinite and in-process" (8). Overall, a/r/tographers investigate in-between unfamiliar spaces as a way to examine complexities and unpredictable connections.

As a relatively new arts research methodology, a/r/tography is growing in recognition in the qualitative research field. For example, Springgay, Irwin, and Kind (2007) published a chapter on a/r/tography in the 2007 *Handbooks of the Arts in Qualitative Research*. Drama in education has been researched through different qualitative methodologies such as reflective practice (Neelands, 2006; Taylor, 1996), ethnodrama (Saldana, 2005), narrative inquiry

(Zatzman 2003), and ethnography (Gallagher, 2007 and 2000). To date, only a few published articles link a/r/tography with theatre/drama in education (Beare and Belliveau, 2008; Winters, Belliveau, and Sherritt, 2009). Even though a/r/tography embraces all of the arts, most of the a/r/tographic publications relate to the visual arts, with only a few reporting on theatre/drama. Therefore, one intent of this thesis is to expand upon the knowledge of theatre-based a/r/tography.

Overall, I believe *a/r/tography* best informs this study because it allows me to follow the unpredictable, creative process of my theatre-based art-making, researching, and teaching practices. Fels and Belliveau (2008) write, “[w]hen we as educators understand that learning emerges through the interplay of students, teacher, environment, inquiry, and the medium of inquiry, our responsibility to bring this dynamic engagement into our classrooms becomes apparent” (p. 28). As a theatre artist/researcher/teacher, my study explores the complex interactions among learners, the theatre curriculum, and academic knowledge.

Complexity in education. Complexity in education is the pedagogical framework for my research. Complexity in education is the study of complex learning systems, and this includes concepts such as dynamic adaptive systems, self-organizing, and conditions for emergence (Davis and Sumara, 2006). I select complexity in education as my pedagogical framework because I am drawn to the evolutionary nature of complexity, which best aligns with how I experience the process of co-creating original theatre with youth.

The study of complex systems, the core concept of *complexity in education*, provides a pedagogical framework to examine group patterns, interactions, and tension points within my theatre teaching practice. Davis and Sumara (2006), and Westley, Zimmerman, and Patton (2007) explain how systems are simple, complicated, and complex. Simple and complicated systems involve step-by-step linear blueprints such as baking a cake (simple) or sending a rocket to the moon (complicated). If one follows all of the simple or complicated steps in a linear and systematic fashion, then the chances for a desirable and predictable outcome are increased. In contrast, complex systems are likened to the complexity of raising a child--the outcome remains uncertain, ever-changing, and often times contradictory. Since I co-create original plays with a large cast and crew of 100 to 200 youth per project, complex systems provide me with a pedagogical framework to examine the ebb and flow of my students’ social and theatre-making actions and interactions.

The *Compassion Project*. At the start of my study I wrote, “If a small group of secondary students from a wide range of different and conflicting backgrounds were brought together and were asked to improve the social and emotional culture of their school, what would emerge?” I wondered how the positive actions of a few could affect the whole, as when a single pebble dropped into water produces a ripple effect. This exploration eventually led to the evolution of the *Compassion Project*, followed by my conceptualization of the *social art effect*.

The *Compassion Project* is a voluntary extra-curricular theatre-based social and emotional learning program where secondary students from diverse backgrounds collectively co-create original theatre about their hopes, barriers, and dreams in school. Inspired by social and emotional learning programs such as Challenge Day (2009), and the movie, *The Breakfast Club* (Hughes, 1985), the original aim of the *Compassion Project* was to reach youth struggling in schools. Furthermore, this study aimed to examine whether or not the *Compassion Project* was able to foster positive youth and group development. The project, which spanned over one year (April 2009 to June 2010), was divided into four phases: 1. Therapeutic Enactments, Circles Talks, and Art-Making Sessions; 2. Viewpoint Workshops, Slam Poetry, and Planetary Dance Ritual; 3. *2010 Theatre of Possibilities Project* (in which students co-created the original play, *The Flip-Side*); and 4. *Collective theatre-making process* (in which students co-created the original play, *Focus*). When the *Compassion Project* is described in later chapters, it is important for readers to remember that what the project originally intended to accomplish, as shown in the invitation letter (see Appendix A), varied from what actually occurred. True to the emergent principles of *a/r/tography* and *complexity in education*, my theatre-based practices unfolded in unexpected ways.

Initially, I intended to find ten non-theatre secondary students who represented ten different clique groups at the school where I taught. This did not occur. I ended up with eight theatre students and two non-theatre students. Very much like a living inquiry, I continually adapted the project to address roadblocks and unexpected obstacles. For example, I planned a *Challenge Day* event in which each of the ten students in the first phase would bring four or five people in the second phase to a day long social and emotional learning workshop. My intent was to examine the ripple effect of the “*pay it forward*” actions. Unexpectedly, the students in the first phase were not very keen on this idea. Instead, they wanted to do more

theatre-based activities, and to stick to established norms within my theatre program. Because I was striving very hard to reach non-theatre students, it took me a while to realize that all roadblocks and obstacles were leading me back to my theatre students. Over time, it became clear that what I needed to research was in front of me the whole time— my theatre students, program, and teaching practice. As a result, the more I surrendered to the needs of the students, the group, and the *collective theatre-making process*, the more the *Compassion Project* evolved, flowed, and transformed, until it eventually generated a different kind of ripple effect, which I could not have anticipated—the *social art effect*.

Social art effect. Typically the term *social art* is described as the art of being social, or a description of one's interpersonal skills in interacting with groups of people. Also, sometimes *social art* is described as a reference to art being shared with the audience, as well as art being influenced by an audience. In this study, the term *social art* refers to the social and theatre-making actions and interactions of the *collective theatre-making process*. In this context, theatre-making includes script-making, music-making, dance-choreographing, poster-making, light designing, flat painting, costume-making, props-making, set-building and others. Collective theatre-making is defined as a group of people working collaboratively on a theatre-making project that is based on the strengths, ideas, and consensus of the people in the group. At no point in my dissertation do I attempt to analyze the quality of the students' theatre creations. Students make art at their own rate and at different degrees of time, energy, commitment, skill, knowledge, and talent. Therefore, in this dissertation, the students' art work stands on its own, with no judgment. Instead, I provide an analysis on the *social art effect* based on their social and theatre-making practices and reflections and simply showcase their creations to reflect these processes.

My research writing also shifted in other directions. At the start of my dissertation, my original intention was to investigate and analyze students' theatre-based inquiry process about safe and caring schools--thus, the *Compassion Project*. While the topic of safe and caring schools is the context of the students' two new plays and the four phases of the *Compassion Project*, the actual analysis of my research shifted to the *social art effect*. From my observations, I became more aware that while the subject material of our collective theatre-making projects changed year from year, the *social art* phenomenon was always present, not only in this project, but in the course of my entire theatre teaching career.

The core turning point in my inquiry process was when I began to notice that many of my students’ most significant learning moments fell outside the parameters of my secondary theatre curriculum. Often the students’ most powerful learning experiences were less motivated by my prescribed learning outcomes, and more driven by the social realm of the group. Typically, the term *social* is associated with the ideas of “leisure”, “free-time”, “off-task”, and “distractions from learning”. Learning and being social are often seen as separate entities—learning is work and being social is play. Yet, from my observations, it became clear that it is very difficult to separate the social and art-making components of the collective theatre making process. Since collective theatre-making is the work of play, I felt compelled to examine the *social art effect* of my teaching practice.

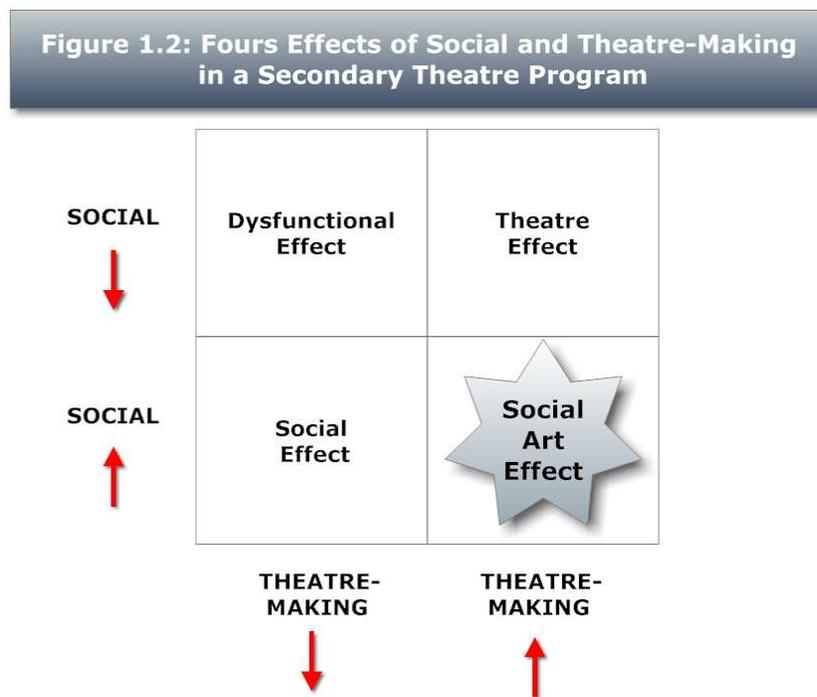


Figure 1.2 presents four effects related to social art within a secondary theatre program. In the first quadrant, the *Dysfunctional Effect* indicates a low emphasis on theatre-making and social components. In this case, the group is floundering or fragmented. In the second quadrant, the *Social Effect* indicates a high emphasis on the social components, and a low emphasis on the theatre-making components. In this case, the theatre project is used as a means to an end, such as developing interpersonal skills, and typically the quality of the theatre product is inconsequential and undeveloped. In the third quadrant, *Theatre Effect*, the emphasis on the social components is low, while the theatre-making components are high. In

this quadrant, there is an attempt to separate or, at least, minimize the interplay between social and theatre-making in order to produce high quality art for an audience and/or to develop theatre skills. This type of theatre often fosters a hierarchical “star” system, which could hinder or split the social group. Rehearsals and repetitions take precedence over the social interactions of the group, and the beauty and emotional power of the art stems from the artists and designers’ talents, skills, and disciplines.

In the final quadrant, the *Social Art Effect*, an attempt is made for pedagogical or psychological reasons to strike a balance between the social and theatre-making components. In this case, the emotional power of the art generates from the complexity of the social and theatre-making interplay; the social feeds the theatre-making and the theatre-making feeds the social. As stated earlier, the *Social Art Effect* is the effect of social and theatre-making actions and interactions that stimulates positive youth and group development, which in turn, propels the social art experience and the entire theatre project forward.

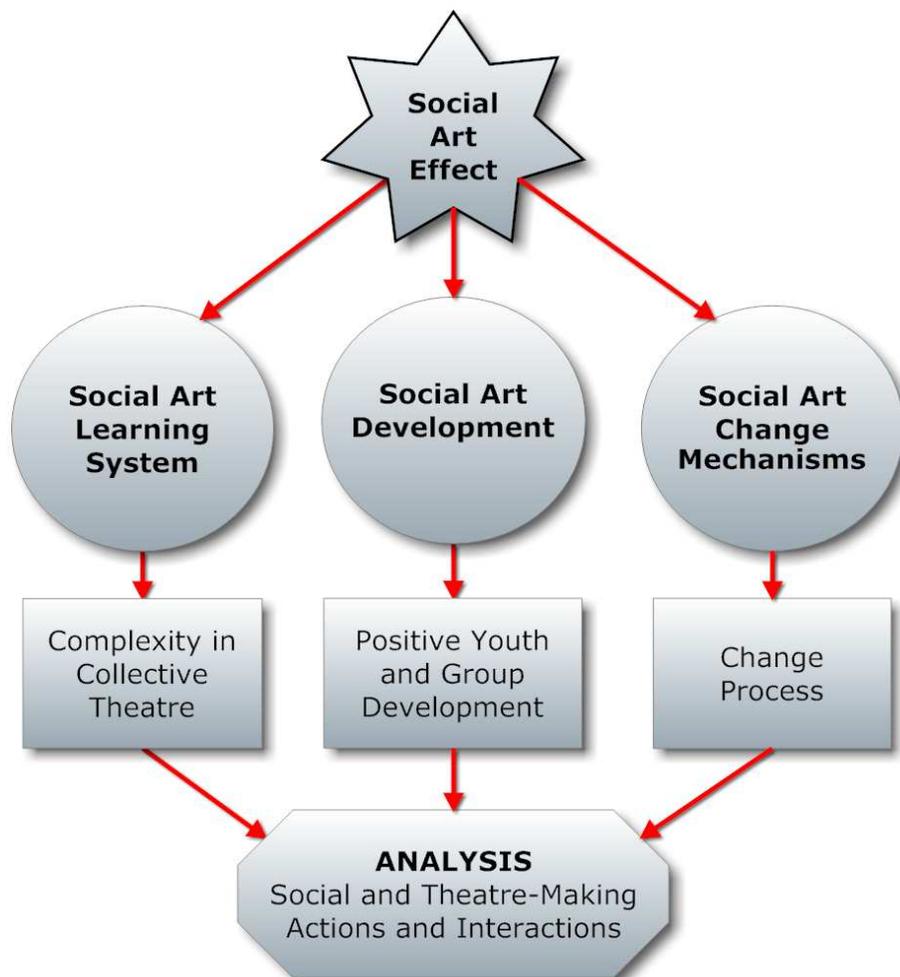
At the onset of analyzing the data, I intended to provide a list of the core *social art effects* as a way to illustrate the positive qualities that students developed from participating in the *Compassion Project*. For example, the Search Institute (2011), one of the leading research organizations on positive youth development, lists the 40 core development assets for adolescents.¹ Based on my investigation on the data of students’ written reflections, I found, in no particular order, the ten *social art effects*:

1. improved theatre-making and/or performing skills,
2. improved teamwork skills/collaboration skills,
3. greater understanding of the creative process/theatre-making process,
4. gained more friends/stronger support system/felt less alone,
5. increased positive/constructive social interactions with peers and adults,
6. stronger sense of confidence,
7. greater ability to take artistic risks,
8. greater awareness of other people’s perspectives/increased empathy for others,
9. stronger connection to school and/or theatre program, and
10. improved leadership skills.

¹ The 40 Development Assets are Family Support, Positive Family Communications, Other Adult Relationships, Caring Neighborhood, Caring School Climate, Parent Involvement in School, Community Values Youth, Youth as Resources, Services to Others, Safety, Family Boundaries, School Boundaries, Neighborhood Boundaries, Adult Role Models, Positive Peer Influence, High Expectations, Youth Programs, Religious Community, Time at Home, Achievement Motivation, School Engagement, Homework, Bonding to School, Reading for Pleasure, Caring, Equality and Social Justice, Integrity, Honesty, Responsibility, Restraint, Planning and Decision Making, Interpersonal Competence, Cultural Competence, Resistance Skills, Peaceful Conflict Resolution, Personal Power, Self-Esteem, Sense of Purpose, and Positive View of Personal Future.

Initially for my thesis, I intended to describe in great detail each of the above ten *social art effects*, but this idea did not push my theatre education research in new directions; many research studies already provide similar results, as I explain further in my literature review chapter. Therefore, instead of providing a list of positive traits students gained from the *Compassion Project*, I analyze the students' and the group's *social art learning system*, *social art development*, and *social change mechanism*.

Figure 1.3: The Three Components of the Social Art Effect



The Three Components of the Social Art Effect

Based on my analysis of the data, I have conceptualized *social art effect* and its three components: *social art learning system*, *social art development*, and *social art change mechanisms* (see Figure 1.3). The *social art learning system* is the collective theatre-making organization composed of highly complex and interconnected theatre-makers, curriculum,

resources, and ideas. This component is based on the integrated principles of complexity in education and collective theatre, and in turn, takes a complexity in collective theatre-making approach. *Social art development* is the study of the positive youth and group development based on youth and group's social and theatre-making actions and interactions. The *social art change mechanisms* are the conditions in the collective theatre-making organization that fosters the change process and stimulates positive youth and group development in theatre-makers. In summary, all three components of the *social art effect* are united by a common research objective: the construction of a theoretical social art framework in order to analyze the social and theatre-making actions and interactions of theatre-makers.

Overview of Chapters

In chapter two, I highlight the *literature review* to examine the connections between drama and social and emotional learning (SEL). In addition, I provide a drama and SEL framework, which highlights various theatre-based SEL programs, and ten drama and SEL qualities: *aesthetic and group change, educational and skill change, dialogic and social change, re-imaginary and personal change, symbolic/realistic and internal change*.

In chapter three, I explain the core philosophy and renderings of my a/r/tographical study, and I describe the parameters of data analysis, the data, and the data-collecting methods. I then show how I triangulate my study by integrating research knowledge, the data of the students' voices and stories, and my conceptualization of the *social art effect*. Finally, I provide a description of the four phases of the *Compassion Project*.

In chapter four, I present the first component of the *social art effect: social art learning system*. I integrate the principles of complexity in education and collective-theatre-making through description of seven new theatre types:

1. *Complex Theatre*
2. *Messy Theatre*
3. *Blind Theatre*
4. *Sly Theatre*
5. *Emerging Theatre*
6. *Adapting Theatre*
7. *Edge of Chaos Theatre*

Overall, chapter four is focused on the third phase of the *Compassion Project*. This phase, also called the *Theatre of Possibilities Project*, involved over 100 students co-creating

a slam poetry play called *The Flip Side*. In this play, students worked together to explore the flip side of school--the social and emotional sides of school. Samples of students' theatre work are highlighted to highlight the complexities of collective theatre-making.

In chapter five, I present the second component of the *social art effect*: the ***social art development***. Throughout this chapter, I discuss my conceptualization of the developmental stages of positive youth and group development, which includes the following five stages:

1. *Inclusion and Social Art Norms Stage*
2. *Self-Management and Theatre Skills Stage*
3. *Relationship and Connections Stage*
4. *Self as Artist and Integration Stage*
5. *Leadership and Vision Stage*

The five-stage model of the *social art development* examines the development of youth as individual theatre-makers, the development of classroom groups, and the development overall play group. Also, I highlight a second and more elaborate collective theatre-making project, which involved over 170 secondary students co-creating a play called *Focus*. Excerpts from this play are presented throughout the entire dissertation.

In chapter six, I reconfigure the data to construct an interview-format discussion with one particular student in order to bring deeper understandings to all four phases of the *Compassion Project*. In general, this chapter highlights a student's social and theatre-making experiences, discoveries, and understandings.

In chapter seven, I present my discussion chapter in which I synthesize all my data analysis into the third and final *social art effect*: ***social art change mechanisms***. In this chapter, I strive to better understand the conditions of the theatre-makers' change process. Based on my analysis of the data, I conceptualize ten *social art change mechanisms* that stimulate positive youth and group development:

1. *Theatre Project and Vision*
2. *Social Art Norms*
3. *Diverse Pathways*
4. *Social Interactions and Self-Disclosure*
5. *Imitation*
6. *Witnessing*
7. *Critical Moments*
8. *Competition and Collaboration*
9. *Large Group Cohesiveness*
10. *Synergy and Amalgamation*

In the last chapter, I summarize key points of my study and provide some closing remarks on the *social art effect*.

Before reading the upcoming chapters, below is another excerpt from the students' theatre-making practice. Based on the exploration of safe and caring schools, students wrote a fictional yet emotionally charged scene about a school-wide lockdown. This scene, including the other art works of the students throughout this dissertation, illustrates how theatre is a social art, and stresses the growing necessity to bring more compassion and human contact into our curriculum and ever-evolving complex schools.

[Data] *(WES is sitting at a lunch table with his friends in the middle of a crowded cafeteria. WES stands and goes to the end of the table to get some math notes. TYLER walks to the table with his black bag and sit in WES's spot.)*

JESSE: *Hey, man you'd better get up. Wes was sitting there. (Tyler doesn't speak.) Seriously, you don't wanna be messing with Wes right now. (Tyler just looks at Jesse, blankly.)*

TYLER: *What day is it?*

JESSE: *What?*

TYLER: *What day is it?*

JESSE: *I don't know, man, just get up before Wes comes back... (Realizing.) Wait, where did you get that jacket?*

TYLER: *Were you at the party?*

JESSE: *Yes. (Pause.) We thought she just passed out from drinking too much...*

(TYLER check's his watch for the last time.)

TYLER: *You have one minute left.*

JESSE: *What?*

(WES returns to his seat, and stops.)

WES: *I was sitting there.*

JESSE: *Here, just take my seat.*

WES: *No, I was sitting there. So move.*

TYLER: *What day is it?*

WES: *I don't care...*

TYLER: *Answer the question.*

WES: *Listen, I don't have time for this right now.*

TYLER: *What day is it?*

WES: *It's Friday. Now get lost!*

(At this point most people in the cafeteria are listening, including WES's girlfriend, AMBER.)

TYLER: What happened a year ago today?
AMBER: (Realizing.) Wes, I think he's talking about...
WES: Amber, shut up.
JESSE: No, Wes, listen to her...
WES: That's my seat.
AMBER: Wes...
TYLER: Last year, today, my sister died.

(All is quiet. ELLA's cell phone rings. TYLER looks at ELLA. She goes to grab it, but he grabs the phone and puts in his pocket without turning it off. The cell phone continues to ring nonstop.)

TYLER: Time's up. Good bye, Wes.

(He opens the bag, but the audience does not see what is inside. The sound of a heartbeat is heard. MEGAN, a friend of WES, AMBER and KAREN, looks in the bag.)

MEGAN: (Looks into the bag.) Oh my god. Oh my god... (She says this repeatedly.)
KAREN: What's in the bag?

(AMBER looks in the bag.)

AMBER: Are you crazy?

(TYLER stands on the table.)

WES: Don't do anything stupid, man.
MEGAN: Please don't. Don't, please...
AMBER: (She yells.) Run!

(TYLER stands in stillness on top of the table holding his black backpack in a spotlight. Both live on stage and on video, students scream, flee and hide, and cafeteria tables are flipped to the side and turned about. A series of short images and frozen pictures illustrate students running through the hallways, locking themselves into rooms, and hiding behind tables and doors.)

PA: Code red. Code red. This is not a drill, I repeat, not a drill. Staff and students get into classrooms and lock all doors.

(After a minute of loud panic, all sound and movement stop abruptly, and only a heartbeat is heard. In frozen positions students breathe heavily and wait in panic. TYLER walks to the edge of the stage. Simultaneously TYLER drops his black backpack onto the floor and the heart beat sound turns into a flat line. Lights fade to black. Close curtains, end of Act One.)

[Scene excerpt from the play, *Focus*, Phase IV.]

Chapter Two

Literature Review: A Drama and SEL Framework

The arts stimulate the very qualities that make us human... the arts allow us to express our feelings in a healthy way, and sharing emotions is the bond that ties children to their families, friends, and community. People who are emotionally bonded to each other make up a healthy and empathetic world.

Placido Domingo, artist and opera singer

As a way to structure the literature review on drama and social and emotional learning (SEL), a drama and SEL framework is provided. This framework serves four main purposes. First, the framework highlights ten qualities as a way to write about the links between drama and SEL. The five drama qualities are **aesthetic, dialogic, educational, re-imaginary, and symbolic-realistic**. The five SEL qualities are **group development, skill development, social change, local change, and internal change**. Second, these ten qualities are used to highlight the literature review on drama and SEL programs. Due to the wide scope of this topic, only five drama and SEL programs are highlighted: **Extra-curricular High School Musical Theatre, Cooling Conflict, Theatre for Community, Conflict and Dialogue, The Possibility Project Program, and Drama Therapy**. Third, the drama and SEL framework expands from the knowledge of the literature review in order to construct the conceptualization of the *social art effect*. Fourth, the exploration of the five programs and ten qualities in the drama and SEL framework greatly influences the organic development and direction of the *Compassion Project*. Before illustrating the drama and SEL framework, brief descriptions on SEL and drama are provided.

Social Emotional Learning (SEL)

The Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) is the largest North American SEL organization, which compiles the widest range of SEL research, programs, assessment tools, articles, and educational policies. CASEL, based in Chicago's Department of Psychology at the University of Illinois, provides a SEL definition:

Social and emotional learning involves processes through which children and adults develop fundamental emotional and social competencies to recognize and manage emotions, develop caring and concern for others, establish positive relationships, make responsible decisions, and handle challenging situations constructively. (CASEL, 2011)

Zins, Weissberg, Wang, and Walberg (2004) illustrate a framework of five person-centred key SEL competencies: **self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making** (for more information see Appendix B). In the past decade, SEL was pushed into the limelight due to Daniel Goleman's best selling books on emotional intelligence in 1995 and social intelligence in 2006. With Goleman's powerful influence, along with other leading SEL researchers, recently, there has been more attention placed on the links between SEL, academic achievement, and pro-social benefits.

Even though SEL is a relatively new phenomenon, there has been an influx of SEL research in the past decade. For example, Greenberg, Domitrovich, and Bumbarger (2001) describe how social-emotional problems interfere with students' academic learning and their development to become model citizens. Schonert-Reichl (2005) suggests that the development of empathy in a concentrated SEL program (involving a baby visiting a classroom nine times in a year) decreases aggressive behavior among elementary school age youth. McDougall, et al. (2001) illustrate that peer rejection is linked to adjustment issues including internalizing and externalizing problems, academic problems, and school drop out. Buds, Ladd, and Herald (2006) highlight similar results in their longitudinal study of grades K-5. Caprara, et al. (2000) found that grade 3 students' rate of social competence is a better predictor of their Grade 8 academic success, compared to their grade 3 academic achievements. Elias and Arnold (2006) provide evidence-based research that link emotional intelligence and academic achievement, and guide educators to bring SEL into the classroom.

Two meta-analyses provide valuable information about SEL. Johnson and Johnson (2004) indicate in a 1989 meta-analysis of social interdependence that cooperative efforts produced better results than competitive and individualistic efforts (such as in academic achievement, self-esteem, time on task, quality of reasoning, and others). They also note that there is little difference between competitive and individualistic goals. They argue that schools produce better academic results if the school culture is built on a philosophy of cooperation. Hymel, Zinck, and Ditner (1993) echoed similar results the previous decade. Durlak, Weissberg, and Pachan (2010) conducted a quantitative meta-analysis in 2007 of 270 after school SEL studies, and they find that students engaged in social and emotional programs have at least 15 percentile points higher on achievement tests, have significantly better attendance records, behave more constructively in classrooms, like school more, have

better grade point averages, and are less likely to be suspended or disciplined. In addition, Durlak and Weissberg (2007) completed a quantitative analysis of 73 after-school research studies and they find that 60% of the students in these programs have better attendance records, have more constructive classroom behaviour, like school more, have better grade point averages, and are less likely to be suspended or disciplined. In short, the research indicates that SEL programs enhance academic achievement and pro-social behaviours. Durlak, Weissberg, Dymnicki, and Taylor (2011) conducted the most current meta-analysis of 213 school-based, universal SEL programs involving 270,034 kindergarteners through high school students. Compared to control groups, participants involved in SEL programs showed an 11 percentile point gain in achievement in the areas of social and emotional skills, attitudes, behavior, and academic performance.

In spite of the benefits of SEL, there are some mixed results. Schaps, Battistich, and Solomon (2004) review the Child Development Project, which focuses on creating schools of caring learners. The research indicates that SEL improves the qualities of caring, conflict resolution, and task orientation, but the improvements of academic gains are inconsistent between schools. In the schools that improved on academic scores, there was a stronger push for academic success. Their research indicates that while SEL promotes pro-social behaviours, high expectations are still needed to be placed onto the students for them to achieve academically.

In spite of the above limitation, Walberg, Zins, and Weissberg (2004) summarize the leading SEL research and its benefits. They acknowledge that the success of the SEL programs varies from school to school, from facilitator to facilitator, and from classroom to classroom, so it is difficult to pinpoint generalized findings. They remind readers that more research is needed on SEL theories and programs, and more advocacy is needed to bring SEL into teacher-training programs, school policies, and classrooms.

Drama

The origin of theatre stems organically from people in small tribes gathering together to share oral stories, sing, and dance with one another. Hartnoll (1998) explains that theatre stems from myth, ritual, and ceremony. Originally, the purpose of theatre ranged from entertainment to appeasing the supernatural gods to learning moral lessons. In all cases, theater is the process of bringing people together to watch, perform, and/or participate in

theatrical performances. In this light, theatre is a social art. The social and art components of theatre are highly interdependent, and each serves the other, much like how oxygen stimulates life in plants, and how plants help to clean our air. Nevertheless, even though the social components can exist without theatre, theatre is completely dependent on social and human interactions in order to survive.

In this thesis, drama and theatre are used interchangeably; however, it is important to distinguish between the terms. Courtney (1989), defines drama as “the process of thinking/acting ‘as if’” (p. 2). The root of all drama is our ability to transform ourselves through playing and make-believing. Through our imagination we can step outside our frame of reference and experience the world in new ways and from different perspectives. This new awareness, complemented with role rehearsal, can lead participants to develop interpersonal, intrapersonal, problem solving, and self-actualization skills (Courtney, 1989; Heathcote, 1984; Johnson, 1982; Landy, 1986; Nelson and Finneran, 2006; O’Connor, O’Connor, and Welsh-Morris, 2006; Spolin, 1963; Way, 1967; Westwood and Wilensky, 2005).

There is a great deal of overlap between drama and theatre. For example, both involve role-playing, story-telling, working collaboratively, interacting socially, manipulating play materials, and working with sound, movement, text, and three dimensional spaces. Yet, in spite of their commonalities, there are distinct features between drama and theatre. Courtney (1989) defines theatre as the “coding of play into performance to an audience” (p. 15). Typically, drama is the process of play that is made private or semi-private (exclusion of an audience), whereas theatre is the process of play that is made semi-public or public (inclusion of an audience). The relationship between the participants and the audience shapes theatre, whereas drama is shaped by the needs of the participants and not the audience.

An outdated and often misleading mode of distinguishing drama and theatre is viewing drama as process and theatre as product. Both drama and theatre involve some degree of process and some degree of product. Furthermore, both move through cumulative actions of play whether done privately or publicly. The cumulative actions of play can be viewed as the process, and the construction that results from the play can be viewed as the product. All drama and theatre practices have unique process and product components, and vary from program to program, and from project to project.

Grotowski (1968), famous for his intense experimentation with actors, states that the essential requirements for theatre are not lights, costumes, and scenery, but performers and audience. If performers and audience cease to come together, theatre ceases to exist. At the most rudimentary and sacred level, theatre only needs two people: a person to perform and a person to watch the performer. In turn, theatre is an exchange of expressing, watching, listening, and responding. In a sense, theatre is heavily rooted in the social foundations, such as interpersonal communications.

A drama education researcher, Cockett (1996) finds that theatre arts teachers tend to be more focused on the aesthetic processes, and less focused on the internal processes, such as SEL. There are clear theoretical views on teaching educational concepts such as acting skills and theatre history; however, there is less understanding on how to facilitate the drama process to foster personal or social change. Research indicates that drama/theatre practitioners know that something meaningful and significant occurs among students, yet “their aims [still] promoted learning *in* drama rather than learning through drama” (Cockett, 1996, p. 214). In short, drama/theatre research lack theoretical principles that examine how to intentionally foster positive social and emotional developmental with youth. The purpose of this chapter is to intentionally explore this connection.

Drama and SEL Connections

There is a typical misconception that SEL falls in the field of psychology (e.g., counselling) or psycho-education. While psychology, psycho-education, and SEL are highly interrelated, SEL means different things under different contexts. For instance, SEL is highly related to sports, church, work, marriage, parenting, and so on. This study explores the connection between drama and SEL within the domain of theatre education.

One challenge in addressing SEL in drama classrooms by teachers is that they already do not have enough time to complete their over-packed curriculum, and they feel overburdened with the addition of extraneous “top-down” programs. While there is some truth in this logic, there is a false assumption that SEL is something separate from the drama curriculum, and this is not the case. For instance, there are at least 40 SEL outcomes stated in the combined British Columbia Ministry of Education Integrated Resource Packages Art Education Drama K-7 (2010) and Drama 8-10 (1996) curriculum (see Appendix D and Appendix E). Subsequently, SEL is not something “extra”, but rather, a core value rooted

deeply and interwoven within the provincial drama curriculum. One goal for this research is to raise awareness of the natural drama and SEL connections. By understanding how to draw out SEL in the drama curriculum, educators are more likely to make stronger curriculum choices that better suit the socio-emotional needs of youth. Figure 2.1 illustrates a framework that highlights various drama and SEL connections.

Figure 2.1: Drama and SEL Connections			
DRAMA and SEL PROGRAMS	DRAMA: ART FOCUS	SEL: CHANGE FOCUS	TRAINING REQUIREMENTS
Program #1 Extra-curricular High School Musical Theatre	AESTHETIC Drama is producing a high quality musical theatre show to perform to an audience.	GROUP CHANGE SEL is developing the group to work cooperatively as an artistic team.	TRAINING: High School Theatre Arts
Program #2 Cooling Conflict	EDUCATIONAL Drama is role-playing as a pedagogical tool to teach and practice SEL skills.	SKILL CHANGE SEL is developing conflict resolution skills to reduce school bullying and violence.	TRAINING: Role-Playing for Conflict Resolution
Program #3 Theatre for Community, Conflict, and Dialogue	DIALOGIC Drama is fostering dialogue and critical awareness of complex social issues through theatre practices.	SOCIAL CHANGE SEL is developing critical social awareness & multiple perspectives to promote democracy, equality, and justice.	TRAINING: Forum Theatre and Other Dialogic Theatre Forms
Program #4 The Possibility Project	RE-IMAGINARY Drama is storytelling and creating original theatre for youth to share and “re-imagine” lives and community.	PERSONAL CHANGE SEL is developing youth’s developmental assets, and developing safe, healthy, peaceful lives and communities.	TRAINING: Play-Building, SEL, and Positive Youth Development
Drama and SEL “Red Zone”			
Division Between the Education/Psycho-Education Domain and Counselling/Psychology Domain			
Program #5 Drama Therapy	SYMBOLIC/REALISTIC Drama is role-playing symbolically with fiction, and with real-life unfinished/traumatic past event; drama is re-imagining one’s story to practice new skills, and construct new possibilities.	INTERNAL CHANGE SEL is integrated with direct or indirect complex psychological internal restructuring of cognitive, emotional and/or behavioural processes.	TRAINING: Drama Therapy and Counselling

Figure 2.1 highlights an overview of various drama and SEL connections based on ten qualities: *aesthetic and group change*, *educational and skill change*, *dialogic and social change*, *re-imaginary and personal change*, and *symbolic/realistic and internal change*. It is important for readers to remember that the pairings of these qualities are interchangeable and would change depending on the nature of the drama and SEL program. Overall, five drama and SEL programs are presented, which include a drama focus, a SEL focus, and training requirements. The first four programs fall within the education/psycho-education domain, and the fifth program fall within the counseling/therapy/psychology domain. The fifth program is placed in the “red zone” to emphasize the importance for educators not to tackle the counseling/psychology domain without proper training and certification.

Drama and SEL Connection #1: Aesthetic and Group Change

The qualities linked to the first drama and SEL connection are *aesthetic* and *group change*. In this connection youth and facilitators work as a collaborative and artful team to stage a theatre performance for an audience. In this case, the rehearsal and performance processes are central, and the SEL tends to unfold organically from within the theatre process. Theatre by its very nature is a social art; in order to create and present the art, people need to socialize with one another. Overall, the function and survival of theatre depends on people interacting and building relationships with facilitators, performers, technicians, audience, community, the characters in the script, and the various artistic avenues. Often facilitators are not trained in SEL, so usually there are no pre-determined SEL outcomes, nor are there any formal intentions to align SEL with the script or the theatre process. Instead, theatre facilitators often work from their instincts and their years of experience (and by the seat of their pants!) to motivate youth to work cooperatively and productively as a creative team. Patterson, McKenna-Crook, and Swick Ellington (2006), Lazarus (2004), and Bennett (2001) provide various frameworks for secondary theatre teachers to develop the aesthetic and group development qualities both in the theatre classroom and extra-curricular theatre programs.

Extra-curricular high school musical theatre program. Larson and Brown’s (2007) study provides one of the most current and thorough research that specifically

Larson and Brown (2007) write that while the individual emotional experiences varied greatly from person to person,

each type of emotion unfolded in fairly predicated ways... positive emotions were encouraged and often spread through the group. Negative emotions were discussed openly and often elicited supportive responses that helped dispel them. (p. 1090)

In the interviews, youth indicated an awareness of emotions being contagious and how the moods of the facilitators and participants strongly influenced the process. Unregulated negative emotions tended to interfere with and sometimes blocked the progression of the theatre rehearsals, and positive emotions moved the theatre process forward.

When compared to the student's experiences in a regular academic classroom, Larson and Brown (2007) found that more emotional learning occurred in the theatre program because it exposed youth to a wider range of complex social interactions. They later suggested that the director served as the primary caregiver for youth, in which she role-modeled, monitored, promoted, facilitated, and expected positive emotional behaviours in all the participants involved. The director supported youth in regulating their feelings of anger, frustration, or boredom by addressing conflicts as they arose and by not allowing them to fester. Originally, the director cultivated a series of social and aesthetic norms, and over time the youth became active partners in passing down from year to year the positive norms of relationships, collaboration, and expression and regulation of emotions.

One limitation of this study is that Larson and Brown (2007) are not able to pinpoint the theatre program's mechanism of positive SEL change in youth. Since this study involved an ideal theatre program, it may not be representative of extra-curricular musical theatre programs in schools with different cultural, racial, economical, and social backgrounds. Also, it is not clear if the theatre program created these differences of emotional development in youth, or if these youth who are to express, develop, and regulate (and perform) their emotions are more prone to participate in a theatre program.

In spite of the above limitations, Larson and Brown (2007) provide an empirically grounded hypothesis, which is the core strength of their research. They hypothesize that youth move through an *adaptive responsive process* to meet the demands of the *multiple systems* within the collaborative norms of the theatre program. Overall, Larson and Brown present three proposals for emotional development in youth. First, youth are agents of their

own emotional development. Second, youth's emotional development occurs in response to the highly emotional episodes within the theatre program. Finally, youth's emotional understanding and management draws from the emotional culture of the theatre program.

Drama and SEL Connection #2: Education and Skill Change

The next set of drama and SEL qualities is **education** and **skill change**. Instead of building a complex artistic community for theatre students, the focus for this connection is more on using drama activities to teach specific SEL skills to the general school population. In this case SEL is made explicit, and drama is used as a means to implement the SEL curriculum. While the aesthetic quality could be included in this connection, it is not essential, because the primary focus of this connection is utilizing drama to teach SEL skills regardless of the quality of the art.

Research indicates that role-playing SEL skills help to reinforce the learning of SEL skills (Ishiyama, 2002; Scales and Leffert, 2004). In one example, Safe Teen, a Vancouver organization, used role-playing to support youth to practice and develop their assertive communication skills (Roberts, 2001). In another example, Brackett and Caruso (2007) utilize drama exercises for youth and facilitators to develop their emotional literacy using the RULER model: Recognizing, Understanding, Labeling, Expressing, and Regulating emotions. Students use the RULER blueprint to role-play constructive ways to resolve school-related conflicts.

In order to implement these kinds of drama and SEL programs, facilitators need to be trained to facilitate both SEL and role-playing. Ishiyama (2002) explains that role-playing is an effective method to practice prejudice reduction, but it involves ethical considerations. He warns that role-playing has “a number of sensitive and potentially problematic issues” (p. 43). For example, it could be problematic to have students role-play characters that express or receive racial or discriminatory statements. Also, participants need to understand how to separate fact from fiction because a lack of clarity between fantasy and reality could lead to boundary confusions and distress in the role-playing process.

There is a common dilemma with students role-playing conflict scenarios as a way of exploring alternative solutions. There is usually an assumption that the facilitators and the participants have the skills (and confidence) to role-play scenarios to their peers. Role-playing is not something one simply jumps into, such as asking students to write in a journal.

clear pre-determined SEL outcomes. To date, the Cool Conflict program has been practiced and tested in schools in Australia, Sweden, and Malaysia.

One of the core concepts of Cooling Conflict is to teach the students to identify three escalating stages of conflict: 1. Latent (hidden conflict; conflict lays dormant); 2. Merging (brewing conflict; conflict has begun to be revealed with little awareness or impact on others); and 3. Manifest (open conflict; conflict is out in the open and clashes with others' interests, rights, or power). The program provides an emotional vocabulary for the students, and encourages youth to identify and practice ways to de-escalate conflict. Also, the Cooling Conflict program identifies the relationship between Bully (offender), Victim (receiver), and Witness (bystander); yet, it strives towards a culture where there are no heroes, no bullies, and no victims--just people.

Another core concept of the Cooling Conflict program is peer mediation. O'Toole, Burton, and Plunkett (2005) highlight in their literature review some mixed results about whether or not peer mediation helps to reduce bullying and conflict in schools. They propose a different model of peer mediation. First, a senior class (relay class #1) is taught specific SEL skills, and afterwards, they teach (and perform) what they learned to a younger grade (relay class #2). In time, this younger class passes this knowledge down (and performs) to an even younger class (relay class #3), and so on. The number of relay classes varies from project to project, but in all cases peers take what they have learned from older peer mediators and teach it to younger peers. The preliminary research results on the relay model illustrated some positive results in reducing the number of bullying incidences in school; however, since this program is still relatively new, more research is needed. For instance, it would be useful if the program could provide data on how the process of creating and presenting these anti-bullying scenes impact the overall school culture (i.e., less disciplinary issues in the office).

One limitation of the Cooling Conflict program is that it is highly dependent on the older students effectively teaching the information to the younger students. There is an assumption that all students have the ability to "teach", and that all students will buy into the teaching of an anti-bullying message. If what the students teach in the younger classroom is different from their behaviours in real life (i.e., picking on peers during recess), then this contradiction may undermine the program. There is also an assumption that all students can

create and perform anti-bullying scenarios well. Weak scripts and aesthetically poor performances could lead to the SEL “messages” being diminished, ignored, or ridiculed. Also, there is a risk that students might create and perform skits that over-simplify complex social problems (e.g., “Hitting is wrong!” as opposed to “What aspects of the school system and our society perpetuate bullying?”). Nevertheless, the Cooling Conflict program provides clear SEL skills for youth development, and it provides the foundation, vocabulary, knowledge, and skills for youth to manage their anger, resolve their conflicts, and communicate, teach, and interact through role-playing.

Drama and SEL Connection #3: Dialogic and Social Change

The third drama and SEL connection is linked to the qualities of *dialogic* and *social change*. Social issues are role-played, slowed down, and performed repeatedly in different ways in order for the youth and facilitators to stimulate dialogue and critical awareness of given social issues. Some of the main SEL skills are raising awareness, exploring the ambiguity of different or controversial issues, connecting the personal experience to the universal, giving voice to the marginalized, and dialoguing multiple viewpoints (sometimes connecting, sometimes contradictory). Dialoguing and working democratically about social issues through constructing, presenting, and interacting with a theatre form is central.

Heddon and Milling (2006) warn readers that the theatre experience cannot be made universal, nor can it be truly equal and democratic. Regardless of the amount of dialogue, there are always viewpoints ignored, forgotten, misrepresented, favoured, and silenced. Therefore, youth and facilitators need to support each other to question not only what they are performing, but also why they are performing it. The aim of this type of theatre-making is on re-interpretation and re-presentation of new material in order to create space for marginalized voices, instead of reproducing already established social norms. Heddon and Milling state that it is impossible to ever be free from intertextuality, since everything new is borrowed from pre-established social and cultural materials. In others words, the theatre-making process is rooted within the very same social and historical norms from which it seeks to be liberated. Therefore, it is the responsibility of the co-creators to both embrace and interrogate the intentions of the creators, the creative process, and the art itself.

There are many examples of drama and SEL connections based on the study of social issues. Ressler (2002) uses drama to talk about sexual orientation and gender identity with

secondary students. Saldana (1995) uses drama to improvise with multiethnic folklore and issues of color. O'Neill (1995) and O'Neill and Lambert (1982) create drama structures to address issues, such as running away from home, the depression era, and the impact of natural disasters. Overall, for this connection, facilitators need to be trained in different conventions of role-plays, forum theatre, social dramas, and other applied drama/theatre practices.

Winston (1998) describes two types of theatre: iconic and dialectic. The iconic theatre, both comedy and drama, leaves the audience's values of the world untouched and undisturbed. The dialectic theatre leaves the audience's values being challenged. He writes that dialectic theatre "works through subversion, by creating an appealing but oppositional claim on an audience's allegiances, and is thus able to disturb its moral sensibilities through tugging at its' emotions in oppositional directions simultaneously and thus forcing it into reflection" (p. 67). In effect, the aim of this drama and SEL connection is to raise greater social awareness.

Jackson (2005) reflects on theatre as an instrumental learning medium and he described the tensions between the dialogic and aesthetic viewpoints of applied theatre. Jackson believes that dialogic theatre and aesthetic theatre are like "awkward bedfellows", which do not naturally fit together (p. 105). Instead of these two awkward bedfellows filing for divorce, Schonmann (2005) opts that these two sides need to learn their place--the aesthetic is the master and the dialogic is the servant. In other words, for both Jackson and Schonmann, the power of theatre as a learning medium can only be effective if and only if the aesthetic of theatre is the driving force of the entire process. They argue that the dialogic movement has weakened the aesthetic side of applied theatre, which in turn has led to poorly written scripts and poor performances. Ironically, this leads to a weakened dialogic side.

Overall, Jackson (2005) states that the emphasis of theatre should not be utilized to reproduce or teach learning messages. The power of theatre does not stem from preaching messages, but from providing powerful theatre experiences. Jackson argues that the aesthetic of theatre speaks louder and more powerfully than any prescribed teaching message, as the theatre experience, and not the teaching message, stimulates meaningful dialogue. Jackson admits that the dichotomy between dialogic and aesthetic theatre is most likely a false one,

media. Similar to Diamond, Rohd (1998) develops his own unique forum theatre program as a way to raise social awareness and stimulate dialogue in local communities.

One of the leading forms of dialogue-based drama is forum theatre. Forum theatre involves an audience watching actors perform a short scene in which characters deal with a particular social issue that is relevant to the local community. With the support of a facilitator (sometimes called the Joker), members of the audience replace a character and act out the scene in order to illustrate another way for this character to behave in the given scenario. In each case the actors improvise with the selected audience members and adapt their responses to match and draw out the audience member's unique viewpoint. Rohd's (1998) program provides a wide range of drama warm-ups, activities, and discussion stimulation formats for facilitators to choose from.

Diamond (2007) writes that the purpose of forum theatre is not to find a single answer, but to draw out a wide range of different perspectives. Some examples for scenarios are a gay man being unable to get a job because he has AIDS, a teenager getting kicked out of the house because she is pregnant, or an Iranian-Canadian shopping at a grocery store being called a terrorist. At no point do the facilitators or actors provide right or wrong answers to these dilemmas since the point of forum theatre is to stimulate dialogue through activating a scene. There are no teaching messages such as, "drugs are bad", or "just say no"; instead, there are open-ended discussions. Instead of telling the audience what to do, the process invites the audience to grapple with complex social issues together.

It is important to remember that Boal (1979) wrote his book, *Theatre of the Oppressed*, when he was exiled to Argentina by the Brazilian military. Therefore, Boal's strong advocacy to fight against oppressions and fight for liberation may not be relevant to the lives of today's North American youth. Furthermore, youth participating in Rohd's (1998) program would need to be open to the expression of different viewpoints and be open to participate in drama and role-playing activities in order to cope with the ever-changing component of forum theatre. Lack of awareness or sensitivity of a social issue or weak improvisational responses can bring the process to a grinding halt. Also, youth need to be open with the forum theatre program's refusal to provide clear straight-forward answers. In effect, Rohd's program encourages youth to think critically for themselves; however, an overemphasis on critical dialogue may not provide youth with enough direction and structure

to develop and integrate SEL skills into their lives. In other words, dialoguing about social issues may not necessarily lead to real action and social change.

Overall, the strength of the theatre forum program stems from Rohd's year of forum theatre experience, which has been highly sanctioned by the internationally renowned forum theatre leader, Augusto Boal. As part of my research training, I took workshops with Rohd and Diamond. Currently in 2011, Diamond has worked on a theatre project that examines the space in between "Us" and "Them", and Rohd worked on a site specific theatre project at the Oregon Shakespeare Festival.

Drama and SEL Connection #4: Re-Imaginary and Personal Change

The fourth set of drama and SEL qualities is the *re-imaginary* and *personal change*. The aim of theatre in this connection is "re-imagine" new possibilities to empower, mirror, heal, and transform the lives of youth and their community. Through the process of creating a play, people work collaboratively to create new theatre material and new ways to relate with one another and the world. Through this theatre-making process, youth make personal choices to change their lives and communities.

The main focus of the fourth drama and SEL connection is fostering positive youth development. Various researchers have found that a caring community and exposure to a wide array of proactive social interactions serve as a buffer for youth to cope with life stressors (Catalano, et al. 2004; Rauner, 2000). Rauner (2000) describe how youth programs foster positive youth development based on the foundation of caring. Scales and Leffert (2004) highlight 40 developmental assets that serve as building blocks for healthy youth development (as listed in chapter one, such as sense of purpose and decision making). In addition, Scales and Leffert indicate that role-playing is an effective technique to support youth to practice, reinforce, and internalize development assets. They do not advocate for untrained facilitators to draw out troubling personal stories from youth; however, they argue that the process of discussing, practicing, and developing developmental assets can lead to meaningful and relevant changes in the lives of youth.

Beare (2003), and Beare and Belliveau (2007) link positive youth development with the collaborative play-creating process. Through the process of students and theatre facilitators collaborating to co-create an original play, youth in turn develop their developmental assets. Based on interviews and three years of research, Beare suggests that

and performance processes, they spent a large amount of time bonding as a group, sharing and reflecting on personal stories, and participating in various SEL activities to build up their developmental assets.

In 1994, as a way of coping with rising violence and racial tension in Washington D.C., local artists and community workers developed *The Possibility Project* in which youth and caring adults worked together to create an original musical, inspired by the youth's lived experiences. There are six core program outcomes: cross-cultural understanding and competence, improved conflict resolution skill/violence prevention, improved leadership skills, initiative towards social change, positive and powerful sense of the future, performing arts excellence, and college attainment. To date, thousands of youth in different cities in United States, Israel, and South Africa have completed the year long program, and they have created original musicals, which have been performed to over a collective 100,000 audience members. *The Possibility Project* program has been featured on "Nightline" news and has received numerous awards.

The Possibility Project has a clear change model. Before the theatre-making process, specific SEL programs are set in place to support positive youth development, which, in turn, feeds the theatre-making process. After the performance, the program continues and youth are encouraged to reflect upon their ten-month change process. Upon reflection, they come to grasp the complexity of the change process and to see how they have been able to integrate (or not) the multiple SEL skills into their lives. *The Possibility Project* website state that the youth

are soon able to make the connection from their experience of creating a show to how anything can be transformed, whether it be friendships, family relationships, community conflicts, or their own path for living. They recognize, most importantly, that it is a process, usually a long-term process that requires the same skills and perspectives and patience that a show requires. Understanding this creative process that leads to performance can be a key to unlocking a participant's frustration with the necessary creative process of change. They learn that they can take the same approach to their lives and their communities, apply themselves "like it's a show", achieve the same level of impact on the "audience", and gain the same increase in "self-confidence that they get from "the performance". In other words, they recognize that this "creating something from nothing but ourselves" mirrors the process of change. (*The Possibility Project*, 2011)

The content of the original musicals is inspired by the stories shared by the youth, and their ideas of positive change to improve their local community. For example, they created

original musicals on safe sex, substance abuse, and family violence. *The Possibility Project* involves around 50 to 100 youth per production, and include eight to twelve alumni participants, who have returned to serve as peer leaders and to be a member of the musical-creation production team. *The Possibility Project* claims that peer leadership is one of the key ingredients for their success.

The Possibility Project requires well-trained facilitators to support youth artistically, socially, and emotionally. Youth are required to share and listen to stories, many of which are difficult and painful. This self-disclosure process has the potential to stir-up difficult emotions in youth, and raise some social tensions in the group and community. One possible limitation in this program is that it could encourage students to compete and out-do one another in their stories, and to over-identify with negative, self-destructive, or painful aspects of their lives. Also, engaging youth through a “re-storying” process, if not done properly, could lead to re-traumatizing the experiences caused by reliving past traumatic events.

Also, *The Possibility Project* has the risk of robbing youth of their stories. Even though the musical is inspired by the youth’s stories and their vision of local change, only the adult facilitators and adult alumni are invited to write the script, lyrics, and the music. While youth may be satisfied with the positive group experience, they may not have the confidence or awareness to inform adults if their ideas or vision of local change has been artistically misrepresented. Also, while none of the youth’s real life stories are used in the script, there is a risk that youth may feel overexposed when the universal story is shared with an audience.

Unlike the first three Drama and SEL programs described above, *The Possibility Project* has strong evaluation procedures and data to report on the success of their program. For example, they reported,

[s]ince 2002, 92% of [The Possibility Project] participants have gone on to college, compared to a national average of 68%. During that time, 99.3% of participants stayed in high school, compared to a national average of 71%. The average GPA increases by approximately 0.5, one-half letter grade.
(*The Possibility Project*, 2011).

In addition to an impressive quantitative result, they provide written reflections from youth that illustrate ways how *The Possibility Project* support youth to transfer the SEL skills and theatre experiences to their personal lives. Conversely, there is little evidence how the program impacts on school and academic experiences. Overall, *The Possibility Project* is an

excellent example of a drama and SEL program that fosters positive youth development and stimulates a change process for youth.

Drama and SEL “Red Zone”

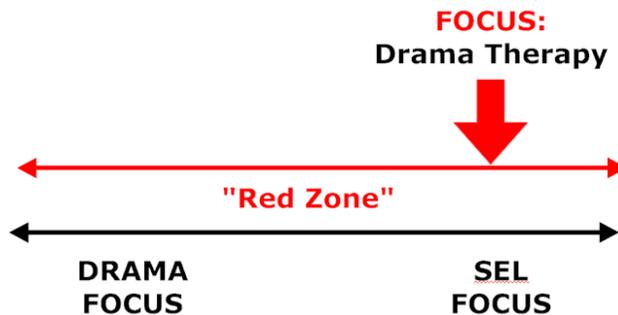
Up to this point, each of the four Drama and SEL programs and connections are centred within the education and psycho-education domain. The “red zone” divides the education/psycho-education domain from the counseling/psychology domain. The fifth and final drama and SEL connection is specific to drama therapy and requires training in counseling psychology and drama therapy.

Drama and SEL Connection #5: Symbolic-Realistic and Internal Change

The fifth set of Drama and SEL qualities is **symbolic-realistic** and **internal change**. In the first four sets of Drama and SEL qualities, the facilitator focused on the group in a classroom or community project. There is intent to teach or explore a concept, develop a skill, or stimulate some dialogue for the individuals in the group; however, there is no attempt to change the individual’s internal psychological processes. In this fifth set, the intent of the facilitator is to work directly (with real life stories) or indirectly (with fictional stories) to change the internal psychological processes of the individuals in the group. The individuals in drama therapy are often screened and placed in the therapy sessions to participate in drama-centred activities for internal restructuring of cognitive, emotional and behavioural processes. Facilitators may work directly with real life stories, or work symbolically with fictional stories. Whether it is working symbolically with fiction or role-playing real-life events, in all cases with drama therapy, drama becomes a re-imagining of one’s (fictional or real) story to produce constructive outcomes, explore new possibilities, and practice new skills. Again, there are many overlaps between drama therapy and the four programs in the education/psycho-education domain, but here the facilitator is properly trained to facilitate youth in drama-based therapy work.

Drama therapy. At its broadest range, drama therapy can be described as “any therapeutic use of role-playing” (Johnson, 1982, p.83). Drama therapy is “the intentional use of creative drama toward the psychotherapeutic goals of symptom relief, emotional and physical integration, and personal growth” (p. 83). Emunah (1994) defines drama therapy as “the intentional and systematic use of drama/theatre processes to achieve psychological

growth and change” (p. 3). Doyle (1998) states that drama therapy has two goals: “To develop and refine roles which aid in self consolidation and the building of self structure,” and “To integrate role repertoire and affect into a cohesive experience of the self” (p. 224). In all cases, role is the key ingredient in drama therapy because without role there can be no drama (Landy, 1990).



Healing through dramatic acts originated with shamanism, a religion where the village shaman cured the sick and controlled events through spiritual rituals, theatrical acts, community witnessing, and magic. Landy (1997a), the founder of American drama therapy, illustrates the interrelationship between theatre and healing, and explains that religious rituals and shamanic ceremonies are woven throughout our history in different forms. Snow (1996) provides a powerful metaphor of a *Shamanic Tree* where the trunk represents the original Shamanic healing rituals, and the branches represents various theatre-based therapies, such as psychodrama, therapeutic theatre, and role-playing techniques in psychotherapies (i.e., gestalt therapy). Snow recommends that the different dramatic art therapies embrace and share ideas with one another since all dramas have healing potential.

Talerico (1986) believes that through working with the symbolic language of metaphor, people are better able to express their innermost feelings. Landy (1995) confirms this idea when he examined the parallelism between an expressive art form and an often-unconscious expression of personal thoughts and feelings. Manheim (1998) writes that there is a high correlation between creative work and self-actualizing growth. Manheim states all creative and expressive arts therapies are based on two assumptions. First, all people have access to expressing their creativity in one symbolic form or another. Second, the creative process has the potential to reach an intangible and fluid realm of the human psyche.

Drama therapists work with a wide range of groups including children with various special needs, schizophrenic adults, prisoners, alcohol and drug abusers, the elderly in nursing homes, and people with eating disorders. Baim, Burmeister, and Maciel (2007), Blatner (1973), Dayton (2005), Westwood and Wilensky (2005), and Yablonsky (1976) provide over 40 years of research on psychodrama and provide a framework for using psychodrama with adults and youth. Fink (1990) provides a theoretical framework linking emotions between psychotherapy and theatre. Johnson (1982) and Landy (1997b) provide various researches on drama therapy. Cossa (1992) combines drama therapy with a theatre program for adolescents that aimed to improve their self-image and ego development. Emunah (1994) provides a thorough in-depth description of the adult patients in a mental health hospital putting on a play. Bolton, Howlett, Lago, and Wright (2004) provide links between writing, storytelling, counseling, and psychotherapy. Rowe (2006) describes dramatizing personal narratives in playback theatre.

According to Johnson (1982) much of the research of drama therapy is grounded in play theory, role theory, and psychoanalytical theory. Yet Landy (1986, 1990) suggests that drama therapy is rooted in symbolic interaction theory, role theory, and distancing. Meldrum (1994a) derives her theoretical framework of drama therapy using four different models: 1) theatre, 2) fictional literature, 3) role theory, and 4) anthropology, which include ritual and shamanism. While all these models are relevant and overlap, to limit the scope of this section, only two key drama therapy concepts are described--role theory and distancing.

Role theory explains how roles are shaped and reinforced by powerful social influences including family, peers, schools, media, and culture (Meldrum, 1994b). Furthermore, Courtney (1989) describes role as “a patterned sequence of learned actions and deeds performed by a person in an interaction situation” (p. 170). There is no one core aspect to a personality, but rather a person is made up of overlapping layers of roles. Different situations draw out different roles and determine how these roles will be performed. For example, how one acts at work with a boss is different from how one acts at a party with friends. Based on role theory, drama therapy aims to bring these hidden or unrefined parts of the self into action, and through the enactment of these roles, participants work towards integrating these different, and often contradictory, aspects of the self (Doyle, 1998; Jennings and Minde, 1993; Landy, 1990; Landy, 1993).

Aesthetic distancing is another core concept in drama therapy (Landy, 1983; Landy, 1986; Landy, 1997a). The key concept of distancing requires participants to project themselves into their roles. As a result, they create a distance from their own personal conflict allowing the participants to see their projections in these roles (Meldrum, 1984b). According to Davies (1987) symbolic distance helps participant to “safely distance the self from the role as far as he or she wishes... stay[ing] within the ‘common denominators’ of the group” (p.119). Landy (1997a) states that distancing--working symbolically--moves the participants outside their frame of reference. This allows room for the participants to perform new behaviours. Over time, the desirable behaviours performed in the roles are integrated into the participant’s ways of behaving in real life. Landy expands on this view by describing distancing as either under-distancing (little separation between reality and role), as seen in psychodrama, or over-distancing (great separation between reality and role) as seen in therapeutic theatre.

There is often confusion between psychodrama and drama therapy, the two leading types of drama-based therapies. Both use similar role-playing techniques and share similar humanistic ideals; both support and insight aid humans can choose to replace undesirable behaviours with desirable ones. What makes the field confusing is that drama therapy means two different things. First, drama therapy is a generic umbrella term, which encompasses all drama-based therapies, such as therapeutic theatre (Anderson-Warren, 1996), psychodrama (Baim, Bureister, and Maciel, 2007), and therapeutic enactment (Westwood and Wilensky, 2005). Second, drama therapy is also a specific type of therapy, which falls under the umbrella of drama therapy (Emunah, 1994). In comparison, psychodrama is heavily tied to a traditional three stage role-playing framework, while drama therapy has no standard framework, and more likely to incorporate art, music, dance, movement, mime, and literature. In short, drama therapy as a therapeutic technique engages the group to role-play fictional stories as a way to protect participants from overwhelming feelings (over-distancing), while psychodrama have participants role-play real past stories in the *here and now* (under-distancing) (Blatner, 1973; Casson, 1996; Dayton, 2005; Davies, 1987; Kedem-Tahar and Felix-Kellermann 1996; Nelson and Finneran; 2006; Snow 1996; Westwood and Wilensky, 2005; Yablonsky, 1976). In this dissertation, the term drama therapy is used as an umbrella term to address all drama-based therapies.

Overall, there are many diverse ways for therapists to use drama (and other creative arts) in counseling and therapy (Gladding, 2005). Currently, there are three main locations in North America where individuals can be trained as qualified drama therapists: Montreal, New York, and San Francisco. In the following closing paragraphs, three drama therapies are explained briefly as they influenced the development of the *Compassion Project*: therapeutic theatre (Anderson-Warren, 1996), the Drama and the Adolescent Journey program (Nelson and Finneran, 2006), and therapeutic enactment (Westwood and Wilensky, 2005).

Therapeutic theatre. My master's research is based on therapeutic theatre (Beare, 2003). *Therapeutic theatre* is another form of drama therapy where disclosure of personal concerns (past and present) is not needed to foster personal growth. This type of therapy does not draw out unconscious issues of participants, but rather, fosters a model of a "healthy environment" in which healing naturally occurs with active communal participation of theatre-making and creative expression of self and community. Therapeutic theatre is a return to the classical times when theatre served originally as the celebration of personal relationships. The act of co-creating as a community helps to reduce feelings of meaninglessness and isolation, two elements that, if left unchecked, erode psychological well-being. The theatre experiences of being listened to, being validated, and portraying honest emotions on stage, help performers to develop self-worth, self-confidence, and community support. It could be argued that some aspects of the four programs in the education/psycho-education domain could be classified as therapeutic theatre. The difference is with the population; typically therapeutic theatre is facilitated in hospitals or mental-wellness facilitates with participants struggling with some kind of physical, emotional, cognitive, or social disability (Anderson-Warren, 1996).

Drama and the adolescent journey program. Nelson and Finneran (2006), co-creators of a youth drama-based therapy program, *Drama and the Adolescent Journey*, facilitated drama-based therapy with youth in the general population. They state that in facilitating youth, it is important not to address sensitive issues early on in the formation of the group. All group move through beginning, middle and end stages, and the basic foundations (such as trust, boundaries, and respect) need to develop before tackling controversial issues. Nelson and Finneran write, "The repetitious nature of the warm-up,

enactment, and sharing provide the ritual function, giving a sense of both safety and security to the environment” (p. 37). As part of the program, facilitators guide youth through a group formation process as they move from low-risk to higher-risk drama and SEL activities. In addition, Nelson and Finneran explain that throughout the process youth balance between fiction and reality, and thoughts and feelings. The process of exploring fictional problems, not necessarily related to their real lives, helps to open up the group discussion, and helps with the practice of SEL micro-skills.

Therapeutic enactment. *Therapeutic Enactment* (TE) involves re-enacting a traumatic or problematic situation in a well-controlled, safe environment (Westwood and Wilensky, 2005). One participant per session volunteers to be the protagonist in the enactment and shares his/her story with the group; this person is called the lead. Each session takes between 1 ½ to 3 hours, which involves the lead to explore unfinished or traumatic real-life past events, to express and release unlocked or stuck energy, and most importantly, to reclaim what was lost in these events. For example, a lead may get to finally stand up to an abuser, a lead may change a negative parent-child relationship to a positive one, or a lead may get the opportunity to speak to a deceased family member. While it is not possible to change the past, TE provides opportunities for the lead to express and do things which were not possible during the actual traumatic or problematic event. The emphasis of TE is not on re-enacting the negative past events, but rather on re-imagining the events to generate new possibilities and new understandings. During the TE sessions, group members serve as witnesses to the lead’s story, holding the therapeutic space for the lead, which fosters safety and human connections. Westwood and Wilensky explain that, since shame is a significant contributing factor in the internalization process of the traumatic event, the act of being witnessed by a caring group empowers participants to release old and unhealthy narratives and to re-imagine new and healthier possibilities for their lives.

While TE is a form of psychodrama, it is distinct from psychodrama. First, psychodrama follows a three stage format (warm-up, enactment and closure), while TE follows additional stages (group screening, private meeting with leads, group norms and group formation, enactments, debriefing sessions, and post-TE follow-ups). The core difference between TE and psychodrama is that psychodrama aims to foster spontaneous responses of unplanned scenarios which unfold organically in the session, while TE reduces

the amount of spontaneity by carefully pre-planning each and every scene and scenario before each session. While the emotional responses of the TEs are spontaneous, the structure and scenes are not. Unlike psychodrama, TE requires counselors to meet privately with the lead beforehand to discuss carefully the parameters of the critical events, the scenes and scenarios, and the plan for constructive change. This is done to ensure group safety and to reduce anxiety in the participants and the group (Blatner, 1973; Dayton, 2005; Westwood and Wilensky, 2005; Yablonsky, 1976). Overall, TE, as the group counselling technique, is used in phase one of the *Compassion Project*. Further details on TE is discussed in chapter three.

Chapter Summary

At the end of this chapter, Figure 2.2 provides a summary of the five programs and its connections to all ten drama and SEL qualities. This chapter does not claim that one program is better than another. Instead, it shows the strengths, limitations, and unique features of each of the five programs. It is up to facilitators to decide critically which programs best suit the needs of youth, and to use the knowledge to increase greater awareness of the drama and SEL connections. As a reminder, facilitation of these programs should not be practiced without adequate training, certification, and/or experience. The drama therapy component is included in the drama and SEL framework in order to distinguish clearly the division line (the red zone) between the education/psycho-education domain and the counseling/psychology domains. Even though only two qualities are assigned to each of the five drama and SEL programs, there are great overlaps and connections between all ten drama and SEL qualities. Overall, the research knowledge of the five programs offers unique ways to support positive youth development, and informs the practice of the *Compassion Project*, and the conceptualization of the *social art effect*.

Figure 2.2: A Summary of Five Drama and SEL Programs

	Extra-Curricular High School Musical Theatre Program	Cooling Conflict Program	Theatre for Community, Conflict and Dialogue Program	The Possibility Project Program	Drama Therapy
Youth	Performing arts youth	General school population	Performing arts youth & general school population	Referred youth in community; no talent or skills needed	Referred youth based on psychological needs
Participation	Extra-curricular; after school hours	Mandatory; during regular school hours	Varied; depends on project	Voluntary; separate from school system	Voluntary; separate from school system
Audience	Community	Younger peers	Community	Community	Often no audience
Drama: Central Outcome	Drama is performing a high quality musical theatre reproduction for an audience	Drama is role-playing as a pedagogical tool to teach and practice SEL skills	Drama is forum theatre-making to stimuli dialogue and critical awareness of complex social issues	Drama is storytelling and creating original musical for youth to share & "re"-create lives & community	Drama is role-playing symbolically with fiction, and role-playing real-life unfinished or traumatic past events
SEL: Central Outcome	SEL is the group working cooperatively as an artistic team	SEL is increasing conflict resolution skills to reduce bullying at school	SEL is raising awareness, multiple voices/perspectives, democracy, equality & social justice	SEL is empowering youth to create safe, healthy, and peaceful lives & communities	SEL is direct/indirect internal restructuring of cognitive, emotional and/or behavioural processes
Aesthetic	High quality of aesthetic performance is required	Performance is required, but aesthetic is not central outcome	Role-playing is required, but aesthetic is not central outcome	High quality of aesthetic performance is required	Role-playing is required, but aesthetic is not central outcome
Dialogic	Dialogue around group management and theatre craft	Dialogue around anger management & conflict resolution	Dialogue around social issues is core outcome	Dialogue around personal stories and changing community	Dialogue around narrative & re-imagining story
Educational	Theatre craft	Anger management & conflict resolution	Development of critical thinking	Personal & community change	Cognitive, emotive or behavioural change
Re-creational	Rehearsing and performing a musical theatre production	Creating & performing conflict based stories and resolutions	Offering no solutions, yet performing multiple alternatives to social dilemmas	"Re"-creating personal stories, history/future, art, and local community	"Re"-creating real or fictional story
Symbolic-Realistic	Usually fiction	Usually fiction	Usually content is real & script is fiction	Usually content is real & script is fiction	Varies; under or over-distancing
Group Change	Group works cooperatively to rehearse & perform to an audience	Group works cooperatively to teach peers in younger grades	Actors & audience engage through an interactive social performance	Group listens & honour youth's stories & rehearse and perform to an audience	Group supports individuals through an internal change process
Skills Change	Expand positive emotions & minimize negative ones to maximize theatre process	Anger management & conflict resolution skills development	Developing multiple perspectives and critical awareness on the complexity of given social issues	Increasing youth's developmental assets through exposure of various SEL activities	Individual practice a range of SEL skills through role-playing
Social Change	Possible but not central outcome	Possible but not central outcome	Dialoguing about social change is central outcome	Bringing action to social change is central outcome	Social Changes stems from internal change
Personal Change	Nurturing a positive and arts-friendly school community.	Reducing bullying incidences in local schools	Possible but not central outcome; up to audience to change own community	Youth encouraged to "Be the Change" they want to see in the local community	Personal Change stems from internal change
Internal Change	Possible but not central outcome	Possible but not central outcome	Possible but not central outcome	Possible but not central outcome	Internal change is central outcome

Chapter Three Research Description

Nothing exists until or unless it is observed. An artist is making something exist by observing it. And his [her] hope for other people is that they will also make it exist by observing it. I call it 'creative observation.' Creative viewing.

William S. Burroughs, American poet and writer

This chapter presents my core philosophy of the a/r/tographical study; specifically it introduces a theatre education research lens through the *rendering of the fourth wall*. Also, the data and the data-collecting methods are shown, followed by descriptions of the four phases of the *Compassion Project*.

Enhancement Position: Core Philosophy of A/r/tographical Study

The core philosophy of this a/r/tographical study is rooted within an *enhancement position*. For the sake of establishing a common language, the term *critical position* (derived from critical theory) is used to describe the examination and critique of society and social problems, while the term *enhancement position* (derived from positive psychology) is used to describe the enhancement of human strengths and social organizations. A core assumption of the *critical position* is that one supports the system by pinpointing and repairing the problems in the system. Conversely, the core assumption of the *enhancement position* is that one supports the system by enhancing human strengths and positive human relationships within the system. In short, taking a *critical position* is rooted in problem-solving and fixing what is not working, while the *enhancement position* is rooted in developing people and building upon what works.

There are many examples of critical theory being integrated into drama education research and research methodologies (e.g., Ackroyd, 2006). Both Boal (1979) and Diamond (2007) developed critical theory in their practice of theatre of the oppressed, which is based on Freire's (1970) pedagogy of the oppressed. Pendergast and Saxton (2009) and Balfour and Somers (2006) illustrate how critical theories fit in the applied drama/theatre fields, and how various theatre and drama programs serve as forms of pro-social interventions. Epskamp (2006) provides the critical theory and practice of theatre for development in Africa. Saldana (2005) expands from Denzin (2003) and McCall's (2000) research on performance

ethnography, and uses ethnodrama to perform multiple perspectives on challenging social issues, such as race, poverty, and street violence.

In another example, Gonzalez (2006) responds to Lazarus's (2004) call for secondary theatre teachers to integrate social responsibility practice and critical pedagogy into the theatre classrooms. Gonzalez developed a model called the *Critically Conscious Production-Oriented Classroom*, which is a method for teachers to empower students and to promote social responsibility through the combined practices of theatre and critical inquiry. Long unexpected breaks for reflection are welcomed for theatre students to address conflicts in the theatre process, to explore power dynamics within the group, and to make connections about global issues such as race, gender, or sexual orientation.

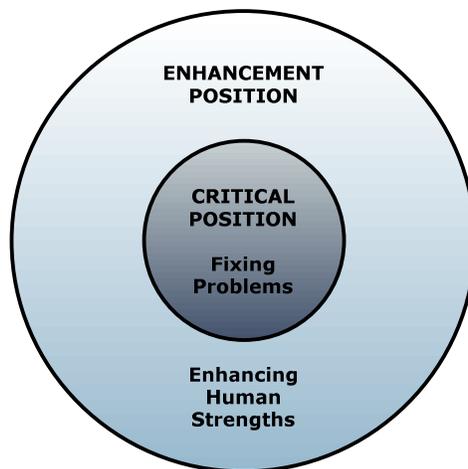
While Taylor (2006) pushes for a stronger *critical position* in drama education research, an *enhancement position* better suits the approach of this study. Rooted in positive psychology and developmental theories, an *enhancement position* allows more opportunities to align human strengths to the system of the theatre group, and to find creative ways for the system to grow and to expand based on the collective strengths of the group. In addition, the *enhancement position* is strongly linked to my training in theatre, counseling, and educational. For example, from my drama in education training, Brian Way (1967) describes the phenomenon of starting where people are at to begin the drama process. From my human psychology training, Carl Roger describes three core foundations of person-centred counseling: genuineness, unconditional positive regard, and empathetic understanding (Corey, 2011). Furthermore, derived from my education training, Davis and Sumara (2006) describe complexity theory in education, and how a complex system can grow and expand from its rudimentary structure if enough structure is provided. This last theory is elaborated further in chapter four.

An example of an *enhancement position* is appreciative inquiry. *Appreciative inquiry* is not a methodology, but rather an approach. It is often used in business or education organizations, which fosters the change process by following a 4-D cycle: Discovery, Dream, Design, and Destiny. *Appreciative inquiry* aims to motivate the people in the organization towards a common vision and shared common values, which in theory, leads to rapid improvements, greater productivity, greater collaboration, and new possibilities for movement and growth (Whitney and Trosten-Bloom, 2003).

While this study is rooted within an *enhancement position*, critical components are still rooted in the theatre-based practice, such as power, oppression, and marginalization. In fact, issues of discrimination, racism, and sexism were discussed in class. For example, in 2004, the school administrator attempted to remove a gay kiss in the students' original play. Eventually this conflict was picked up by the local, national, and international media, and some students and I were interviewed live on Canada AM television, where we nationally and publicly addressed issues of homophobia and censorship. Furthermore, various controversial topics were discussed in the theatre-making process. For example, as introduced in chapter one, the students co-created an original play, *Focus*, which explores the causes and consequences of students bringing weapons to school.

As part of my philosophy of education, I believe schools would be better served with a stronger understanding of how to integrate social development theory into the curriculum. Social development theory indicates that social interactions precede development, and concepts such as learning, consciousness, and cognition occur at the end of socialization and social behaviours (Vygotsky, 1978). Derived from the works of Dewey, Vygotsky and Bruner, Anderson (2012) writes, "Collaborative practice in particular is integral to drama making and performing, and a fundamental underpinning of the drama pedagogy as a model of social learning theory" (p. 128). In terms of human development, thinking and learning flows better after social (and emotional) connections with people. Subsequently, thinking and social concepts in schools are not opposite ends of a spectrum but highly interconnected concepts within a complex learning system.

Figure 3.1: The Relationship Between Enhancement and Critical Positions



As shown in Figure 3.1, the *enhancement position* and *critical position* are not opposite forces along a spectrum. Both are ideal for different kinds of pedagogical and psychological purposes. For example, critical thinking is required for moral development, and trust-building is required for development of interpersonal relationships. While both approaches have unique distinctions, there is no chasm between them. Both positions are highly interrelated within a complex learning system; however, for this study, learning is better served when the *critical position* is nested within an *enhancement position*.

After 20 years of teaching and 10 years of researching theatre education, I find that the *critical position* rarely drives the learning process or gets students excited about learning. Also, the *critical position* often did not provide a better understanding of the change mechanisms of positive youth and group development, which is the focus of this study. Instead, based on observations, the critical elements emerged organically from within the learning process, alongside other key elements such as playfulness, tension, collaboration, competition, and aesthetics. When the *critical position* was placed at the centre of the teaching practice, it tended to limit or to interfere with the flow and advancement of the learning process. Furthermore, sometimes the *critical position* magnified problems, and created more walls and conflicts between people, and led the group to “over-identify” with problems. Srivastva and Cooperrider (1990), two researchers of *appreciative inquiry*, state that when too much attention is placed on the dysfunction of the group, the dysfunction tends to multiply and fracture the people and the group. In short, sometimes problems generate greater and more complex problems.

In general, the students in this study tended to respond more positively when the teaching practice was rooted within the *enhancement position*. This may be a result of the creative nature of the theatre program, and the theatre students being oversaturated with critical-based activities in their other academic courses. The theatre students stated repeatedly in their written and verbal feedback that they wanted a safe place to hang out, have fun, make friends, and engage in theatre activities. Rarely did they report that being critical was a motivational factor for participating in the theatre program. Ironically, within the safety framework of an *enhancement position*, the students organically asked critical questions and explored complex and controversial critical topics. In other words, instead of the critical

components being mandated from the top-down, it unfolded organically from the bottom-up, which in turn, became more meaningful and relevant to the students.

Overall, while critical thinking did occur in this project, the students understood that the critical components were not more privileged than other valued components, such as appreciation, care, collaboration, and respect. Instead of the critical element being viewed as separate and more important, it is viewed as an organic component of the learning process. While critical thinking skills are important, other factors, such as interpersonal skills, are equally important. Also, instead of talking and writing critically about issues of social injustice and inequality, as if problems are somehow “out there”, the *enhancement position* challenges students to “walk the talk” and to turn their ideas into actions. This echoes Ghandi’s famous quote: “You must be the change you want to see in the world.”

The Renderings of A/r/tography

In general, a/r/tographers *conceptualize* how to inquire on and to question the inter-relationships and inter-subjectivity of arts education practices. The observations, practice, and data analysis of this study examine the change process of theatre-makers and the collective theatre-making organization, and how they unfold, expand, generate, improve, and progress. A/r/tography is distinct from other arts-based or inquiry-based research models because it frames the methodology around *renderings*. Renderings are *conceptual organizers of ideas* used by a/r/tographers to interpret qualities *deemed significant* during an artistic or creative process (Irwin, 2004). Irwin and Springgay (2008) describe six renderings of a/r/tography:

1. **Contiguity:** *giving attention to the spaces in-between art/education/research, in between ‘art’ and ‘graphy’, and in-between art and a/r/t;*
2. **Living Inquiry:** *giving attention to the complexity and contradictions of relations between people, things, and understandings of life experiences;*
3. **Openings:** *giving attention to dialogue and discourse;*
4. **Metaphor and Metonymy:** *giving attention to new connections and intertwined relationships;*
5. **Reverberations:** *giving attention to shifts in new meaning, new awareness, and new discoveries; and*
6. **Excess:** *giving attention to what lies outside the acceptable. (pp. xxvii-xxxi)*

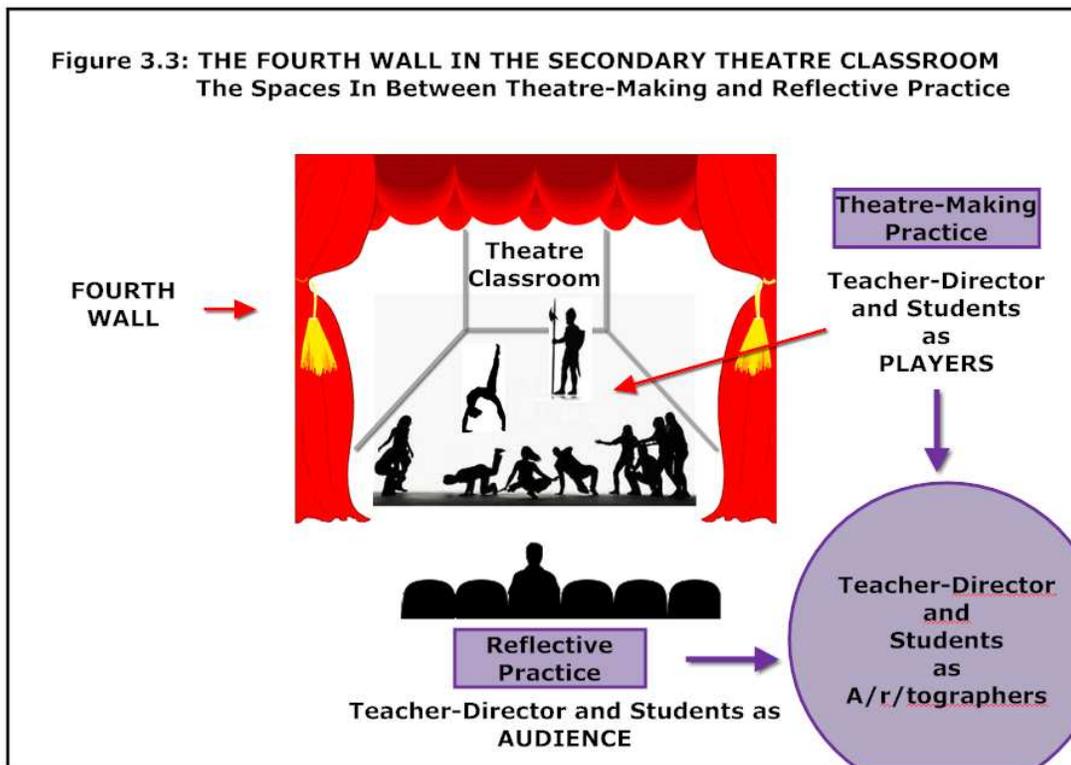
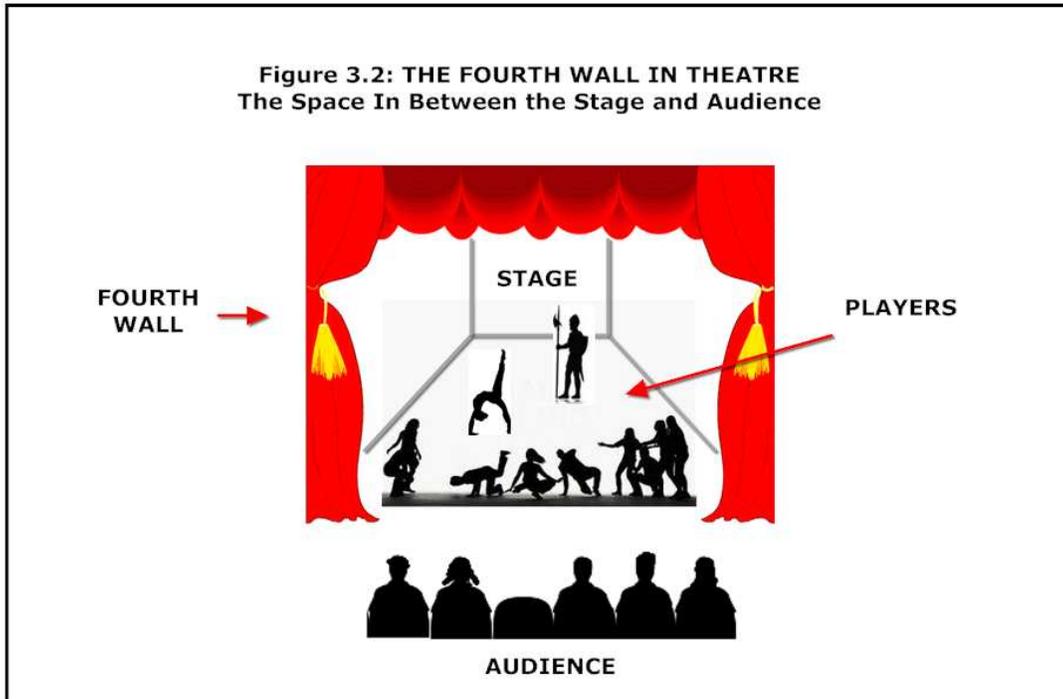
Renderings are not to be confused with methods. While methods are procedural organizers for data collection, renderings organize ideas conceptually. In short, renderings are not about gathering data, nor about reproducing/copying a piece of art, but rather a *coming*

closer to an idea through the process of art-making, which in this case, is the *social art effect*. Since a/r/tography is a never-ending and incomplete inquiry process, it remains open to the re-interpretation of renderings and the discovery of new ones. Therefore, the above list of renderings is not conclusive, exclusive, or exhaustive. Instead of using the established rendering as shown above, this study attempts to expand the possibilities of a/r/tography by offering an additional rendering rooted in the language of theatre.

Overall, this study is rooted in one core theatre-based rendering: the *fourth wall*. In a typical black box theatre, such as a proscenium arch stage, the front wall is removed for the audience to see into the world of the play. This front wall is called the *fourth wall* (also, any stage space open to the audience is considered the *fourth wall*). In theatre, the *fourth wall*, which separates the stage from the audience, is an invisible opening between the imaginary world of the play, and the real world of the audience; it is a temporary portal that allows the invisible to be made visual. The *fourth wall* allows the audience, from the outside, to look inside the imaginary world of the characters and actions of the play, like peering into a fishbowl. When actors perform characters and look out towards the *fourth wall*, ideally they do not see the audience but rather the imaginary world of the play. Also, ideally, the audience believes in the imaginary world through the performers' belief of the imaginary world. Nevertheless, sometimes the illusion of the imaginary world is disrupted when characters speak and interact directly with the audience, which is called, '*breaking the fourth wall*'. Below, the conceptualization of the *fourth wall* rendering is presented, and this serves as a theoretical foundation for this research. Accordingly, as a pedagogical research lens, the *fourth wall* rendering is extended from the theatre to the classroom.

The fourth wall in theatre. Conceptually, as illustrated in Figure 3.2, the *fourth wall* in a typical theatre environment keeps the audience members and the players on stage physically separate; however, the *fourth wall* also serves as gateway for these two separate groups to interact and to respond to one another. The audience participates in the play by watching it. Through the *fourth wall*, the audience observes the players, characters, actions, story, and the imaginary and technical elements of the play. The players (and theatre-makers) participate in the play by taking on roles and engaging in the actions of the play. The players are aware of the imaginary and technical elements of the play, and they are aware of the audience observing them and the play. Conceptually, the *fourth wall* is an interactive space

between the lives of the audience and players through the imaginary world of the play. The in-between spaces of the *fourth wall* allow new stories, new ideas, new meaning, and new possibilities to unfold, to be expressed, and to be shared.



The fourth wall in the secondary theatre classroom. The above conceptualization of the fourth wall is extended from the theatre space to the classroom space. As shown in Figure 3.3, the theatre-based rendering of the *fourth wall* invites students and teacher-director to shift between both sides of the *fourth wall*; the stage side represents theatre-making practice, and the audience side represents reflective practice. When students and theatre-director function both as players and audience of theatre-making and reflective practices, based on this study, this is considered the practice of a/r/tography.

Figure 3.4: Conceptualization of the Fourth Wall as an A/r/tographical Rendering

Fourth Wall Perspective		Fourth Wall Engagement	Fourth Wall Observation	Fourth Wall as In-Between Spaces	
THEATRE	Audience	Audience is engaged by watching play.	Audience are aware of the players, characters, actions, and the imaginary and technical elements of the play.	Fourth Wall as in-between spaces for engagement of audience and players united by the imaginary world of the play.	
	Player	Players are engaged in the roles and actions of the play.	Players are aware of the imaginary and technical elements of the play, and audience observing them and play.		
SECONDARY THEATRE CLASSROOM	Student as Player	Engaged in theatre-making practice.	A/R/TOGRAPIICAL PRACTICE	Fourth Wall as in-between spaces for engagement of students, teacher-director, players, theatre-makers, audience, and researchers united by the imaginary world of the play and the real life experiences of the inquirers.	
	Teacher-Director as Player				Students are aware of peers, teacher and audience observing them, and aware of the theatre-making process and creations.
	Teacher-Director as Audience	Engaged in reflective practice.			Teacher-director aware of students and audience observing self as group leader, and aware of the theatre-making process and creations.
	Students as Audience	Engaged in reflective practice.			Teacher-director observes students and self engaged in the social and theatre-making actions and interactions.
			Students observe self, peers, and teacher as a/r/tographer engaged in the social and theatre-making actions and interactions.		

Elaborating further on the *fourth wall* rendering, students are aware that their peers, teachers, and the audience are observing them, the theatre-making process, and the creations as a final product. The teacher-director is aware that students and audience are observing him/herself as the group facilitator. Through reflective practice, students and teacher-director tend to become more aware that the *fourth wall* serves as an in-between space for engagement of students, teacher-director, players, theatre-makers, audience, and researcher

united by the imaginary world of the play and the real life experiences of inquirers. Conceptually, the rendering of the *fourth wall* allows new stories, new ideas, new meaning, and new possibilities to unfold from the diverse social and theatre-making actions and interactions in the group. Figure 3.4 summarizes the conceptualization of the *fourth wall* as an a/r/tographical rendering.

Irwin (2004) describes the renderings of a/r/tography as conceptual organizers. The rendering of the *fourth wall* in the secondary theatre classroom is conceptually organized into five theatre-based dimensions: *Ensemble; Action; Dialogue, Soliloquy and Monologue; Improvisation; and Re-Imagining*. The five theatre dimensions of the *fourth wall* are common theatre components in theatre-making and reflective practices. While the five theatre dimensions are presented as separate, there is overlap between them. In addition, even though the students (as theatre-makers and players) and I (as teacher-director and theatre-maker) were engaged in different inquiry processes, we all are considered a/r/tographers in this study because we were engaged in overlapping theatre-making and reflective practices

Ensemble. In general, the research on the *social art effect* is extremely focused on group dynamics. An *ensemble* in theatre is a group of theatre-oriented artists with a diverse range of theatre skills working together to create a theatrical production (Weinberg, 1992). Whether the group works in a hierarchical or non-hierarchical fashion, the theatre production requires the theatre group to work collaboratively as a team united by a common vision. The dimension of *ensemble* guides a/r/tographers to give attention to the group's diverse range of social and theatre-making actions and interactions to better understand how people network and co-create together.

Action. In theatre, *action* is the movement and development of the characters, plot, and story of the play (Courtney, 1979). *Action* is the unfolding sequence of events, which can be broken down into beats and moments. A beat is the smallest unit of *action*, and a moment is a significant and heightened *action* or series of *actions* that captures the essence, turning point, and/or meaning of the events and developments of the play. The main purpose of *action* is to illuminate for the audience the change process of one or more characters in the play. The driving forces that propel the *actions* of the play are the characters' motivations and the tension that arises from characters' conflicting desires and goals. The dimension of *action*

guides a/r/tographers to give attention to the conditions and forces that propel people, ideas, and theatre to advance forward in a productive and constructive manner, as well as, to study how they develop, unfold, shift, expand, change, and learn.

Dialogue, monologue and soliloquy. In theatre, a *dialogue* is a conversation between characters, which is viewed by an audience (Davis, 2007). Dialogue gives the audience (and possibly characters) insight and new understandings into the characters and the actions of the play. A *monologue* is a long singular speech delivered literally or figuratively in which a character speaks and responds “to” and “with” other characters in the play. A *soliloquy* is a singular speech in which characters, often alone on stage, share their thoughts, feelings and opinions to themselves, which are not shared with the other characters in the play but rather disclosed directly to the audience. The main difference between these two solo pieces is that a monologue is between people (interpersonal communication), and a soliloquy is with oneself (intrapersonal communication). While soliloquies and monologues are singular uninterrupted speeches, both are extensions of dialogues as monologues are between characters in the play, and soliloquies are between a single character and the entire audience. Overall, dialogues, soliloquies, and monologues provide insight into the character’s actions, thoughts, feelings, and motivations, which illuminate the causes and effects that push the action of the play forward.

The dimension of *Dialogue, Soliloquy, and Monologue* gives attention to real, fictional, and semi-autobiographical narratives, and to the voices of students, teachers, theatre-makers, players, audience, and facilitators. This dimension engages in and examines individual and group conversations, interviews, circle talks, reflective writings, script-writings, and performances. Each exchange of ideas leads to more conversations and more questions, which in turn, propels both the research and the theatre-making process forward and shifts them in new and unexpected directions.

Improvisation. In theatre, *improvisation* is the spontaneous and unplanned invention of dialogue and actions within a given scenario (Spolin, 1986). Improvisation is a technique to explore, experiment, and play with scenarios to develop performance skills and/or to develop a scene. Improvisation is also done during performances to cope and to respond naturally to unexpected situations that occur during the performance, such as forgotten lines

or broken props. In general, theatre-makers are improvising continuously throughout the entire *collective theatre-making process* as they adapt and respond naturally and spontaneously to unexpected and unplanned social and theatre-making actions and interactions. The dimension of *improvisation* gives attention to the self-organizing adaptive process in which a/r/tographers respond organically to the unpredictable and ever-emerging processes of collective theatre-making, data-analyzing, and research-writing.

Re-imagining. Albert Einstein famously said, “Imagination is more important than knowledge.” In theatre, the process of imagining requires audience, theatre-players, and theatre-makers to suspend their disbelief, and to think, feel, behave, and imagine “as if” (Courtney, 1989, p. 2). Re-imagining in theatre is the process of making something anew, such as creating a new version of a classic Shakespearian play. The world renowned Shakespearian director, Peter Brook (1968), argues that theatre, whether traditional, modern or experimental, must be re-imagined regularly. Theatre cannot sit still like a finished painting, nor can it be replayed the same way over and over again like a song on the radio, or a movie in the cinema. He describes theatre as a self-destructive art—once it becomes static or sets, it slowly begins to die. The process of re-imagining keeps the theatre experience alive, and pushes theatre in new directions.

The strength of theatre stems from its ability to evoke and elicit powerful feelings and thoughts in the audience. While the performance of the play is imaginary, the experience of watching and presenting the performance, in an emotional sense, is very real. Whether the play is presented as naturalism or surrealism (realistic or abstract), the verisimilitude of theatre allows theatre-players and theatre-makers to work symbolically with theatre elements to present the appearance of truth. Yet, theatre is not restricted to a single truth; instead, theatre provides multiple pathways of expression and disruptions of diverse and contradictory truths. Theatre challenges people to shift out the confinement of their own personal realities, and invites them into the imaginary realities of the play. By re-imagining old concepts anew, theatre has the potential to transport people to uncharted worlds. The power of re-imagining exposes people to new possibilities and perspectives, and this has the potential to disrupt established paradigms, unleash complex or caged truths, and inspire people to imagine a better society. The dimension of *re-imagining* gives attention to new meaning that unfolds from making something anew.

Summary of fourth wall rendering. The rendering of the *fourth wall* and its five theatre dimensions are not exhaustive, exclusive, or conclusive, nor are they methods used to research and collect data. Instead, the rendering of *fourth wall* serves as a *conceptual organizer of ideas* to frame this study and to interpret qualities deemed significant during the *Compassion Project*. The rendering of *fourth wall* invites a/r/tographers to look around, dwell, and reflect on both sides of the *fourth wall* and in between them. A/r/tographers are in a continuous process of *moving closer to an idea*. Including the *fourth wall* as a rendering provides a theoretical framework to guide, illustrate, analyze, evaluate, and illuminate the *social art effect*, and how the *Compassion Project* fosters positive youth and group development. For this study, the ***rendering of the fourth wall*** gives attention to:

1. Both the audience and players' sides of the fourth wall;
2. The in-between spaces of the fourth wall;
3. The spaces in between students and teacher-director as players and audience;
4. The spaces in between theatre-making practice and reflective practice;
5. The spaces in between the imaginary world of the play and the real life experiences of the inquirers; and
6. The five theatre dimensions: ensemble; action; dialogue, soliloquy and monologue; improvisation; and re-imagining.

Data and Data-Collecting Methods

As illustrated in Figure 3.5, this study involves a wide range of data. Three primary methods were used to collect data from the four phases of the *Compassion Project*: participant observation, interviews, and collection of artifacts and texts. The a/r/tographer's field notes and diagrams stemmed from immersion in the facilitation of the four phases of the *Compassion Project*, and from review of the data below.

The first phase of the *Compassion Project* involved ten students. Each of the ten students participated in one to three individual interviews ranging between 30 to 60 minutes and these were audio/videotaped. Only sections related to most of the circle talks and the topic of *social art* were transcribed. For the first one-on-one interview, students met privately a month before the start of the project. During the interview students discussed their personal background, their experiences in school, and their thoughts and impressions about a safe and caring school. Each interview unfolded in different directions. Originally, mid-project and post-project individual interviews were intended, but this was switched to group interviews. This was done because the students seemed to communicate their thoughts and feelings better

during the circle talks and this provided more insight into the *social art* process. In short, students' responses were richer, more elaborate, and more generative when they were able to hear and to bounce off each others' responses. In addition, 35 hours of group work were audio/videotaped, which included therapeutic enactments, circle talks, guest lectures, and art-sharing sessions. Throughout phase one, students wrote and drew reflections and creative pieces on body-sized blue reflection sheets; the ten body-sized blue reflection sheets were collected as data and fully transcribed.

Figure 3.5: Compassion Project Data

Data	Method	Participants	Time Spread	Phase
Audio/Videotapes of group and individual interviews (Selections transcribed)	Interviews	Individual and group discussion with original 10 students	5 months; 25 hours of tapes	One
Audio/Videotapes of therapeutic enactments, circle talks and art-sharing (Selections transcribed)	Participant Observation	10 students engaged in 6 sessions of therapeutic enactments, circle talks and art-sharing	6 Sessions; 35 hours of tapes	One
Body-Sized Blue Reflection Sheets (All text transcribed)	Collection of Artifacts and Text	Transcriptions of 10 students' ongoing reflections	6 Sessions	One
<i>The Flip Side</i> Reflections: Post-Regional Festival (All text transcribed)	Collection of Text	500+ written responses from 91 of 110 students involved in play	Post-Performance Week	Three
<i>The Flip Side</i> Reflections: Post-Provincial Festival (All text transcribed)	Collection of Text	173 written responses from 61 out of 68 students involved in play	Post-Performance Day	Three
<i>Focus</i> Reflections (All text transcribed)	Collection of Text	117 written responses from 117 out of 170+ students involved in play	Post-Performance Week	Four
Script and Videotape of students' original play, <i>The Flip Side</i>	Collection of Artifacts	Collection of slam poetry, including 110 students in a 1 hour play	6 months	Two & Three
Script and Videotape of students' original play, <i>Focus</i>	Collection of Artifacts	2 hour play including 170+ students and over 50 characters	1 year	Four
A/r/tographer's Field Notes and Diagrams	Participant Observation	A/r/tographer's immersion in <i>Compassion Project</i>	1 year & 3 months	One to Four
Dialogue with a student	Interview—Extended	A/r/tographer and student ongoing discussion	2 ½ years; Ongoing	Ongoing
<i>One Year Post-Project Reflections</i> (All text transcribed)	Collection of Text	176 written responses from 90 students	A year after Completion of Project	Post-Project

Ongoing individual interviews were conducted with one particular student, Soraya (pseudonym), which is the focus of chapter six. Soraya was heavily involved in all four phases of the *Compassion Project*. Over the course of two and a half years, Soraya was interviewed face to face, and by email, formally and informally, numerous times before, during, and after the *Compassion Project*. Data related to *social art* were transcribed from Soraya's interviews, written reflections, theatre-making scripts, therapeutic enactments, songs, and/or other texts.

In terms of collecting theatre-making artifacts, the two plays, *The Flip Side* (Beare and Writing Team, 2010b) and *Focus* (Beare and Writing Team, 2010a), were videotaped. Sections of both scripts are highlighted throughout the dissertation in italics. As for collected texts, the grade 10-12 theatre students who participated in one or both plays were invited to write answers to a wide range of research questions. Students were informed that participation and completion of the research questions were optional, and that their identity and handwriting would be anonymous. Students were informed that all written texts would be transcribed by someone other than myself, and that I would only read the typed text after the school year was completed. Below is a list of open-ended questions, which varied and evolved over time. At first, the questions were about the *Compassion Project* and the topic of safe and caring schools, but eventually this led to questions about their social art experiences. Essentially, the *social art* questions were not pre-determined, but rather, they evolved organically from the investigative inquiry process.

Compassion Project Questions

- What did you learn, discover, or gain from participating in the *Compassion Project*?
- Describe your experience with the *Compassion Project*, theatre-making, stage performances, and/or *collective theatre-making process*?
- What does safe and caring schools mean to you?
- What did you discover or learn about safe and caring schools?
- What did you learn or discover about yourself and others?
- How did the project positively/negatively impact you as a person/learner/theatre-maker?
- What was rewarding and challenging about working on this project?
- If you were to do this project again, what would you do differently, and why?

Social Art Questions

- What is social art?
- How is theatre a social art?
- What was your experience working collectively in a large group?
- How did working in a large group impact you as a person/learner/theatre-maker?
- Describe the group and your social and theatre-making actions and interactions.
- How did the social elements of the group impact your theater-making experience, and how did the theatre-making elements of the group impact on your social experience?
- How did your theatre-making experience impact your social experience in the group?
- How did your social experience impact your theatre-making experience in the group?

Overall, written data was collected and transcribed from over 200 students that participated in one or more phases of the *Compassion Project*. On the post-performance week of February 1-4, 2010, 524 responses were obtained from 91 of 110 students involved in the performance of *The Flip-Side* at the Regional High School Drama Festival (on average students answered around five questions each). On the post-performance day of May 8, 2010, 174 responses were obtained from 61 out of 68 students involved in the remounting of the production of *The Flip-Side* at the Sear's B.C. Provincial High School Drama Festival (on average students answered three questions each). On the post-performance week of April 20-23, 135 responses were obtained from 81 of 170 students involved in the performance of *Focus* at Centennial Theatre (on average, students answered one to two questions each). In total, 833 post-performance written reflections were obtained from phases three and four.

In addition, a year after the *Compassion Project*, students were invited to reflect upon questions related to the research, as a way of member checking. At this point, the students had just finished performing their major play, exactly one school year later. Most of these students had either watched one or more of the phases of the *Compassion Project* or had participated in it themselves. As a way to extend the analysis of the *Compassion Project* data, students, a year later, were asked more direct questions about their social and theatre-making experiences, which helped to crystallize the conceptualization of the social art effect and its three components.

Overall, the data, based on students' interviews, written reflections, and circle talks, consist of over 325 transcribed pages, totaling over 100,000 transcribed words. As a way to organize the transcribed text, a qualitative research software program was used, *Max Qualitative Data Analysis* (MAXqda). MAXqda aids researchers to systematically sort the

data and aids in the process of qualitative data analysis.³ Currently, over 1000 written responses from students (including transcribed interview sections) were input into MAXqda program, which were divided into over 40 different themes. These themes were used to better understand the components of the *social art effect*.

In addition, the conceptualization of the *social art effect* is not limited only to the data and research knowledge. It also stems from my ongoing accumulation of over 20 years of secondary theatre teaching, and 10 years of researching the *collective theatre-making process*. As a theatre teacher, I am heavily immersed in the culture of my theatre classroom, which changes and evolves from year to year, month to month, week to week, day to day, and moment to moment. My participation in this study is highly interactive as I have strong relationships with my theatre students. I am highly aware that as one of the drama leaders in the school, I have a strong influence over my students, the group, and the entire *collective theatre-making process*. Consequently, they, in turn, have a huge influence on my a/r/tographical understandings and development as an artist/researcher/teacher. Because of the actions, interactions, feedback, and critical moments (tension points) with and from my students and school community, my practice gradually evolved. A/r/tographically, I give attention to the dual relationship of being immersed in the living inquiry of the *Compassion Project* and the notion of *moving closer to an idea*, which in this study is the *social art effect*. The following section presents the four phases of the *Compassion Project*. The following chapters explain the components and conceptualization of the *social art effect*.

The Four Phases of the Compassion Project

As I highlighted in chapter one, I wrote, “If a small group of secondary students from a wide range of different and conflicting backgrounds were brought together and were asked to improve the social and emotional culture of the school, what would emerge?” I wondered how the positive actions of a few could affect the whole. This was the starting point for the *Compassion Project*.

Originally, the *Compassion Project* was conceived as a extra-curricular voluntary theatre and socio-emotional learning program where secondary students from diverse backgrounds explore stories and co-create original theatre about their hopes, barriers, and dreams in school. The overall aim of the research was to examine how the *Compassion*

³ For further information about *Max Qualitative Data Analysis* (MAXqda), visit www.maxqda.com.

Project fosters positive youth development. The seed of the *Compassion Project* was inspired by social and emotional learning programs, such as Challenge Day (2009), and the movie concept, *The Breakfast Club* (Hughes, 1985). The original intention of the *Compassion Project* was to unite a diverse range of students from different backgrounds. The group would consist of a balanced spectrum of social groups (cliques), academic and achievement abilities, gender, race, pro and anti-social school behaviours, and other distinct representations, such as sexual orientation and physical disabilities. The group was intended to reach students who did not typically interact or get along with one another, and at least half of the students would have defined themselves as not experiencing success in school. No theatre experience was required to participate in this project.

Nevertheless, the original intention of the *Compassion Project*, as shown in the invitation letter (see Appendix A), varied greatly from what actually occurred in the study. Initially, this study aimed to reach ten non-theatre secondary students representing ten different cliques in the school; however, this did not occur as eight theatre students and two non-theatre students were selected. True to the evolutionary principles of *a/r/tography*, the research unfolded in unexpected and surprising ways.

At the start of the process, a *Compassion Project* presentation was conducted at the school to some of the administrators, counselors, and special education teachers. At this meeting, information about the project was shared, and then staff reviewed the invitation letter and parent consent forms (see Appendixes A and F). After the presentation, staff members were asked at the meeting to recommend non-theatre students who they thought would benefit from participating in the *Compassion Project*. The intent was to reach marginalized students--the ones who were “slipping through the cracks” and needed a “voice”. The intent of the project was to co-create original plays inspired by the voices and diversity of the original ten students, and to gradually bridge these ten students and the themes of their stories with the theatre students for phases two to four. After the presentation, the staff developed a list of students for the initial core group. Afterwards the staff approached these students and asked them if they wanted to participate in the *Compassion Project*. Surprisingly, most of the students were not interested.

Of nearly 30 names presented, only 4 students were willing to commit to the project. There was a fifth, but this person withdrew from the project minutes before the first group

session (he said that he could not commit to the long after school hours). Overall, this was an unexpected outcome because typically, at the start of a new theatre project, between 100 to 200 enthusiastic theatre students scramble to participate. Yet this entire research idea was based on reaching out to non-theatre students, and they were not responding positively. Consequently, the project was re-evaluated.

With consultation with staff, they explained that students could not commit to the 35 extra-curricular hours. They stated that even if the time commitment was significantly decreased, there would still be a high chance that these students would not commit or probably quit in the middle of it. Also, some students claimed they did not want to work in a group setting or to expose their personal stories to strangers. Since trust and confidentiality were major issues for these students, there was not enough time or resources to develop one-on-one rapport with students to help them feel safe with participating or sharing personal stories. In addition, some students expressed disinterest or strong resistance towards the “theatre” component of the project. Upon discussion with staff, the scope of the study was widened to include theatre students and/or non-theatre students who were more ready to participate in this type of project. The staff provided new names and these students were approached about the project. Again, all the non-theatre students declined the offer; however, most of the theatre students energetically accepted. Overall, twelve students were selected and interviewed, but two quit before the first group session. In the end, ten students participated in the first phase, including eight dedicated theatre students. For ethical reasons, six theatre students that I was currently teaching were reassigned to a different theatre teacher who evaluated their theatre assignments and assigned their course grades.

Overall, the *Compassion Project* spanned over one year (April 2009 to June 2010), and was divided into four phases:

- Phase One: Therapeutic Enactments, Circles Talks, and Art-Making Sessions
- Phase Two: Viewpoint Workshops, Slam Poetry, and Planetary Dance Ritual
- Phase Three: *2010 Theatre of Possibilities Project* (original play, *The Flip-Side*)
- Phase Four: *Collective theatre-making process* (original play, *Focus*)

Only ten students were invited to participate in the first phase, and afterwards, students in the grade 10-12 theatre, film, dance, and production classes were invited to participate in the second phase (50 students), third phase (109 students), and fourth phase (170 students).

Phase One: Therapeutic Enactments, Talk Circles, and Art-Making Sessions

[Data] "I stepped out of the meeting room and took a deep breath as [the counselor] asked everyone to pull up a chair and sit in a circle... before I knew it, I was called up to walk beside [the counselor] as she asked me questions... We started out slow [walking in a circle], she asked me about my experiences in elementary school. I told her about my good friends who lacked in supporting me when I needed them the most. As ridiculous as it sounded, the popular girls could not get over the fact that I did not like the same things they did. They bullied and taunted me, encouraging me to commit suicide and rid the world of one more freak. [The counselor] stopped our walking and asked me to assign a few roles for this first scene. I did as she said and we watched as they replayed my nightmare of a childhood. I couldn't stop the tears from overflowing as I remembered their harsh words screaming in my ears. We stopped the scene and then I had a chance to step in as myself and tell the girls exactly what I felt. I was different now, I was not the same little girl corrupted by their mean words. I stood up for myself and told the "popular kids" exactly what I thought of their pathetic behaviour. I let out everything I had to say and my heart suddenly felt lighter. I felt more confident and a small smile crept onto my lips as I finally had the chance to express myself." [Excerpt from Student's Post Therapeutic Enactment Reflections, Phase I.]

Throughout the study, students were invited to write about their experiences in various theatre-based activities in the *Compassion Project*. For the first phase ten students engaged in therapeutic enactments (TE), circle talks, and art-making sessions. Since I functioned both as the teacher and the researcher, a well-practiced TE counselor, Enzula Tavormina⁴, was hired. TE works best with two facilitators and since I have my M.A. counseling training and TE training, I agreed to serve as Enzula's counseling assistant.⁵

In addition to Enzula, there were three other adults involved in the first phase. First, a high school theatre alumnus, Brett Jamieson, was hired to videotape all the sessions. Sometimes he was selected to play roles in the enactments. Second, Chris Gatchalian, a guest artist, was hired to witness all six sessions, and to share with the group his creative work as a playwright, writer, and artist. Finally, after the second session, Brett encouraged the invitation of a guest speaker to join the group, Josh Ramsay, the lead singer of the Juno nominated band, *Marianas Trench*. Josh performed and talked with the group for 90 minutes; he shared his experience in the mental health field and his career in the music industry. One

⁴ Currently, Enzula Tavormina work as a school counselor in a Greater Vancouver school, and she is a Ph.D. student in counseling psychology at UBC. As her colleague, we explore ways to bring action-based counseling practices into the public school system.

⁵ Along with my M.A. counseling training at UBC, I have TE training from Dr. Westwood. I have lead group therapy sessions, assisted with TE group sessions, and participated in various TE groups under the leadership of various psychologists: Dr. Marvin Westwood at UBC, Dr. Patricia Wilensky at Wilensky & Associates, Dr. Patrice Keats at SFU, and Dr. Paul Whitehead at UBC.

intent of this phase was expose students to Canadian artists, such as Chris Gatchalian and Josh Ramsay, in order to emphasize the balance between art-making practice and SEL practice. The combination of the five adults, Enzula, Brett, Chris, Josh and myself, fueled the ten students to regard their personal stories more intently, which eventually led to the creation of powerful theatre-based art.

Figure 3.6: Phase One Schedule of the *Compassion Project*

Thursday, April 23, 2009 @ 4:30-9:30
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Circle Talk: Check-In• Introduction to Social and Emotional Literacy• Introduction to Therapeutic Enactment• Circle Talk: Check-Out
Friday, April 24, 2009 @ 9:00-5:00
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Check-In• TE Session #1• Full-Body Mural Writing Exercise• TE Session #2• Check-Out
Saturday, April 25, 2009 @ 9:00-5:00
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Check-In• TE Session #3• Guest Lecture: Josh Ramsay, lead singer of Juno nominated band, Marianas Trench• Art-Making Session• Check-Out
Friday, May 1, 2009 @ 4:30-9:30
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Check-In• TE Sessions #4 and #5• Check-Out
Saturday, May 2, 2009 @ 9:00-3:00
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Check-In• Writing and Art Group Sharing• Ideas for Future Collective Theatre-Making Projects (for Phases 2, 3 and 4)• Check-Out
Monday, June 8, 2009 @ 3:15-6:15
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Check-In• Six- Week Follow-Up Review and Reflections• Check Out

Again, TE was a core component of phase one. TE, conceptualized by Dr. Marv Westwood and Dr. Patricia Wilensky (2005), is a modified version of psychodrama, which was first developed in the 1940s (Blatner, 1993; Dayton, 1994). TE is a type of action-based group therapy in which repair and healing stem from participants taking on roles to address past traumatic events. The purpose of TE is not to relive the past but rather to revisit a critical traumatic moment as way as to reclaim something that was lost or to resolve unfinished business. The event itself is not the main source of trauma, but rather how the person internalized the trauma. Since trauma is in the body, TE brings the body into the centre of the process so that cognitive shifts can occur from being “inside” the action-based experience. Further information about TE is highlighted in chapter two.

As shown in Figure 3.6, ten students in phase one met as a group six times for 35 hours, which includes five sessions, five TEs, and a six week follow-up session. While all ten students participated in the TEs, only five students volunteered to be leads (protagonists). In the TE sessions, the group moved through the following steps:

1. Private one-on-one meeting with lead to review story and pre-plan scenarios
2. Group check-in
3. Lead walks in a circle surrounded by group and tells his/her story
4. Support systems are put in place for lead
5. Roles are assigned to group members to play out a scenario
6. The critical moment is played out
7. New cognitive/behavioural/emotional schemas are practiced
8. Repeat #3-7, depending on the number of scenes required
9. Healing/Celebratory activity, as way to reinforce the person’s worth, positive attributes, and/or new learning
10. Group members de-role from their roles
11. Members share experiences as a witness and role-player
12. Lead and Group Check-out

Overall, the TEs and circle talks (group check ins and check outs) made up 70 percent of phase one. For the rest of the phase, all ten students were heavily involved in journal writing, art-making, and engaging with guest speakers. At the beginning of the project, each student was given a large sheet of blue paper and they drew the outline of their body onto the

paper. Throughout the sessions, students wrote reflections and creative pieces onto their body-size blue reflection sheets. All of these written reflections and creative pieces were transcribed for data analysis. The written reflection periods provided an outlet for students to be creative and to express thoughts and feelings that were stirred up during the enactments. In addition, students were encouraged to create a piece of art, inspired by the TEs, circles talks, and their writing/drawing on the blue paper. In the fifth session, the students shared and celebrated their art creations with one another—these art creations ranged from songs, musical scores, poems, raps, short stories, and written prose.

Due to the length of this dissertation, the TE data in phase one fall outside the scope of the study; therefore, they are not used in the data analysis and conceptualization of the *social art effect*. Nevertheless, the TEs, circles talks, art work, and written reflections in phase one laid the groundwork for the two collective theatre-making projects in phases three and four, and the conceptualization of the *social art effect*.

Phase Two: Viewpoints, Slam Poetry, and Planetary Dance Ritual

Of the four phases, phase two was the least productive phase; however, like phase one, the obstacles and discoveries in phase two paved the way for new explorations and unexpected breakthroughs in phases three and four. The original group of ten students in phase one agreed that the second phase would be opened up to a wider group. This phase ranged from 40 to 50 students that met twice for two six-hour Saturday workshops. In the 12 hour workshop, a series of Viewpoint activities (Bogart and Landau, 2005) were conducted. In short, Viewpoints practice provides students with basic movement principles (such as tempo, duration, repetition, shape, and gestures) as a means to develop organic characters, scenes, and relationships through improvised scene/movement work. While this movement technique is a powerful theatre tool, it was not ideal for students to explore the topic of safe and caring schools. After the first session, it became clear that students needed to experiment less with movement and more with words. As a result, the technique of slam poetry was introduced and integrated into the *Compassion Project*. For the second session, students experimented heavily with rhythmical speech and wordplay. As a result of these workshops, all grade 10 to 12 theatre students wrote slam poems in class, which eventually were used to form an original play in phase three. Some of the students' creative works are shown in chapter four.

As way to solidify the inquiry process on safe and caring schools, phase two ended with a Planetary Dance Ritual, developed by Anna Halprin (1995). The overall purpose of a Planetary Dance Ritual is to bring peace into the world. This ritual was used to bring peace into schools. Since group safety was formed in the Viewpoints and slam poetry workshops, students moved quickly into the heart of Planetary Dance Ritual. The ritual took two hours to complete and involved nearly 50 students. For half of them, this was a new experience, and for the other half, this was their second or third time participating in the ritual from previous years.

The Planetary Dance Ritual requires people to run through a series of four or five rings of circles (see Appendix G for a diagram of the Planetary Dance Ritual). Since the ritual takes a lot of space, the gymnasium was reserved to complete the ritual. As part of the preparation, circle rings were taped onto the floor for safety and containment reasons. Students have the option to run quickly clock-wise on the outer ring, to run a bit slower in the opposite direction in the second outer ring, to walk quickly in the next inner ring, to walk slowly in the fourth inner ring, or to stand/sit in the centre. Students may switch back and forth from one ring to another, one ring at a time. They can also stand outside the outer ring as a witness. Before entering the sacred space students are invited to make a declaration. Before the ritual, students wrote on a piece of paper the completion of the following statement, “I run for... I run for all...” First, participants make a declaration for something personal in their lives, and then, second, they make a parallel universal declaration. For example, “I run for my uncle who has cancer. I run for all uncles with cancer” or “I run for my brother serving in Iraq. I run for all brothers serving in Iraq.”

One by one, students declared their statement as they entered the circle, and then they ran through the rings as a commitment to bring peace into schools and to the planet. Throughout the ritual, students often broke into chant, song, dance, and rhythmical movement. Emotions were often expressed, such as laughter, anger, and tears of grief or fear. The combined emotional and rhythmical expressions served to deepen shared experiences of the ritual. Typically there is a drummer who leads the people through the ritual; however, this time, the group did not have a strong drummer in the group, so they were challenged to experiment with alternative means to maintain a steady beat by chanting, singing, dancing, and making rhythmical sounds. Each ritual has its own unique energy flow and naturally

tends to end in a place of stillness. In this phase, the ritual lasted an hour and a half, followed by a circle talk. After the ritual, students sat in a large circle, and, one at a time, they took turns sharing their experiences with one another, and discussed ways to foster safe and caring schools through various theatre practices.

Due to the limitation of this study, most of the data from phase two was also not included in this dissertation, but, phase two greatly influenced the two collective theatre-making projects in phases three and four. Based on the students' feedback on their ritual experience, the majority of the students expressed a collective cleansing and a deep connection between one another, the group, and the universe. Overall, the ritual allowed the students to share a powerful bodily, emotional, rhythmical, and spiritual experience together. Through this powerful bonding experience, students were more open to take greater risks in co-creating original theatre. Also, the ritual helped to clarify for the group the essential message they wanted to express in the creation of the plays and, equally as important, how they want to treat one another as they co-create the plays together.

Phase Three: The Theatre of Possibilities Project (Original play, *The Flip Side*)

The third phase overlapped with the slam poetry components of the second phase. During this phase students were heavily engaged in co-creating an original play, *The Flip Side* (Beare and Writing Team, 2010b). During this time, students explored a wide range of social issues related to the topic of safe and caring schools. Phase three involved 109 theatre students over the course of two months: seven weeks from December 2009 to January 2010 for the Regional High School Drama Festival, and back again for two weeks in April/May 2010 for the Sear's B.C. Provincial High School Drama Festival. This project involved 25 class hours, 15 hours of five after school rehearsals, 4 evening performances for the regional festival, and 3 full days/nights for the provincial festival. Specific details about the third phase are discussed in Chapter Four.

Phase Four: The Collective Theatre-Making Process (Original play, *Focus*)

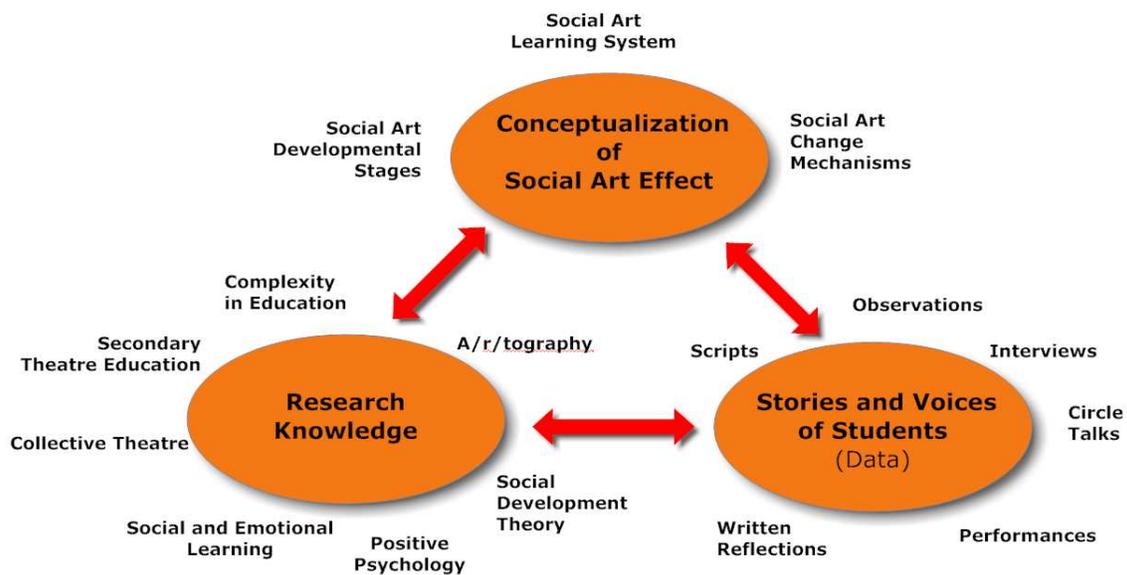
The fourth phase nearly spanned a full school year from June 2009 to April 2010, and involved 170 students engaged in over 500 collective hours of in-class and out-of-class circle talks, script-writing, rehearsals, and performances. As a result of exploring upon the topic of safe and caring schools, students co-created a original two hour play, *Focus* (Beare

and Writing Team, 2010a). Of all the phases, this phase had the greatest impact on the theatre program and the school community, and encapsulates the accumulative strengths and discoveries of all phases combined. Specific details about the fourth and final phase are discussed in Chapter Five.

Triangulation of Research

In the next four chapters, I present my research findings. Below, Figure 3.7 illustrates how I triangulate my research findings by integrating research knowledge (a/r/tography, secondary theatre education, collective theatre, positive psychology, social and emotional learning, social development theory, and complexity in education) and the stories and voices of students (interviews, scripts performances, circle talks, and written reflections) into my conceptualization of the *social art effect* and its three components (*social art learning system*, *social art development*, and *social art change mechanisms*).

Figure 3.7: Triangulation of Research

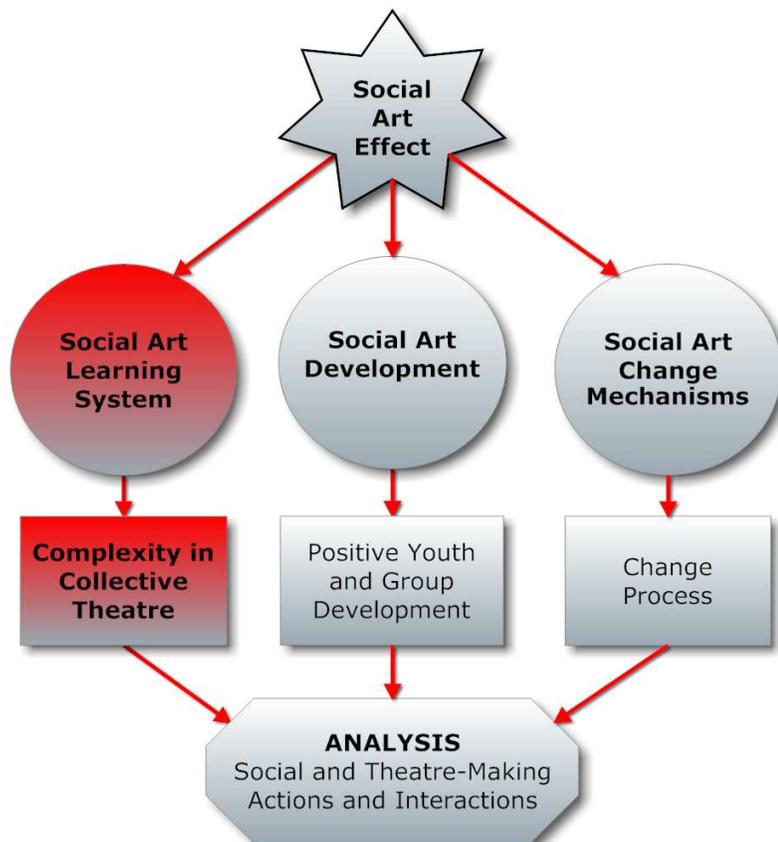


Chapter Four Social Art Learning System: Complexity in Collective Theatre-Making Education

The question is not what you look at, but what you see.
Henry David Thoreau

Co-constructing plays with youth is a complex process. This chapter illustrates the secondary collective theatre-making practice through the theoretical lens of complexity, and examines the *2010 Theatre of Possibilities Project*, which is the third phase of the *Compassion Project*. Also, as shown in Figure 4.1, this chapter describes the *social art learning system*, which is the first component of the *social art effect*. The *social art learning system*, rooted in complexity in education, is a system of a collective theatre-making organization composed of diverse and highly interconnected theatre-makers, and theatrical and technical possibilities.

Figure 4.1: The First Component of the *Social Art Effect*



In general, the *Theatre of Possibilities Project* is a *collective theatre-making process*, in which participants push and experiment with the boundaries of words, images, movement, sound, and technical theatre elements. The entire *2010 Theatre of Possibilities Project* lasted for over six months, from conception to final performance (December 2009 to May 2010). From this project, an original play was derived, *The Flip Side*, which was created, written, and performed by 107 grade 10-12 theatre performance students and two grade 9 stage managers, for a total of 109 students. Together, they co-created and performed a combination of fictional and semi-autobiographical monologues and short scenes about the inquiry topic, safe and caring schools. Throughout the chapter, script samples are marked in *italics* as a way to highlight the students' art work in relationship to the theoretical framework of complexity in theatre education, and to illuminate the art and a/r/tography that transpired from the *social art learning system*.

[Data] **The Flip Side**

Written and performed by high school students (2010 Theatre of Possibilities Project)

SCENE: The classroom

(At the start of the play, the stage is empty and lights are dim. Loud music with a set mechanical sounding beat is played. One by one, 107 students walk in a single-file row. The first 24 students each carry in a desk, placing them down one at a time, creating a traditional classroom environment--four by six rows of desks. The next 24 students each carry in a chair for each desk. They place them down all at the same time. Once the classroom environment is set, the stage is fully lit and the remaining students move horizontally and vertically through the rows and columns of desks. At this point, students randomly portray different characters in a classroom, working spontaneously together, with no pre-set direction, in which they perform a mix of the following voices and actions.)

Voice A: I have something/nothing to say.

Voice B: What?

Voice C: Is this even important?

Voice D: Pay attention.

Voice E: It/You/This matters to me.

Action 1: Stand at a desk with hand in the air.

Action 2: Stand in profile with hand to mouth and whisper into someone's ear.

Action 3: Sit at desk with head tilted and one hand to side of face.

Action 4: Sit at desk with face into desk and both arms wrapped around head.

(After several minutes of working spontaneously to create a group rhythm, the first group sits in the classroom setting of 24 desks and chairs. Everyone else sits in chairs, positioned on both sides of the classroom, in profile positions.)
[Scene excerpt from the play, *The Flip Side*, Phase III.]

Finding creative ways to bring 107 actors onto a small stage with no exits for one hour was a huge challenge. Many workshop hours were spent pinpointing key statements and movements that best captured the essence of the group's intentions. This process began as a classroom assignment where grade 10-12 theatre students wrote about their social and emotional experiences in schools. The students were exposed to various examples of "word play" (i.e., slam poems; Canadian spoken word artist, Shawn Koyczan; Tony award winner, Def Poetry; Vancouver's Word Play organization; musical numbers from *Rent* and *My Fair Lady*). As discussed in a UBC graduate *teaching writing* course, Professor Carl Leggo stated that writing is a process of *babble and doodle*, which is the playful process of drawing and arranging images and words on paper. Expanding on the concept of *babble and doodle*, students were also invited to experiment and play with their words and images through sound and movement in a three dimensional space.

Over the course of 25 years of co-creating original scripts with youth, I have experimented with several collaborative play-building models (Beare, 2003; Belliveau, 2006; Boal, 1995; Gonzalez, 2006; Knowles, 1999; Lundy and Booth, 1983; O'Neill, 1995; Sainer, 1975; Saldana, 2005; Tarlington and Michaels, 1995; Way, 1981; Weinberg, 1992). In 2005, I developed a collective theatre-making model called *the Theatre of Possibilities Project*. To date, this model has been used five times to create original plays in the 2006, 2007, 2009, 2010, and 2011 Regional High School Drama Festivals. Four of these five times the students' original play was selected to advance to the Sear's B.C. Provincial High School Drama Festival, including *The Flip Side*. In 2009, I published an article about a/r/tography and secondary theatre education practice in the *Youth Theatre Journal* using the rendering of contiguity to examine the in-between spaces of the 2007 *Theatre of Possibilities Project* (Beare, 2009). However, due to page limits, the information on complexity in education was not integrated into this article; therefore, this chapter aims to highlight connections between collective theatre-making and complexity in education.

Waldrop's (1992) book, *Complexity*, stimulated my intellect and imagination. I was fascinated to read about the real life stories of economics and physics professors and graduate

students gathering for several weeks to discuss about the complexity and connections of mathematics in the fields of economics and physics. Initially there was great tension between the two groups as they had different perspectives on the usage of mathematics to solve complex non-linear social problems. Over time, the two opposing groups began to see the interconnectivity between their distinct domains, which in effect, strongly altered how they perceived their own field of study. When they returned to their universities, they began to realize how this experience had changed their teaching and academic writing about mathematics.

Davis and Sumara's (2006) book, *Complexity and Education*, provides multiple examples of how to integrate complexity theory within the pedagogical curriculum. Davis and Sumara explain that it is difficult to define complexity thinking because terms can only be defined in relationship to what they are being rested upon. Instead of clear-cut definitions, they highlight eight qualities of complex systems, which are explained in this chapter: nested structure, ambiguously bounded, organizationally closed, structure determined, self-organized, bottom-up emergent, short-range relationships, and far-from-equilibrium. Overall, the research on complexity led to a deeper understanding of the links between complexity in education and the *collective theatre-making process*. Since 2007 I have presented my work on complexity and secondary theatre education at various theatre education conferences, university teacher education settings, and secondary theatre education settings. After discussions with various stakeholders, I discovered a disconnection between the language of complexity and the language of theatre-making. As a way to address this concern, I integrate Davis and Sumara's (2006) eight qualities of complex systems with the language of theatre.

The change of language is partly inspired by Peter Brook (1968), a world renowned director, who describes theatre in four ways: *The Deadly Theatre*, *The Holy Theatre*, *The Rough Theatre*, and *The Immediate Theatre*. Brook strongly argues that theatre is deadly because it is often boring and not engaging. In order to keep theatre alive, he suggests for theatre to reconnect to its ritual and ceremonial roots (Holy Theatre), be wickedly and delightfully defiant (Rough Theatre), and offer a direct pathway to create immediacy of human interactions (Immediate Theatre). What makes his writing so compelling is that his theoretical framework and his theatre practice as a Shakespearean director are interwoven organically.

The following section integrates Brook's (1968) four types of theatre, and Davis and Sumara's (2006) eight qualities of complex systems, and as a result, I develop seven ways to describe the collective theatre-making practice: *Complex Theatre, Messy Theatre, Blind Theatre, Sly Theatre, Emerging Theatre, Adaptable Theatre, and Edge of Chaos Theatre*. Throughout this chapter, the links between complexity thinking and collective theatre-making practice are presented in a systematic fashion, but in reality, the process was non-linear, unpredictable, messy, and emerged organically from the multiple interactions of people, art, education, and research.

Complex Theatre: Complex System of Interconnected Systems

[Data] SCENE: Concentrate

(A student, born in Iran, raised in Canada, sits at the edge of stage in a spotlight.)

*B.J.: Concentrate, concentrate, concentrate,
World's collide.
Concentrate, concentrate, concentrate,
Who am I?
Turn on the T.V,
I see my people dying.
Flip the channel,
Too hard to watch,
Gossip girls on.
Forget what I know,
Push it to the back of my mind.
That world doesn't relate to me,
Or so I tell myself.
Over protective parents,
They gave up everything.
Everything for me?
Feeling guilty,
Go to school,
Work harder,
Work harder,
Work harder.
Watch the people around me,
Why was I given the chance?
And not the other girl who used to live on my street?
Freedom is now mine,
But what will I do with it?*

*[Scene excerpt from the play, *The Flip Side*, Phase III.]*

In this very short theatre piece of fictional and semi-autobiographical references, the above student captured a diverse range of complex themes: the difference between Persian culture and North American culture, war and peace, pop culture and news media, career and education, parent and child, privilege and power, opportunity and pressure, and today and tomorrow. Based on over 300 art pieces created by 109 students, a total of 53 monologues and short scenes were selected for the performance of *The Flip Side*. Collectively, the students explored a wide range of themes related to the topic of safe and caring schools.

A key distinction of my collective theatre-making practice is that typically, I facilitate between 100 to 200 high school students per theatre production. Based on 25 years of working with youth, I have worked with small, medium, and large sized groups. A large group consists of 50 or more members, and a small group with ten or less members. In the past thirteen years, I have worked with large groups in nearly 20 *collective theatre-making processes*, with the largest group being over 300 students. Currently, my large group size ranges in between 100 to 175 students per show.

[Data] **SCENE: What am I?**

(Over hundred students walk through the space to make the desks and chairs disappear. The stage looks like a sea of students walking through the hallway. A student appears above the crowd, standing on a desk.)

*K.H.: Another face in the crowd?
Another fish in the sea?
Another wolf in the pack?
Does anyone listen to what I have to say?
Does anyone notice? (All stop and look at her, then continue walking.)
No, they just rush by thinking of their problems and troubles...*

Students: ME! ME! ME! (Students randomly raise hand in air shouting, "Me!")

*K.H.: What about me? (All stop and look at her, then continue walking.)
Did you ever think for a minute that the same person beside you,
has the same problems as I do?!?
And though we think we're the only ones hurting
and our life is at it's end...
There is one thing we all have in common... (no one listens to her.)
(Sadly.) It's high school we dread.*

(She disappears into the crowd.)

[Scene excerpt from the play, *The Flip Side*, Phase III.]

It is easy to get lost in a large group. I did not start off wanting to work with large groups, but rather, with the intention of being inclusive. Consequently, as the theatre program became more inclusive, the group became larger. As I adapted to the growing numbers, I also developed a deeper understanding of how to facilitate large groups. Eventually, I became curious to know, “Just how many students can I squeeze into one show?” While I set up the initial foundation to include and unite many students through a single assignment, I noticed something was generating in the project that could not artistically be predicted or controlled. I was curious to better understand how the group and the theatre-making process were being held together. While I worked hard to facilitate the large group, it became apparent that I was not the centre of the group. For example, with a large group, I was not able to give close attention to each member, which typically a director is able to provide if working with a small group. I also noticed that even though some students required the facilitators’ regular attention, many students worked independently and excelled with little feedback. In fact, many students surpassed the facilitators’ feedback and expectations and took the initiative to incorporate new ideas, which created a chain reaction that greatly influenced both the development of the group and the art. While I was able to leave my directing imprint on the play, so did the students. Overall, I turned to complex systems to better understand this process.

Davis and Sumara (2006) write that complex systems consist of a diverse range of independent and interdependent subsystems, which influence the structure of the system and interactions within and between the subsystems. In short, everything is interconnected. Similar to the butterfly-effect theory, the actions of an individual within a subsystem have the potential to affect its subsystem, the surrounding subsystems, and the system as a whole. Davis and Sumara (2006) explain that complex systems are made up of subsystems that are nested within, outside, or across other subsystems. For example, the large group involves a wide series of subsystems, such as the writers, actors, student directors, designers, and stage managers. The art involves a wide series of subsystems such as the dialogue, script, props, music, movement, costumes, and lighting designs. Each subsystem is a nested structure, a container, with distinct and independent functions; yet each operates interdependently within a larger system to reach a common goal—in this case, to share a performance with an audience.

As explained in chapter one, Westley, Zimmerman, and Patton (2007) highlight how complex systems are not simple or complicated step-by-step blueprints, but are compared to the process of raising children, in which the outcomes are often uncertain and sometimes contradictory. Westley, Zimmerman, and Patton explain that interconnection of relationships is the key to understanding the concept of complexity—by following the unpredictable dynamics of relationships, people’s ideas and actions are expressed, mobilized, and transformed. This study illustrates how people and the group, engaged in *complex theatre*, are held together by the relationships, the art, and theatre-making practice.

Complex theatre combines complexity thinking, collective theatre, and large group principles. The large group and the art creation simultaneously serve as containers for one another throughout the theatre-making (and theatre-playing) process. The large group functions as a container to hold all the possibilities of the art creation, and the art creation functions as a container to hold all the diverse pathways, relationships, and interactions of the large group. Both the art and large group are highly dependent on one another for their existence and growth, and both generate and expand in complexity as a result of their unpredictable interactions. Furthermore, there is a clear intention with a *complex theatre* to maximize the number of interactions and relationships in the large group of the *collective theatre-making process*. The same premise can be achieved with small or medium-sized groups, but the complexity of social and theatre-making actions and interactions increases exponentially in large groups.

The *Theatre of Possibilities Project* was developed because the spirit of inclusion and the social and theatre-making benefits gained in the extra-curricular theatre program did not transfer completely into the curricular program in the day-to-day classroom setting. In turn, the first *Theatre of Possibility Project* was developed in 2005 as a co-curricular program that combined both curricular and extra-curricular theatre programs uniting multiple theatre, dance, film, production, and English classes together by a single common collective theatre-making assignment.

In a typical theatre classroom, students tend to work on their assignments in independent small groups. Interactions between students from different grades and classes rarely occurred. In the typical theatre classroom, students rehearse/design, perform/present, obtain feedback, get a grade, and then move on to the next assignment. These students tend to

get feedback only from their group members and the teacher, and often with little opportunity to improve on their work after a single performance. In contrast, in the *Theatre of Possibilities Project*, students from multiple classes and grades work both in subgroups and collectively as a whole. They obtain a greater quantity of feedback on their theatre practice from members before and after repeated performances. The abundance of feedback and observations influences the development of students' art and pushes their commitment to the theatre process in ways that is less often seen with students who do not participate in the cross-curricular program. By uniting multiple theatre classes together, the common assignment stimulates more inclusion, fosters greater possibilities for interactions, relationships and feedback, and pushes the theatre-making process in new and exciting directions.

Overall, the level of constructive risk-taking tends to be higher and more fulfilling for students working in large cross-curricular groups, compared to students confined to individual classes. Students who worked collectively as a large group seemed to internalize more artistic, technical, social, and emotional skills. Through the process of plugging into a complex "matrix", students were challenged to explore and to find creative ways to connect to the large group and *collective theatre-making process*. With so many students co-creating art simultaneously, students seemed less concerned with "grades" and were far more motivated intrinsically to experiment and to create collaboratively towards a common vision.

Messy Theatre: Self-Organizing

[Data] **SCENE:** *I'm Fine*

(Students sit at desks. Quickly they each stand up and speak one by one. The spotlight shines on one student, A.H., who never stands up.)

Peer #1: *Why?*
Peer #2: *I don't care.*
A.H.: *I'm fine.*
Peer #3: *Life.*
Peer #4: *Family.*
Peer #5: *Risk.*
Peer #6: *Work.*
Peer #7: *I hate you.*
Peer #8: *I love you.*
Peer #9: *Broken hearts.*

Peer #10: Loss.
A.H.: I'm fine.
Peer #11: Another test?
Peer #12: Success.
Peer #13: You can't make me.
Peer #14: Hi!
Peer #15: NO!
Peer #16: What the hell is an asymptote?
Peer #17: Listen to ME!
Peer #18: GO AWAY!
Peer #19: Yes.
Peer #20: I will not change for you.
Peer #21: Failure.
A.H.: I'm fine.
Peer #22: I can't.
Peer #23: Escape.
Peer #24: You son of a bitch.
A.H.: I'm fine.

(All look at him. He maintains his blank face.)

[Scene excerpt from the play, *The Flip Side*, Phase III.]

A classroom is not a single group, but rather a collection of individuals with a diverse array of wants and desires--together they form a group. In a *messy theatre*, the group is less unified by a solitary top-down idea, but rather shaped by a unique gathering and formation of multiple perspectives, including opposing or contradictory viewpoints. Davis and Sumara (2006) describe complex systems as self-organizing. The *Theatre of Possibilities Project* is an unpredictable self-organizing system socially constructed by an endless array of unique choices made by group members with a diverse assortment of backgrounds, personalities, talents, interests, and agendas. In this project, students focused on different components of the process simultaneously. For example, in a classroom, three students wrote new poems, two students debated over the use of a stage prop, one student was distracted by the recent news of a sick family member, a senior student was directing a group of younger students in a scene, a student taught a small group of peers how to program the lighting board, and so on.

To an untrained eye, the observation of a cast and crew of 109 students doing different tasks simultaneously can appear chaotic and unstructured. Yet, to the trained eye, there is a trust that with enough time and support “something” eventually will come together. The *Theatre of Possibilities Project* is similar to watching hundreds of birds scrambling

about in random directions before merging into self-organizing patterns. As the patterns of the *messy theatre* form together, theatre students grow from a wide range of complex interactions, such as the art form, interpersonal and intrapersonal relationships, technical components, and responses to the content, space, text, and curriculum.

Blind Theatre: Freefall into the Unknown

[Data] SCENE: For a Moment Open Your Eyes

*N.C.: For a moment open your eyes
Take a second to breath, sit back and relax
Enjoy this moment because it will go by fast
and one by one you get closer to the last, so wake up and get lost in it.
Because beauty lies in the eyes of it is beholder, and this world has no restrictions, no
boundaries and no limits, so let's explore what we've got and discover what's in it.
But my brother never opened his eyes
he couldn't see the possibilities only the problems, and like his highlight reels they
would repeat and replay, slowly infecting his mind,
driving his demons deeper and deeper.
Till fear blinded his eyes and ate at his soul,
Took him to a world with no warmth only cold,
Where dreams turn into the screams of his mistakes,
no second chances no second takes.
He felt the eyes of the world on him so he closed his eyes.
As I watched him turn his world over
I could see the burning fire of his insecurities melting anger into pain,
and as he wiped the shame from his face I said brother and he said no, so I screamed
brother, and he said yes.
I love you.
And for a moment, his eyes were open.*

*[Scene excerpt from the play, *The Flip Side*, Phase III.]*

Each time a new play with a large group is devised, the group does not know what will transpire from the project—it is a *blind theatre*. In the *2010 Theatre of Possibilities Project*, students and staff, especially in the first half of the project, often worked with immediate group members within their confined subgroup. At the start of the process, students worked blindly, without knowing what the other groups from various classes were doing. Since the students usually had little experience engaging in this type of collective theatre-making, there was a blind trust that I was guiding them towards some kind of “giant master plan”. While I had a general understanding of the overall vision, it was difficult for

the students to grasp fully that I, too, was following blindly the unfolding impulses of the large group and the *collective theatre-making process*.

Davis and Sumara (2006) explain that agents within complex systems tend to interact mainly with neighboring agents. In *The Flip Side*, students tended to focus on information that was relevant to their specific subgroup or class, and ignored information from other subgroups or classes. Information from other subgroups or classes became significant, at a later stage, when students were ready to make connections between their own scene and the rest of the play. *Blind theatre* is like working on a few puzzle pieces without ever seeing the overall picture. As different pieces come together, participants see how the smaller parts fit together with the overall whole. As a teacher, I often had to encourage students to trust the process as they were freefalling into the unknown; whenever students or the group got stuck or lost, they were invited to reconnect to the rudimentary anchor points of the program (e.g., topic of safe and caring schools, word play concepts, and 24 chairs/desks).

Sly Theatre: Beg, Borrow and Steal

[Data] Scene: I Am Really Bad At Writing Poems

(Everyone turns and looks at C.O., a boy sitting at the back of the classroom. Silence. He stands.)

C.O.: I am really bad at writing poems.

(Silence. He sits.)

[Scene excerpt from the play, *The Flip Side*, Phase III.]

The previous script highlights comedic relief in the play, and two opposing points about *Sly Theatre*. First, this student struggled to write an original poem, and he had a hard time with the idea that he could beg, borrow or steal ideas to inspire his poetry—he was limited by his imagination. As a way to open up new possibilities, videos were shown in class of slam poems that were sweet, short, and playful. From this experience, the student learned that not all poems in the play needed to be dark and heavy. This opened a new window of opportunity for him. Second, in a tongue-in-cheek manner he used clearly his experience of not being able to write a poem as the source material to write his poem. In doing so, he gave voice to all the students who also struggled to write a powerful piece of slam poetry, and he

established himself as the class trickster. This piece, while extremely short compared to others, was an unexpected highlight in the play, because it provided a way for this particular student to hook his unique and somewhat sarcastic humor into the play in a positive and constructive manner. This poem was his lead into the creative process, and organically over time, he started giving humorous pep talks to the entire cast and crew before each show. Through his funny seven word poem, this particular student found his place in the group.

Freefalling into the unknown can be a daunting process, and students need a lot of support and guidance to take creative risks. Having access to diverse and endless possibilities can be overwhelming, even suffocating for students. One way to address this concern is to explain the key elements of the creative process to the student, and to encourage students to beg, borrow, and steal from a wide array of possibilities from surrounding systems. Davis and Sumara (2006) describe complex systems as ambiguously bounded and influenced by surrounding systems (e.g., neighboring community, culture, curriculum, and global events). The *2010 Theatre of Possibilities Project* was made up of a wide array of overlapping subsystems, such as the student body, the school staff (including myself), the school culture, the surrounding community, the theatre education program, past school plays, the British Columbia Ministry of Education secondary theatre curriculum, the annual British Columbia Regional and Provincial High School Drama Festivals, local school trips to theatre performances, and movies, television, and other local, regional, national and global social media.

Narrowing the scope, the *2010 Theatre of Possibilities Project* was also shaped by the combination of the 109 high school theatre students, the students' own life experiences, the content of the play (i.e., safe and caring schools), the theatre form (i.e., slam poetry), the theatre space, the audience, the script, monologues and short scenes, the words, the alphabet, and so on. Together these overlapping factors influenced and shaped both the formation of the art and the dynamics of the large group. Based on post-modern concepts, the *Theatre of Possibilities Project* is less about creating something new from nothing, and more about creating new pathways and interactions between elements that typically do not intersect. Therefore, instead of reinventing the wheel, students are encouraged to take a *beg, borrow and steal* approach to collective theatre-making. Like alchemy, students combine familiar

elements to create something new; instead of wrestling with “everything”, students wrestle in between a “few things”.

Emerging Theatre: Bottom-up and Unfolding

[Data] [Music is played and a large group of students move the 24 desks together to form a rectangular stage on top of the stage. One by one student get on top the united desks to recite poems about breaking free from a rigid school infrastructure or unhealthy school interactions, such as bully. As way to celebrate a re-imagined healthy school environment, the flip side of school, seven people appear and speak as overlapping echo.]

ECHO: Flip me Upside Down

Flip me Upside Down

*ALL: And
see
what
falls
out.*

[Scene excerpt from the play, *The Flip Side*, Phase III.]

Collective theatre-making is often a process of allowing unknown ideas to emerge from the bottom-up. Similar to the views of theatre artists Brook (1968) and Lepage (in Dundjerovic 2007), the play-creating process is greater than the sum of its parts; the whole is a result of the unpredictable interactions of self, others, the environment, and the art. Davis and Sumara (2006) explain that for complex systems to evolve they cannot be bound by a central controller (theatre teacher/director) or an overbearing structure (the play-creating procedures). Even though a “top down” structure was initially imposed onto the students in the *2010 Theatre of Possibilities Project*, spaces in between the structure were provided for

new learning to unfold. The open spaces allowed for unique expressions of art and technical forms, fresh perspectives of theme content, and new awareness of self or others.

The *Theatre of Possibilities Project* is rooted in a theme-based model (rather than a protagonist-based model) because it allows the theatre-making process to be shared collectively (instead of it being centred on a handful of talented actors). This shift provides more room for further exploration of possibilities and multiple perspectives to be represented since the script is no longer limited by a linear plot device or a single writing or acting style. In this project, students experimented with slam poetry, rap, songs, music, love sonnets, soundscapes, chants, repetitions, soliloquies, and confessions. Structurally, the monologues and short scenes were independent of one another, yet they remained interconnected thematically. The theme-based model made the script-writing process easier since the students were able to write within their ability levels, and they did not have to worry about connecting it to a linear plot or a complex protagonist-driven storyline.

In addition, students and groups were required to find creative ways to include the rest of the cast into each of their scene. The entire group was included in each piece by sounds, words, movements, or other theatrical devices, such as frozen images, humming, or choreographed dance. For example, while one person recited a written love poem to the audience about a secret crush in the class, the rest of the 109 students were engaged in a movement sequence of passing notes, which built up to a choreographed paper fight. One of the strengths of this work resulted from the groups taking turns pitching their ideas to the large group. This very slow ritual of giving each group an opportunity to be the leader of the whole group and to shape their art, led more students to take more ownership of their *collective theatre-making process*. Since students wanted their individual scene and the overall play to look good, they were more committed to their peer's work, too.

Overall, the students in *The Flip Side* played multiple roles in every scene in the play, and they remained on stage in role for the entire hour of the show. The collective theatre-making format helped students to feel more satisfied with the short amount of stage time assigned for each monologue and short scene (an average of 37 seconds per person). Even though students received the spotlight for less than a minute of an hour show, the format provided opportunity for students to play multiple roles in all pieces of the performance. This helped the actors to let go of being the “star” of the show. In general, this format encouraged

the cast and crew to work collaboratively and to give focus and commitment to every piece. As Lazarus (2004) describes, the structure helped students to shift from a “me to we” state. Overall, the art emerged from the unpredictable interactions of theatre-makers, collective theatre-making, art, and pedagogical theory and practice.

Adaptable Theatre: Evolutional and Generative

[Data] SCENE: Chicken Nuggets

*L.F.: He was a friend of mine,
We used to light things on fire
With a magnifying glass,
We'd carve our names into the wood.
We would play road hockey and sidewalk basketball
We would ride our bikes up down around over under and everywhere
Everywhere there was air, speed and gaps
He craved the danger and excitement
I watched him and laughed and said man,
You'll be pro.
We'd go inside after
And we'd make popcorn with too much salt
He'd say, with a smile,
Mom, can we have chicken nuggies.*

*His dad didn't sleep after he crashed in the car
Didn't get his rest
Didn't know why he had no energy,
For himself
For his son.
For his son was frustrating at times like most boys are
But when you don't sleep your dreams can't cushion real life
And the nightmares wake where dreams should rise,
And the nightmares seep and flow into the day
And his son
And his son, would go find his mom and say
Mom, can I have chicken nuggies.*

*He had a joint he said do you want one?
Not just to me but to more of his friends
Some who weren't his friends
They said
Do you want another one? You might run out of ones to give
Ooooh man of LOVE to give
Yes*

*They said you could make some money
His young mind went to new bikes
Yes
I said, do you want to hang out
Yes
He said smoke a joint?
Sure
Do you want more
No
I have something else if you don't like that
I didn't know how to say
No man that's fucked up
Instead
cool man, not right now
He had my unapproving approval
I walked away.
I didn't know then that all he wanted
Was some salty popcorn and chicken Nuggies.*

*He was months deep in a mountain of cocaine
After he lost his mind,
He looked at the mountains across the water
Barely remembering biking up down around over under and anywhere.
Anywhere but where he was then.
He was alone*

*Like snow falling gently into a fire,
he melted in the flames*

*His eyes stared into the flame of lighter over the pipe
He wanted to call his mom*

*He did
She cried
Mom can I come home
Yes
But dad said no
His son said I miss you, but silently, he was too proud
Instead he said,
Mom
When I get home
Can you make me chicken nuggies?*

[Scene excerpt from the play, *The Flip Side*, Phase III.]

The student wrote this powerful piece based on the grass-root of a single idea, which developed over time. As the character in the poem adapted to a wide range of complex social and family interactions, the writer had to adapt to a wide range of possibilities to write the poem. As the poem expanded in new ways, the student made choices about the selection of words, content, and rhythm. Like the survival of the fittest, each choice gave new ideas life, while the other ideas died off.

An *Adaptable Theatre* is a learning system, in which the large group and art grow from its elementary structures and its responses to external stimulus. Amsel and Renninger (1997) explain that Jean Piaget, a child development researcher, used the term adaptation to describe the learning process, which includes the terms assimilation and accommodation. One assimilates a new object into an old schema and one accommodates an old schema to a new object. Waldrop (1992) explains that if enough building blocks are provided, like dendrites and human DNA, a complex system can grow from its rudimentary structure. In other words, complex systems are learning systems because they have the ability to adapt to their surrounding influences. For example, if young writers are exposed to new words, such as RED, CAR, and ROAD, these words can serve as building blocks for the development of more complex forms of sentences. In time, these sentences serve as building blocks for a paragraph, and paragraphs for chapters, and so on. The structure of the *2010 Theatre of Possibilities Project* served as the building block for students to create original scenes and to explore new possibilities, which led to the unique self-organization of the group, and the creation of play.

An *Adaptable Theatre* explores ways to include all members in the art-making process. For example, each member or small group explored ways to include the entire group into each scene. Since all the students were involved in all scenes, they needed to reflect upon what was being expressed in each scene, how their scene was interconnected to other scenes and the whole play, and how they were going to respond both as learners and performers (or technicians) to each scene. In effect, as the students began to see the interconnectivity of their scene to other scenes, they were led to view each scene as building blocks for the development of the entire play. In other words, the initial monologues were developed based on agreed upon building blocks, but once these monologues and short scenes were developed, the monologues and short scenes themselves became the new building blocks to

continue the process of the play-building. The initial agreed upon themes and technical conditions of the play were general and open-ended, but as the play developed and matured into a tangible art form, the play became more grounded in the particulars of the choices made in the group.

Another aspect of the project that enriched the learning process was the creation of transitions between monologues and scenes. Transitions are in-between pieces that link the independent pieces together. After the monologues and short scenes were created, each student or group of students negotiated in a democratic manner with their neighbouring groups, and explored ways to connect their pieces together. Transitions are as important as the monologues and short scenes themselves because they provide a framework for the audience (and students) to better understand the links between scenes and the theme as a whole. Also, transitions help students to examine the similarities and differences between the pieces. For example, how does a comedy about a party scene link to a drama about a date rape? How does an abstract scene about a student feeling like a robot in a classroom link to a slam poem about a boy feeling disconnected from his dad? These kind of questions inspired students to search for and materialize new connections amongst a diverse range of art forms, and perspectives of students and subgroups. As the *collective theatre-making process* evolved, the learning and new discoveries became richer and more meaningful, and the parts of the play became more interconnected and sophisticated. Abstract theories were channeled through concrete characters and storylines, and simplistic actions, dialogue, and other expressive mediums illuminated complex ideas.

Edge of Chaos Theatre: In-between Order and Chaos

SCENE: Smash the Bottles

[Data] (A boy wearing ripped jeans, pierced body rings, and a spiked nailed Mohawk appears.)

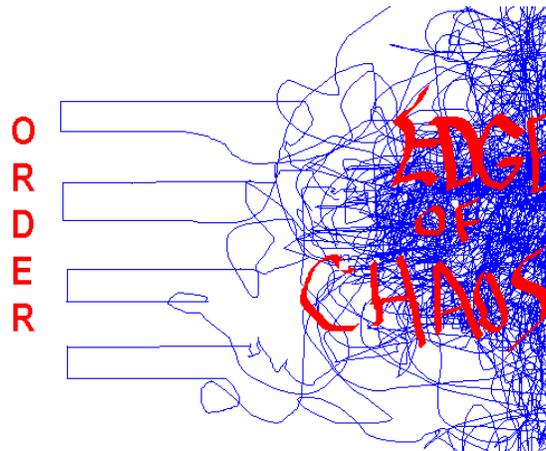
*H.S.: I find the awkwardness comforting
And the feeling that it won't be the same
And their eyes scouring my carcass
So I make the skin itch, hair prick up
So I rip my clothes
And shave my head
Spit, split skin, grunt 'n' groan*

Smash the bottles smash the walls
In your face
In their face
Keep the pace
Of a ska beat punching through
Hair-dyed hair-dos
So you disobey
Break out and play
'Til you wake up
And school isn't your world anymore
You threw it, your mates
For sake of a romantic essence
Stolen from the rhymes of a musician in
The vain hope
That his dope
Of words, will fit your brain
They melt into your brain
...And out come the wolves
And you still
Smash the bottles smash the walls
Their the rules you follow
You are hollow
Like a burnt out jeep
Left to rust
Remnants of an Empire on the cusp
Of beating a cavalry's fuelling sleep
So you rise from your 'bed'
And you realize, you're
At The War's End

[Scene excerpt from the play, *The Flip Side*, Phase III.]

Complex systems are on the edge of chaos—they are in a constant flux in between stability and instability (See Figure 4.2). Davis and Sumara (2006) explain that the relationship in between chaos and order is the interaction in which emergent and new discovery becomes possible. Too much order, and the complex system becomes locked in; it slowly begins to die as it cannot adapt to unpredictable changes. Too much chaos, and the complex system becomes unmanageable; it slowly begins to be dysfunctional, as it cannot cope with anarchy and the lack of organization. An *Edge of Chaos Theatre* is a philosophy of theatre-making in which the order is influenced by the chaos, and the chaos is influenced by the order—a learning environment that is both stable enough and flexible enough for new ideas, relationships, and pathways to unfold.

Figure 4.2: Learning System: Dwelling In Between Order and Chaos



Brook (1968) described theatre as a self-destructive art—once it becomes static or sets, it slowly begins to die. Brook theorized that in order for theatre to remain potent, it must follow a different set of rules—it must reinvent itself. He argued that for theatre to remain alive, producers, directors, and designers need to re-conceptualize theatre every time. *The 2010 Theatre of Possibilities Project* embraced this spirit of “re”-inventing itself and shifting in between the states of equilibrium and disequilibrium.

The *2010 Theatre of Possibilities Project* was rooted in an inquiry-based learning model, which builds on the ideas of Dewey (1938), Freire (1970), Vygotsky (1978), and Piaget (in Amsel and Renninger, 1997). Within the conventional learning model, the teacher (and text) stands in between the learner and the curriculum (or natural phenomenon). The teacher determines the learning, usually done through lectures and demonstrations, and is responsible for bridging the learner and curriculum together. With the conventional learning model, the teacher is always in the middle of learning, and learning cannot exist without the teacher. In the inquiry-based learning model, the teacher strives not to be in the centre of the learning, and provides opportunities for learners and the curriculum to interact directly (without the teacher being in between). In an inquiry-based model, learners take more responsibility for their learning, and they are given space to follow their own curiosities and to connect with the parameters of the curriculum in personal and meaningful ways (both with and without the aid of the teacher). Learning in an inquiry-based classroom often occurs without the teacher, and more often than not, learning tends to occur outside the typical evaluation parameters, since intrinsic learning often unfolds in unpredictable ways, which are

more difficult to predict and measure. Nevertheless, teachers using the inquiry-based learning model are still responsible for structuring, planning, and evaluating the learning process; however, they strive to “get out of the way” of the students’ learning. Overall, the *Theatre of Possibilities Project* provided multiple pathways of learning to unfold as students and facilitators dwelled in the in-between spaces of order and chaos.

[Data] SCENE: *Every Day Order and Fight Paper*

A.B.: *Every morning I wake up
at the sound of my alarm,
having gone to bed
at the same time every night.
I eat breakfast,
get dressed,
brush my teeth
pack my bag,
then march out into the world
only to wait for the bus,
which I know will arrive,
at the same time,
every day.
When I get to school,
I know my courses
know my books
know exactly where I sit.
I could look at my agenda
and read my life for the next three months.
when I eat
when I sleep
my sports
and my school.
life's not an adventure,
it's a chess game between masters
the moves planned out
all the way to the end.
And I need to escape.*

Voice: *(Loud.) Paper fight!*

(A wild paper fight breaks out and paper is thrown in all directions. T.R. hides under the desk. All freeze in a state of chaos.)

T.R.: *We may not like it
But order is needed
If we are without it*

*Chaos
Rules keep us secure
Keep us safe
And pure
From unleashing unwanted anger
We may not like it
But order is what we need*

[Scene excerpts from the play, *The Flip Side*, Phase III.]

Davis and Sumara (2006) wrote that while complex systems are open (because they are ambiguously bound), they are also organizationally closed. An *Edge of Chaos Theatre* strives to structure some kind of systematic order from chaos. As Waldrop (1992) explains, complex systems exist between stable and chaotic states. The structure of a stable state is locked in, like atoms in a chair. The structure of a chaotic state is changing constantly in unpredictable ways, like atoms of spilling water. Overall, a complex system needs both redundancy (similarities amongst agents) and diversity (differences between agents) to remain stable and alive.

The *2010 Theatre of Possibilities Project* was made up of a stable and organized structure of theatre students and staff exchanging and exploring ideas between one another and the audience. Without these elements of stabilization, it is difficult for the *collective theatre-making process* to develop and mature. Some examples of stable structures were the scheduled timetable, regular attendance of students and teacher, classroom routines and rules, and daily assigned tasks of the *collective theatre-making process*. Throughout the process, structure was provided for the students to follow, which evolved into fifteen steps (as shown below). The fifteen steps of the *2010 Theatre of Possibilities Project* were not perfectly predetermined, but rather, emerged as we moved through a trial and error process of shifting in between states of order and chaos.

Fifteen Steps of the 2010 Theatre of Possibilities Project

1. The six senior theatre classes agreed to work respectfully, democratically and collaboratively to co-create an original play.
2. The whole group agreed upon a theme, which was based on the combined topics of safe and caring schools, and students' social and emotional experiences in school.

3. The whole group agreed upon a set of technical conditions, which limited students to a classroom setting of 24 square desks and 24 detached chairs. They also agreed to keep props and lighting to a minimum.
4. The whole group agreed to write monologues based on “word play” concepts, which may include musical, rhythmical or slam poetry principles.
5. The whole group engaged in basic movement technique, Viewpoints (Bogart and Landau, 2005), as a way to experiment with physical ways to play with words and to interact with classroom desks and chairs.
6. The whole group watched a wide range of performance samples of word play.
7. The whole group discussed and wrote on large poster paper individual thoughts, feelings and responses about the theme of social and emotional safety in school.
8. The students from three of the five classes wrote between two to five different monologues, which were a combination of fictional and/or semi-personal narratives. The students in two of the five classes worked in small groups to create short scenes. Each person was assigned to write in between 100 to 200 words. Each written piece was required to stand on its own and engage the audience—it could not be boring!
9. The students presented their written pieces and each student’s strongest piece was selected. The selected scripts required enough diversity (of ideas and art forms) between subgroups to explore the theme and technical conditions in its widest scope.
10. The student rehearsed their pieces in small groups.
11. While there were five classes involved in this project, only one class at a time were positioned in the setting of 24 classroom chairs and desks. The other students from the other four classes sat on chairs on both sides of stage.
12. All subgroups were required to include the whole group from all five classes in an artistic way to enhance their piece and the interconnectivity of the whole group. The entire group was included in each piece by sounds, words, movements or other theatrical devices, such as frozen images, humming, or choreographed dance. For each piece, the student(s) of that piece directed the rest of the classes.
13. All selected pieces were ordered in a logical, artistic, and meaningful fashion so that the play as a whole was greater than the sum of its parts.
14. Each student/group was required to work with neighbouring students/groups to create transitions between monologues. Transitions are theatrical techniques to support the large group of students to move to new positions, and/or to draw out the interconnectivity of the themes between monologues positioned next to each other.

15. The whole group rehearsed both in and out of class, and then they performed seven times at their school, at the Regional High School Drama Festival, and at the Sear's BC Provincial High School Drama Festival. In the Regional festival we presented 65 monologues and 17 short scenes. In the Provincial festival we polished the play and presented 43 monologues and 13 short scenes. (At this later stage, some students dropped out because they could not attend the provincial festival; therefore, some students merged with other groups and some students took over other students' monologues.)

The fifteen steps shown above are not meant to be viewed as a recipe or a formula, but rather as an illustration of the meandering creative process. Again, it is important to remember that the fifteen steps were not laid out before the process, but emerged from the interactions of people and the art-making process, and from exposure to theatre-making practices and theories, such as collective theatre, word play, viewpoints, and complexity thinking. The reproductions of these steps are mere guidelines and would most likely change from project to project. As a way to stress the importance of integrating complexity theory into the curriculum, I end this chapter with the first slam poem from *The Flip Side*. An unmotivated and discouraged student sits in the front row of her classroom telling the audience why she is inspired in school and bored with learning. She yearns for meaningful social interactions, the flip side, of school.

[Data] SCENE: I'm Not Sitting at a Desk.

(24 students in a classroom setting sit in straight rows of desks and mime. Most students mime taking notes and listening to the invisible teacher teaching at the front of the classroom. A few are bored and do random off-task actions. A female student sitting in the front row speaks directly to the audience.)

*O.W.: I'm not sitting at a desk.
You may think I am,
but I'm not sitting at a desk.
I'm not learning geography,
memorizing formulas,
Or checking my grammar.
I'm not writing essays
taking notes
or studying for tests
I'm not even listening to that person up there,
always talking on and on
and on and on
about (beat) nothing.*

*Because what they don't get is
I'm not sitting at a desk
I'm waiting
For my heart to flip upside down and inside out
Forwards, backwards and around
Exploding in slo-mo
Seeing what falls out.
Yes, I'm waiting...
I'm waiting
For the flip side.*

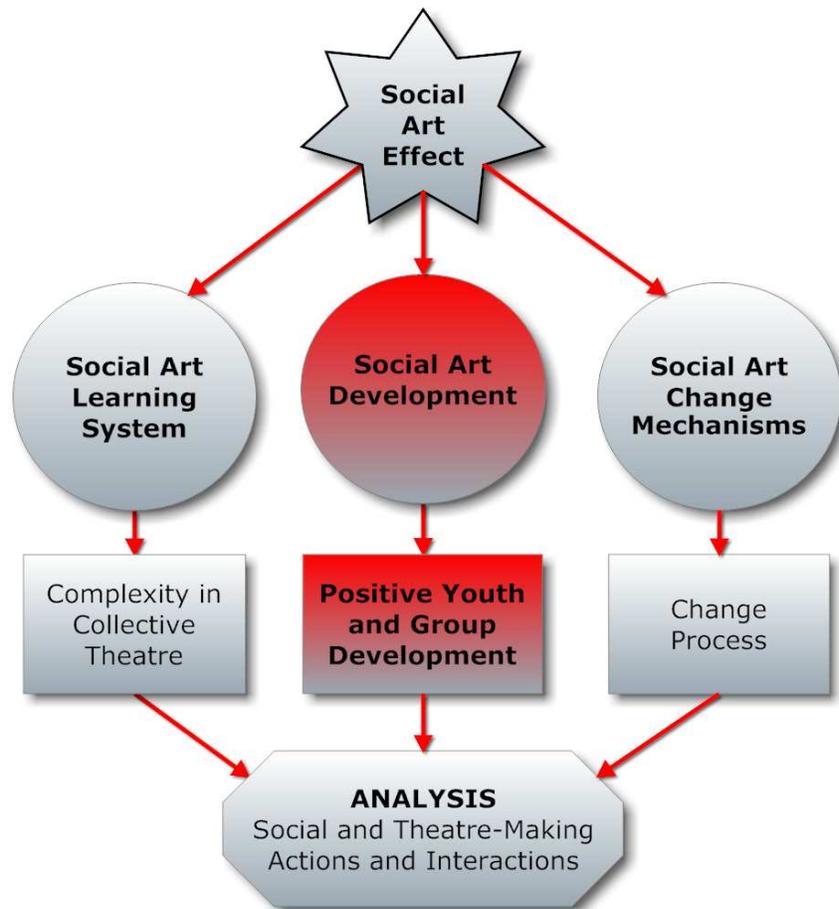
[Scene excerpt, *The Flip Side*, Phase III.]

Chapter Five Social Art Development

A healthy social life is found only, when in the mirror of each soul the whole community finds its reflection, and when in the whole community the virtue of each one is living.

Rudolf Steiner

Figure 5.1: The Second Component of the *Social Art Effect*



This chapter presents the second component of the *social art effect*, as shown above in Figure 5.1. Also, an overview of the last phase of the *Compassion Project* is presented in this chapter, which includes the five-stage model of *social art development*. The model highlights five developmental stages: *Inclusion and Social Art Norms Stage*, *Self-Management and Theatre Skill Development Stage*, *Relationships and Connections Stage*, *Self as Artist and Integration Stage*, and *Leadership and Vision Stage*. In addition, the model illustrates the application to three distinct, yet overlapping groups: individual theatre-makers

(youth), theatre classroom groups (class group), and the entire co-curricular group of theatre-makers from various class groups combined together (play group). Overall, the model represents a synthesis of my research based on the data of the students' written reflections, my observations and experiences of teaching and directing over 170 students in a second and more elaborate *collective theatre-making process*, and the students' co-created script, *Focus* (Beare and Writing Team, 2010a).

Also, showcased in this chapter is a series of scenes (printed in *italics*) from *Focus*. The story and characters were introduced in chapter one, and more excerpts are provided in the following sections. Again, the story revolves around a central troubled character, Tyler, who brings a weapon to school. Overall, the scenes from the play are not presented in a sequential order; instead, they are selected to highlight the five-stage model of *social art development*, the students' inquiry process on the topic of safe and caring schools, and my inquiry process on social and theatre-making actions and interactions.

[Data] *(First scene of the play, after DEATH'S opening song. In a pool of light, TYLER is seen in front of his laptop. He is finishing the video diary in his bedroom. In his room we see a guitar on a stand, a jacket, and a large black backpack.)*

TYLER: *....you have no idea what she was going through. But she was surrounded by all of you, and you did nothing. Well today, today I'm doing something so you never forget.*

(In another pool of light, TYLER'S DAD is sitting at a breakfast table with four chairs. TYLER'S MOTHER is setting up the table for two people.)

MOTHER: *Tyler, what are you doing? You're going to be late for school.*

TYLER: *Don't worry, I'll be on time.*

(TYLER puts CD from laptop into an envelope. He enters the kitchen.)

MOTHER: *Tyler, come, we gotta get moving. Come on, get up, you need to eat breakfast. (To DAD.) Here, take your pills.*

(TYLER sits at table while his MOTHER prepares cereals for TYLER and his DAD. DAD takes some pills from a tray of pill bottles. MOTHER enters with some cereal, and TYLER simply stares at her, blankly.)

MOTHER: *Here you are, there's your cereal, eat up. Now Tyler, I'm going to be late again tonight, so there's a lasagne in the fridge for you and your Dad. Just*

heat it up when you're ready to eat dinner. 350 for 30 minutes. Tyler. Tyler, repeat that back to me.

TYLER: *(Blankly.) 350 for 30 minutes.*

MOTHER: *Good, you have to remember because your Dad will forget...*

(She pours a glass of orange juice for TYLER. As she does this, Tyler grabs her hand and looks at her.)

TYLER: *Mom, you know that I love you, right?*

MOTHER: *Tyler, not today.*

TYLER: *Mom, I just need you to know that...*

DAD: *(DAD speaks abruptly.) I thought we were having spaghetti.*

MOTHER: *(Frustrated.) It's breakfast. It's morning. It's Friday morning.*

DAD: *I want spaghetti.*

MOTHER: *We're having cereal. (The milk carton is empty.) Ugh, we're out of milk. I don't have time for this.*

(MOTHER bustles offstage to get more milk.)

DAD: *Shouldn't you be at school, Tyler?*

TYLER: *It's not time yet.*

DAD: *Lazy son of mine. In my unit, you were up and out at the crack of dawn. That is if you slept at all.*

TYLER: *Trust me dad, I didn't sleep.*

DAD: *That's because you have too much free time. You should be in the reserves.*

TYLER: *(Abruptly.) I want them to remember her.*

DAD: *(Pause. He focuses on Tyler.) Well, you just can't sit back and do nothing. (Pause.)*

TYLER: *I know.*

DAD: *I'm leaving for Afghanistan tomorrow. (TYLER has a look of realisation on his face. DAD strokes his head to indicate his brain injury. MOTHER enters with milk.) I'm leaving for...*

MOTHER: *You were discharged two years ago. (TYLER holds up his DAD's pills that were on the table.) I have to get to work! Don't forget the lasagne, Ty! Promise you won't forget. (She sees the pills.) Give me those. (She takes the pills away. She leaves.)*

DAD: *Tyler, is it time now?*

TYLER: *(Sighs.) Yeah, it's time. (TYLER gets up and hands his DAD the envelope with the CD in it.) Here. Don't let mom open this until tonight. I've written all the instructions down, okay?*

DAD: *Where's your sister? Where's Rae? Isn't she driving you to school?*

TYLER: *Goodbye dad.*

(Lights up on RAE, his sister, playing her guitar. Lights out on DAD. TYLER takes it and plays it once.)

TYLER: *I haven't touched this since the day you died.*

RAE: *That explains why you haven't gotten any better.*
TYLER: *It seems like only yesterday you left for that party...*
RAE: *I know I screwed up. I'm really sorry.*
TYLER: *They're going to be sorry for what they did to. (He puts on her jacket.)*
RAE: *What are you doing with my jacket? (He looks inside his black backpack.)*
Don't make the same mistakes as I did. Please, think before you do anything stupid.
TYLER: *Why didn't you just think before... (He zips up the backpack.)*
RAE: *Tyler, please, for me.*
TYLER: *I am doing this for you. (He exits.)*

[Scene excerpt from the play, *Focus*, Phase IV.]

Collective Theatre: A Brief Overview

The *collective theatre-making process* engages youth through a process of scriptwriting, rehearsing, performing and reflecting, and engages youth to interact collaboratively to co-create and present an original script based on the strengths, interests, and social interactions of the participants. The principals of the *collective theatre-making process* evolved from various branches of theatre: collective theatre, experimental theatre, and devised theatre (Heddon and Milling, 2006; Knowles, 1999; Roose-Evans, 1989; Sainer, 1975; and Weinberg, 1992). A common theme in experimental and collective theatres is that new art forms draw from or react to previous schools of theatre thoughts (i.e., Stanislavski, Brecht, Artaud), different acting styles (i.e., naturalism, realism, surrealism), and different political agendas (i.e., fascism, capitalism, modernism). One of the principles of the *collective theatre-making process* is that all original ideas and art forms are never truly new; instead all new ideas and new art forms are derived from the roots of pre-estimated ideas and forms.

Weinberg (1992) presents a thorough historical examination of collective theatre in the United States from 1900 to 1991. He indicates that the 1960s and the early 1970s led to a burst of radical theatre productions. During this time period, North America was going through a great deal of political changes: the anti-war movement, the space race, the black power movement, the women's liberation movement, the gay rights movement, and so on. The status quo of the social structure was under attack, and so was theatre. A wave of radical theatre groups began to reject traditional and conventional theatre. Some removed the need for directors and scriptwriters, some rejected the commercial notion of theatre that narrowed theatre down to the portrayal of white middle-class values, and some aimed to reach a wider

audience from all walks of life. Filewod (1987) considers Toronto's *Theatre Passe Muraille* to be Canada's first official collective theatre company. It was founded in the late 1960s, and began to create a series of successful hits in the early 1970s that aimed to document and re-imagine Canadian history (i.e., Paul Thompson's *The Farm Show* and Rick Salutin's *1837*).

Weinberg (1992) describes a collective theatre organization as a system that is both revolting against the status quo, and reinventing itself to create new forms of expression. For example, concepts such as protagonists are rejected, and are replaced by thematic material where all the performers are equally valued, and not just the performer portraying the hero of the story. By removing the protagonist, the struggles of the self are replaced by the struggles of the group. Ironically, while the power was shared between the participants, few plays from collective theatre were able to withstand the test of time due to poor scriptwriting. Since then, many collectives have altered their views again, and have found creative ways to reintegrate the scriptwriter back into the process. Thus, theatre invents itself again.

While North America developed the fields of collaborative and collective theatre, Britain and Australia developed the field of devised theatre. Oddey (1994) does not provide devised theatre formulas since each group and process is unique, eclectic, and multi-vision. A devised theatre company does not work from a play text or a single author's viewpoint; the process is less patriarchal and hierarchical, and more democratic and collaborative. The process requires devised theatre participants as a group to think, conceive, invent, adapt, create, imagine, plan, construct, and present an artistic product for an audience.

Devised theatre and collective theatre, both examples of post-modern theatre, borrow ideas from a wide range of sources, such as adapting short stories, poems, historical documents, interviews, court transcripts, letters, participants' journals, and even play texts. The techniques of improvisation, such as the works of Spolin (1963) and Johnstone (1979), are used to play around with different mediums, sources, and resources in order to reproduce something new. Heddon and Milling (2006) explain that devised theatre constantly moves back and forth between structure and spontaneity (between order and chaos) in order to allow new material to unfold and to be discovered.

The aim of devising theatre is to re-interpret and to re-present new material for marginalized voices, instead of reproducing and reinforcing already established social norms. Heddon and Milling (2006) describe three broad usages of devised theatre. The first is to

build a community through participation. The second is to focus on the content of the performance and to provide opportunity for critical and democratic discourse among the participants and spectators. Finally, the third, is to provide a therapeutic avenue to bring about personal change.

Heddon and Milling (2006) warn that there are misinformed assumptions about the beneficial effects of using theatre for developmental purposes. For example, the theatre experience can never be made universal, nor can it ever be truly equal and democratic. Therefore, youth and facilitators need to support each other to question not only what they are performing, but also question why they are performing, how they are performing, and for whom they are performing. In addition, youth and facilitators need to understand that regardless of what they perform, there will always be viewpoints ignored, forgotten, misrepresented, favoured, and silenced. Heddon and Milling remind readers that devising original theatre can never be free from intertextuality, since everything new is borrowed from pre-established social and cultural materials. In other words, the theatre-making process is rooted within the same social and historical norms it wishes to be liberated from. Therefore, it is the responsibility of the co-creators to both embrace and interrogate the intentions of the creators, the creative process, and the art itself.

Overall, the *collective theatre-making process* best fits the principals of *collective theatre*. The term *collective* indicates that the group is central to the creative process, and the entire creative process is structured, inspired, and developed by the cohesion and interactions of the group. The term *collective theatre-making process* is used, instead of *collective theatre*, because *collective theatre* is typically affiliated with professional theatre companies. By using the term, *theatre-making*, rather than *theatre*, more pedagogical emphasis is placed on the learning of making theatre, rather than the product of producing art.

The following scene illustrates learning moments that organically unfold in the collective art-making process. In a play within a play format, the scene illustrates a group of students attempting to construct a commercial for a film contest, which has gone horribly and comically wrong. In the previous scene, the audience learns that the main actress, Emmy, in the film, does not want to kiss her co-actor, Willy, because she has never kissed a boy before. During the chaos, the group is unaware that one of their group members, Ella, has withdrawn

completely from the film-making process. The group does not know that she is waiting secretly for her test results about a lump in her neck that could be fatal.

[Data] (The set of the commercial filmed near the cafeteria.)

EMMY: Everything's a disaster... Why? Because of me!!!! (EMMY goes to the bench upset, and sits next to WILLY.)

THEO: Ella... please.

ELLA: Hold on. (ELLA walks over to EMMY.)

EMMY: I'm the worst actress in the world!

ELLA: Emmy, just listen to me. You're a good actor, you just need to relax okay.

EMMY: What do I know about zombies? And kissing! I've never even kissed a boy before!

ELLA: Good. Use that.

EMMY: Huh?

ELLA: Try to imagine this, you know you're going to die, there is no way to prevent it. All this craziness is happening around you, and death is facing you, and suddenly, bam, you realize you'll never skydive, or have a baby, or go on a road trip to California... you will never get the chance to experience everything you ever dreamt about. (She looks at WILLY.) All you have is now, all you have is your first and mostly likely final kiss.

(ELLA kisses WILLY slowly and passionately. When done ELLA looks sad, then walks away before WILLY is able to respond.)

THEO: Wait. Come back. That was perfect.

EMMY: Get the camera's rolling.

STEWART: Stand by.

THEO: What?

EMMY: Let's shoot this puppy.

THEO: Now?

BUTTON: Places everyone!

AUGUST: Camera is ready!

STEWART: Roll camera.

THEO: Action!

EMMY: (Overacting to the camera, with zombies behind her, pretending to chase her.) The zombies are chasing me. I'm going to die. This is my last chance to experience true love.

WILLY: (As himself.) Please don't knee me again.

EMMY: Shut up and kiss me.

(EMMY kisses WILLY abruptly and with lots of comedic energy.)

WILLY: Whoa, that was...

EMMY: What are we doing standing around?! The zombies are coming!

WILLY: Ah, right! To the science hall. (They go to the science lab set piece.)

VIRGINA: *What is this madness?! That's not in my script.*
THEO: *Keep rolling!!! Get the music ready.*
EMMY: *Bunsen burners! Goggles! No wait! The soap!*
WILLY: *Yes, the soap!*
EMMY/WILLY: *The Zombies need to wash their hands!*
ZOMBIES: *Not the soap!*

(WILLY and EMMY squirt soap into ZOMBIE'S hands. One by one they turn into humans and dance and sing.)

ZOMBIES: *One way or another we're gonna wash ya'
We're gonna wash ya
Wash ya wash ya wash ya.
We say we're gonna get ya,
We're gonna cleanse ya, we'll cleanse, we'll cleanse ya!*

(They end in a giant pose.)

WILLY: *Remember, washing your hands can mean the difference between life and death.*
EMMY: *So whether you're stopping the zombie invasion*
WILLY: *Or pandemic swine flu.*
EMMY/WILLY: *Always wash your hands.*
THEO: *And cut! That was absolutely amazing!*
VIRGINA: *They didn't even follow my script...*
THEO: *That's a wrap everyone...*

(Everyone leaves except ELLA and her friend, KYLIE.)

KYLIE: *I can't believe Emmy gave Willy kiss like that... it was hilarious. (KYLIE laughs, but ELLA does not respond.) Are you even listening to me? What is wrong with you today?*
ELLA: *I don't think I can go to L.A. with you anymore.*
KYLIE: *But we've... (Pause.) Oh, you're just getting butterflies*
ELLA: *No, it's not that. I can't be away from my mom right now. I can't move out right now.*
KYLIE: *Come on, we had plans.*
ELLA: *(Pause.) You can still go without me.*
KYLIE: *(Scared.) I can't go down there all by myself. (Beat. Angry) You're being so selfish.*

(KYLIE exits. ELLA touches the lump on her neck.)

[Scene excerpt from the play, *Focus*, Phase IV.]

Phase Four: *Focus*

In the final phase of the *Compassion Project*, students continued to explore more deeply the topic of safe and caring schools. They co-created a play based on the topics of school lockdowns, violence in schools, and SEL concepts, such as social responsibility and mindfulness, thus the play's title, *Focus*. *Focus* is the tenth play written by students specifically to be performed at a local 700-seat theatre located in the community near the school. Each year, the theme, format, process, and style of the plays evolved in different and distinct ways, and each year the play and its structure grew out of (or more accurately reacted from) the play of the previous year. In all cases, each play was connected loosely to some kind of SEL concept (i.e., empathy for others, seeing another perspective, social responsibility, interpersonal relationships, and so on). The entire process to develop one play takes a school year, usually beginning in May and ending in April the following school year. On average, the play involves between 150-250 students. *Focus* involved a cast and crew of over 170 students, mostly in grades 10 to 12, from twelve different theatre, dance, film, English and technical production classes.

As an aside note, along with *Focus*, over 150 grade 8 and 9 students were involved in a separate variety-type show, *Hands Up*.⁶ The data of the junior students' theatre work was not included in this research; nevertheless, this point is raised to stress the complexity of the theatre program. Both *Focus* and *Hands Up* involved the collaboration of 4 teachers, 3 support staff members, over 350 grade 8-12 students, and 18 different classes working together to co-create two different plays performed the same week in the same theatre space. This chapter will only highlight the play, *Focus*.

Similar to the *2010 Theatre of Possibilities Project* (as discussed in chapter four), *Focus* was not predetermined—it started with a “blank slate”, and the process unfolded organically in unpredictable ways. The idea of a starting with a “blank slate” is not completely accurate because many students (and teachers) had been involved in the *collective theatre-making process* for several years and they brought their knowledge, experiences, ideas, desires, fears, and preconceived expectations to the creative table.

⁶ The senior grade 10-12 students also performed in *Hands Up* and they directed the junior students. This provided significant opportunities for new pathways of relationships to form, and allowed senior students to role model and pass down to junior students positive SEL values and constructive theatre norms.

Focus began in May 2009 and ended in April 2010. In May 2009, most of the soon-to-be grade 12 theatre, film and dance students (many who became the student-leaders in the play) gathered after school to co-write a play to be performed five times at the local theatre in April 2010. Unlike the *2010 Theatre of Possibilities Project* in which all students wrote scripts as part of their curricular assignment, *Focus* was written by an extra-curricular writing team. Typically the writing team was open to all grade levels, but due to the large number of students wanting to write, the writing team was limited to grade 12 students, so they could be monitored better during the writing process. In total, 36 of 48 grade 12 students that participated in *Focus* formed the writing team.

At the beginning, the writing team met together as a large group and in subgroups both in and out of class to brainstorm a wide range of possible topics for the next play. Collectively, the writing team decided to write an intensive drama about a fictional school lockdown. Around this time, two local schools were engaged in a lockdown (one false, one real). In addition, on the front page of the *Vancouver Province* newspaper there was an article about a student being removed from a different local high school because allegedly he had access to weapons and threatened on the internet to kill a list of his classmates. The group leaders, including myself, were nervous about this topic because we did not want unintentionally to promote violence or to create a destructive copy-cat situation. Nevertheless, after much discussion with the students, the facilitation team, and the principal, we decided to move forward with the lockdown idea for several reasons: the theme of school safety was a major component of the students' inquiry on safe and caring school, and the subject matter was relevant to the students' lives and reflective of North America's changing school culture. Thus, the students were ecstatic. After a few years of creating comedies or plays with complex fictional worlds, they felt it was time to present something "real".

As explained briefly in chapter one, *Focus* revolves around a central character named Tyler. Tyler carries a weapon to school with the intention of causing harm to peers whom he believes were cruel to his sister at a house party where she unexpectedly died of a drug overdose. The setting takes place at lunch time in a typical Canadian high school cafeteria, which is represented by three cafeteria tables. Thematically, *Focus* examines how one person's (or group's) actions, directly, indirectly, positively, or negatively impacts a community or a single person's day.

Overall, the play consists of original songs, dances, and a script of nine overlapping stories and 57 characters. The first act illustrates nine unrelated storylines in the cafeteria. Each group, without being aware of it, directly or indirectly impacts Tyler, which escalates his destructive behaviour. The first act ends with Tyler causing a deadly lockdown in school. Act Two begins with Tyler waking up from a deep sleep and the nine storylines start all over again at the beginning of the same lunch hour; however, in Act Two, random acts of kindness and simple gestures of listening and compassion lead to unexpected chain reactions, which constructively change the outcome of the day for most characters. The story ends with Tyler making an unexpected and life-changing connection with another character. Thus, the play ends not in a bloody lockdown, but with students finishing their lunch break and going to their next class like any other typical school day. The play leaves the audience wondering which between act one or act two is real.

The writing team discussed in great length the option of using a protagonist-based or theme-based model to write the play. After much deliberation, the writing team decided to combine both models. The protagonist-based model allowed the story of 57 characters and over 100 singers, dancers, and school crowd members to revolve around one character. The central character of Tyler helped to give the writing team, theatre-makers, and the audience a focus. In addition, the theme-based model allowed the writing team to explore and to present in a non-linear and non-traditional manner a wide range of themes about school safety and violence in schools. Eventually the writing team was divided up into nine different groups and they created nine distinct storylines, with each highlighting various sub-themes (i.e., relational violence, poverty, bullying, substance abuse, and so on). Each storyline was required to stand on its own; yet like a collage or a quilt, the storylines when knitted together revealed an overarching narrative. Even though the play was limited by an overall linear plot device, the theme-based model allowed more perspectives to be presented, and a wider range of talents and abilities to be highlighted.

Compared to previous years, the writing process of *Focus* went somewhat smoothly because students were creating realistic characters within a realistic school setting. Since they were not writing about complex metaphysical or imaginary worlds, students were better able to draw from their personal life experiences to create honest characters and dialogue about

students within a school high setting. For the most part, the storylines were written, cast, rehearsed, and polished in a timely fashion.

After the core parts of the script were written (but far from being polished), auditions were held in December 2009 for actors, singers, and dancers. Before auditions, the actors studied the characters in class. The auditions occurred after school so all facilitators could attend. Also, some student-leaders and a returning alumnus (i.e., singing coach) participated in the audition process. Each year, the audition process varies based on the needs of the students and the script. With *Focus*, most of the rehearsals took place during the theatre and film classes; therefore the casting of the roles was limited to the students' timetable. Also, since *Focus* was a co-curricular program, students were required to complete class assignments (i.e., character sketches, costume designs, blocking, subtext, storyboarding, film-making, and others) and they were required to participate in the rehearsal and performance processes as part of their course work. As a result, only grade 11-12 students in Theatre Performance 12, Directing and Scriptwriting 12, and Acting for Film/Television 12 were invited to audition for the 57 speaking roles.

The posting of the cast list is typically one of the most stressful parts of the entire process. Even though everyone is included in the play, there seems to be some inevitable pressure in the senior year to obtain key roles. In general, students, especially grade 12 students on the writing team, become heavily invested in the play. Although students are warned to remain detached from the outcome of the casting process, each year, a handful of students still end up feeling hurt, disappointed, sad, or devastated. Compared to other years, the *Focus* auditions and the reactions to the cast list went fairly smoothly, with some exceptions. Some actors auditioned for a role that required actors to be available in both acting and dance classes. In the end, an actor, not in the dance class, was given the part. Even though she was not enrolled in the dance class, she had a free spare during the dance block and was willing to attend the dance class regularly. This was a huge unexpected curve ball for some of the dance students. They were upset with the casting of this role, and expressed mixed emotions to their peers. In turn, I met with them individually to explain the rationale behind the casting decisions (made by four facilitators), and to give them an opportunity to express their thoughts and feelings. One student said she resented how quickly the facilitators and their peers told them to "trust the process"; she wanted space to express her

disappointment without it being perceived as “negative”. Over time, while they struggled with the decision, each of them found a way to become excited with his or her assigned roles. After the cast was finalized, the writing team rewrote the next draft of the script in order to integrate the actors’ acting, singing, dancing, musical, and other special abilities into the scripts and the characters. On the final night of the show, each of the dancers who were upset earlier approached me, most of them sobbing, and expressed how much they loved playing their characters; ironically, they each apologized for not trusting the process. In turn, I told them that I learned the importance of giving space for students to express disagreement and disappointment in a supportive and non-reactive environment. Upon reflection of the process, we discussed how these points of tension pushed the play and their characters in new and unexpected directions.

After the auditions, students were engaged in the rehearsals process in a timely and productive fashion. The students met regularly in their assigned rehearsals, and over time the script changed and adapted with each rehearsal. The script was tweaked routinely as the students improved the quality of the dialogue and discovered more clearly the characters’ motivations and personality traits. For example, one student felt strongly disconnected to her role as the divorced mother. Since the majority of the characters in the play were high school students, she was hoping for a similar role. She could not relate to the mother role and she was afraid to play her as a stereotypical angry “bitch”. She felt the audience would not believe her character, since she had no life experience of being a mother. Even though she rarely complained, it was clear in her body language and lack of verbal participation in the rehearsal process that she resisted the role for several weeks. Again, this point of tension led to much dialogue and further script rewrites. A positive shift in her attitude occurred during a rehearsal when she explored her love for her daughter. We experimented with her imagining and watching her daughter getting shot during the lockdown. At first this scenario was only an exercise and was not included in the play, but since she expressed the mother’s grief of losing her child so powerfully, this moment eventually was integrated into the play. The new addition was a non-verbal moment of the mother reaching out and grasping her chest as her daughter is dragged off-stage by dancers during the lockdown dance. This simple gesture of reaching out and grasping her chest helped her to connect with her character. In turn, when she explored her relationship with her ex-husband, she discovered that her aggressive

behaviour stemmed not from anger but a place of hurt and fear. Once she understood and felt these hidden feelings and motivations, she better understood how to play the role of the mother for all her scenes.

The purpose of illustrating the above stories is to show the complexities of directing a large cast of 57 characters and over 170 students in one play. Each group worked independently in class until about three weeks before the performance dates, and then the rehearsals shifted to after school hours, at which time the participants and subgroups were brought together to knit the scenes together. Until this time, most groups worked blindly on their evolving storylines, songs, and dances since they did not have a clear understanding how the different pieces fit together. From the success of previous plays, the students trusted that somehow, everything would come together as an artful whole.

The procedure of uniting the technical world with the performance world is another stressful point in the process. Often the stress stems from having very limited time and resources to run the technical rehearsals in a graceful and organic fashion. Since the theatre rental is expensive, the budget only allows for three days of technical and dress rehearsals, followed by three days of matinee and evening performances. Moving over 170 students and all the production elements from one space to another space is a “pressure cooker”. Once the play moves in to the performance space, there is little room for error and little time for long discussion. At this time, a great deal of energy is spent on organizing and uniting the technical, front-of-house, supervision, and performance teams.

In spite of endless hours of organizing, rehearsing and preparing, it is expected that unforeseeable dilemmas occur. For example, there was a great deal of tension about the family storylines in the high school counseling office. At first the scene was written for comedic relief; however, after a few rehearsals it became clear that the comedic storyline did not fit with the rest of the play as it diminished the integrity of the lockdown scene. As a result, the comedic story was switched to a dramatic one, and this required the writing team and actors to sit together and rewrite the entire storyline. The script morphed many times, and soon it became apparent that the family and the school counselor represented a very important message in the play—youth require support from adults to cope with the wide range of complex social issues. It was not intentional at the time, but the character of the

counselor ended up being the sole voice to represent the school staff. As a result, this change brought about an unexpected problem.

After the presentation of the play, which was shown to nearly 3,000 people, a few staff members challenged the ethics of the counselor character in the play. One staff member felt strongly that the play “crossed a line”, and thus, I was brought into a meeting to discuss this matter with the president and vice-president of the local teacher’s union. This meeting involved discussions of various dilemmas: whether or not the counselor character reflected and made a statement about real staff members at the school; whether counselors in schools were portrayed to students in a positive or negative light (in a trustworthy or untrustworthy manner); whether or not the play told students not to trust and confide in counselors; and whether or not the play was “too close to home” to be done in the first place. After much discussion with co-workers and the principal, I asserted the following points. First, all the characters in the play were fictional and did not reflect any specific individual. Second, as a counselor myself, I believe the play to be pro-counseling. The play makes a statement about the lack of support and resources for counselors to address adequately the school’s overwhelming range of social and emotional issues in our students. Third and finally, similar to all characters in the play, the counselor character was written intentionally to be both admirable and flawed—in act one she was presented as overworked and ineffective due to personal issues, and in act two she made a significant and unexpected connection with a student. This, in turn, led to a positive chain reaction of events, which indirectly stopped Tyler from following through on his destructive plans. The irony of this particular conflict was that the students and facilitators thought people would react strongly and perhaps complain about the disturbing lockdown scene. The writing team spent a great deal of time and energy to write the lockdown scenes in a responsible way. As a group we were prepared to justify the lockdown. It was a shock to me when the complaint was not about the lockdown, but about the portrayal of a school staff member.

Subsequently, upon discussion with staff, principal, and other play facilitators, the role of the counselor character was tweaked to make the intention of the character and the storyline clearer. As a result, the counselor’s storyline changed radically after each of the five performances. While the other eight storylines were set, the actors in the counseling storyline worked hard to rewrite their scenes. Overall, the rewriting process during the week of the

show consumed a great amount of energy. On one hand, I was resentful with having to cope with the stress of the changes, but on the other hand, the students in the counseling group were excited to tweak the script and to discover a deeper truth of the play. Because this group had to switch radically their storyline and characters from a comedy to a drama, they sensed that, compared to other groups, their storyline was underdeveloped, and therefore, they welcomed the opportunity to better flush out their characters. As a result of these kinds of tension points, the message and interconnectivity of the play became clearer and clearer with each performance.

Again, the above story illustrates the unpredictable complexities of the *collective theatre-making process*. While one group completes a storyline before auditions, another group makes radical changes hours before performance time. The spectrum is wide. Teacher-directors can never predict what type of facilitation and mentorship is required during the writing, rehearsal, and performance process. There are moments of creative flow and electrifying breakthroughs, and there are moments of artistic blocks and volatile reactions. During these difficult moments, students and facilitators (including myself) are reminded to “trust the process.”

In the original concept for Rae, she was presented as a non-speaking spirit who followed and watched Tyler, like a haunting ghost, throughout the play. Yet, after completion of the first draft of the play, it became clear that the students were confused about Tyler’s back story because he rarely talked in the play. He came across as a stereotypical detached angry guy walking around the school carrying a weapon in a black bag. The students wanted to find a way to humanize Tyler and to share his back story. In turn, the group decided to create a series of flashback scenes about the day his sister died. Consequently, Rae evolved from an abstract spirit to a real three-dimensional speaking character.

[Data] (Flashback Scene. RAE plays guitar in the living room. TYLER enters.)

TYLER: What are you playing?

RAE: Just a new song.

TYLER: Oh... (beat) why are you so happy?

RAE: I found out you were adopted.

TYLER: (He smiles.) I think it’s because you like someone. (RAE stops playing.)

RAE: No. (Pause.) I’m just going to a party, now get lost. (RAE continues to play.)

TYLER: Wow, first party at the new school, lucky you.

RAE: It’s no big deal. Just some guy, Wes, having this football party...

TYLER: *Wow, you must really like him. You despise football.*
 RAE: *Trust me, I don't like Wes.*
 TYLER: *(Loud.) Maybe you can be his personal cheerleader.*
 RAE: *(Loud.) I rather stick needles in my eyes!*
(RAE plays the guitar singing a song about needles in her eyes. TYLER laughs. They are loud. DAD enters rubbing his head, followed by MOTHER.)
 DAD: *(Bluntly.) All that noise is giving me a headache.*
 RAE: *I'll keep it down.*
 MOTHER: *Rae, go play in your room.*
 RAE: *But my room is the size of a closet!*
 MOTHER: *That doesn't matter, just go to your room.*
 RAE: *I need to finish this song.*
 MOTHER: *You can play in your room.*
 DAD: *(Bluntly.) She's stealing my pills.*
 RAE: *No, I haven't.*
 DAD: *You've been taking my pills.*
 RAE: *Leave me alone.*
 MOTHER: *(frantic) How many times do I have tell you, she hasn't been taking your pills!*
 DAD: *Stop taking them.*
 RAE: *I can't believe this.*
 DAD: *I need them when I leave to Afghanistan.*
 MOTHER: *See what you did?*
 RAE: *Me?*
 MOTHER: *You know loud noise confuses him.*
 RAE: *No, I think the bullet in his head did that to him...*
 MOTHER: *We're not doing this again.*
 DAD: *I need to start packing.*
 MOTHER: *You're not going anywhere.*
 DAD: *Give me back my pills.*
 RAE: *I didn't take your pills.*
 DAD: *Hand them over.*
 RAE: *Get away from me.*
 DAD: *Hand them over, cadet.*
 RAE: *Will you shut up!*
 MOTHER: *Don't talk to your Dad like that.*
 RAE: *Don't you even know who I am? I'm Rae, your daughter. There's a lot of things you don't remember, isn't there?*
 MOTHER: *Go to your room, Rae.*
 RAE: *No, I'm going out to have some fun for a change. (RAE walks away with her jacket.)*
 MOTHER: *Don't you walk away from me! (RAE exits.) Rae! (MOTHER begins to walk after RAE, but TYLER stops her.)*
 TYLER: *Mom, she got invited to a party. Just let her go.*
 MOTHER: *But she...*
 TYLER: *Just let her go. You're always telling us to make new friends... well, she is. She's going to be fine, okay? I promise you, everything's going to work out.*
 [Scene excerpt from the play, *Focus*, Phase IV.]

In terms of curriculum, some key senior theatre outcomes are to guide students through various theatre-making processes, to create original theatre-based art, and to work as a production team. Unlike directing a conventional classic or modern play, students in this program are encouraged to co-create something new. In doing so, there is a risk of potentially opening up “cans of worms”, as I described above. Since the theatre program follows an inclusion-based model, the quality of the art varies greatly from student to student—in other words, the collective works presented on stage are constrained by the students’ abilities, limitations, energy, and time. Therefore, there is always a risk that the characters, the message, and the play as whole may not become fully developed or realized by performance times. Often, the play or characters are not fully understood until after the play is over. Often times I tell students during the reflection sessions that the final performance of the play, in a sense, is really the first strong draft of the play. During circle talks and written reflections, students are invited to reflect appreciatively and critically on the play and *collective theatre-making process*. In time the play is released and students and facilitators move on to other aspects of their school lives, such as other school assignments and marking. As Leonardo da Vinci famously said, “Art is never finished, only abandoned.”

The Five-Stage Model of Social Art Development

Figure 5.2 illustrates the five-stage model of *social art development*. The model synthesizes three key theoretical concepts: *Three Dimensions of Group Counselling* (Schtuz, 1958), *Five Person-Centred Key Social and Emotional Learning Competencies* (Zins, Weissberg, Wang, and Walberg, 2004), and my master’s thesis, *Five Developmental Stages of the Collaborative Play-Creating Process* (Beare, 2003).

As part of my master’s training in counseling psychology, I studied various counseling theories and practices. Yalom and Leszcz (2005), Corey (2011), and Shakoor (2010) provide overviews on various stages of group therapy. For example, groups move through five stages: forming, storming, norming, performing, and adjourning. In the forming stage, group members get to know one another and discover how the group will function together. In the storming stage, theatre-makers work through various power struggles and test the boundaries and limits of the group and the group leader. In the norming, stage, group safety, trust, and cohesiveness are established, and the group works through various personal issues. At the performing stage, the group functions at an advanced level and members take

greater responsibility to support and to challenge the group and individual members to change and improve their lives. Finally, at the adjourning stage, group members prepare for the group to be terminated and to reflect upon ways to integrate new discoveries and behaviours made within the group into their everyday lives. For the past ten years, I explored ways to integrate group therapy principles into my teaching practice, and to better understand how to support groups in the *collective theatre-making process*.

Figure 5.2: Evolution of Five-Stage Model of Social Art Development

Schutz, 1958	Beare, 2003 (Masters Thesis)	Zins, et al, 2004	Beare, 2011 (Ph.D. Dissertation)
Three Dimensions of Group Counseling	Five Developmental Stages of the Collaborative Play-Creating Process	Five Person-Centred Key Social & Emotional Learning Competencies	Five Developmental Stages of the Collective Theatre-Making Process
<i>Inclusion</i>	<i>Inclusion</i>	<i>Social Awareness</i>	Inclusion & Social Art Norms
<i>Control</i>	<i>Control</i>	<i>Self-Management</i>	Self-Management & Theatre Skill Development
<i>Affection</i>	<i>Intimacy</i>	<i>Relationship Skills</i>	Relationships & Connections
<i>N/A</i>	<i>Empowerment</i>	<i>Self-Awareness</i>	Self as Artist & Integration
<i>N/A</i>	<i>Vision</i>	<i>Responsible Decision-making</i>	Leadership & Vision

In my master’s thesis, I based my model of developmental stages around Schutz’s model. Schutz (1958), a pioneer in the field of group counseling, states that the development of interpersonal behaviours of participants in group counseling involves three dimensions: inclusion, control, and affection. His group counseling model indicates that the group must achieve success with each dimension before moving forward to the next dimension. Over time, the group recycles the three dimensions at higher and more refined levels.

In addition to integrating Schutz's (1958) *Three Dimensions of Group* (inclusion, control and intimacy) in my master's work, two new stages were added to the model: empowerment and vision. While most youth involved in the collaborative play-creating process were operating in the first three stages, the data indicates that not all students advance to the fourth and fifth stages. When conceptualizing the development stages for youth, several questions came to mind. What were some typical descriptions of youth at different developmental stages? In what ways did youth engage in theatre and express self? How much and what kind of self-disclosing was occurring? Finally, what qualities impeded and advanced progression of youth development?

Specific details of the *Collaborative Play-Creating Process* are elaborated further in my master's thesis (Beare, 2003), and in my publication, *Theatre for Positive Youth Development: A Model for Collaborative Play-Creating* (Beare and Belliveau, 2007). Moreover, I presented the *Model of Developmental Stages* at various theatre education conferences, secondary theatre classrooms, and UBC teacher education courses. Based on the data analysis of the *Compassion Project*, and feedback from discussions with academic scholars, theatre students, and practicing teachers, it became clear that my master's model required modifications and revisions.

First, while the *theatre* components (writing, rehearsing, performing, and reflecting) were straight forward, there was confusion about the *self* components (inclusion, control, intimacy, empowerment, and vision). Since the model was based on group counseling theory, people were uncertain as to whether the *self* referred to the individuals in the group and/or the group as a whole. Does the group develop together stage by stage, or do individuals develop at different stages within the group? The answer is both; however, the development of youth is distinct from the development of the group. Another common question was that since multiple classes merged together to co-create a play, does the development stages of the group refer to the group of a single class or the group of the entire play? Again, the answer is both; however, the development of the class group is unique from the development of the play group. Overall, the core problem of the 2003 model is that the complexities of the individuals and groups could not be limited to a single category called *self*. To address this concern, the *self* component of the model has been expanded into three categories: *youth*, *class group*, and *play group*.

Another major concern was that the terms used to describe the five developmental stages (inclusion, control, intimacy, empowerment, and vision) sometimes caused confusion. In general, the majority of the people seemed to understand the stages of inclusion, intimacy and vision; however, the terms control and empowerment led to misunderstandings and required elaborate explanations. Upon discussions and data analysis, it became clear that the model did not tell the whole picture, and required further research. This concern was addressed by researching and integrating *Social and Emotional Learning* (SEL) theory into my model.

As part of my Ph.D. program I took an eight month SEL course with two Canadian SEL researchers, Kim A. Schonert-Reichi and Shelly Hymel. This stimulating course exposed the class to a wide range of SEL theories and practices, and I examined connections between SEL, and my model. In time, I was excited to discover a natural connection between my five developmental stages and five person-centred key SEL competencies: *Self-Awareness, Self-Management, Social Awareness, Relationship Skills, and Responsible Decision-Making* (Zins, et al., 2004).

Surprisingly, like a jigsaw puzzle coming together, each of the five SEL components organically matched up to each of the five components of my model (See Figure 5.3). In turn, the five SEL competencies were adapted and reordered into my *social art development* model, because they provide a clearer picture of the social art complexities of the collective theatre-making practice.

As illustrated in Figure 5.3, the five SEL competencies are aligned to each of the five developmental stages for youth, class group, and play group. *Youth* represents theatre-makers as individuals in the class group and/or play group. The *Class Groups* represent groups of 24-30 students in various theatre, dance, film, English, and/or production classes. The *Play Group* represents all classes formed together to co-create an original play. Youth in the class group who do not want to participate in the play group do the same assignment; however, their classroom work is not integrated in the play.

Figure 5.3: Five-Stage Model of Social Art Development

Social Art Development	Inclusion & Social Art Norms Stage	Self-Management & Theatre Skills Stage	Relationships & Connections Stage	Self as Artist & Integration Stage	Leadership & Vision Stage
SOCIAL & EMOTIONAL LEARNING	Social Awareness	Self-Management	Relationship Skills	Self-Awareness	Responsible Decision-Making
YOUTH	New students; <i>Focused on blending in and fitting with the group.</i>	<i>Focused on managing self-control and developing theatre skills; explores and copes with working in group.</i>	<i>Focused on forming a support network of close relationships and connections.</i>	<i>Focused on integrating first three stages and developing self as artists (or designer or technicians); feels a sense to “shine”.</i>	<i>Focused on developing self as leaders and understanding the “big picture”; feels a sense to support others to “shine”.</i>
CLASS GROUP	The teacher establishes, monitors, and reinforces positive social art norms as a means to create group safety and engages students in low risk theatre activities.	The teacher establishes clear expectations for classroom behaviours and engages students in a wide range of low to high risk theatre activities to develop theatre skills.	The exploration of authentic human relationships and the expression of honest emotions become the new class norm both on and off stage.	The class shift in and out of this stage throughout the year and peaks around the performance of the play.	The class is united by a vision; students are assigned duties to co-create, co-design or co-lead; a strong desire to give something back.
PLAY GROUP	Inclusion is central to the entire process as all theatre students are welcomed to participate; social art norms are quickly passed down by student-leaders and from play to play.	Students explore when to assert their voice and when to surrender to the creative process; there is a “ <i>battle of the fittest</i> ” of ideas; students cope with the unknowns of the theatre process.	The act of co-creating a play together creates new and diverse pathways and a wide array of complex and unexpected social interactions and relationships	The script is built around the strengths of the students; youth integrate complex theatre skills and become more self-aware of identity and voice as artist.	The entire process is constructed by teacher and student-leaders engaged in a continuous collaboration to unite the entire cast and crew through a common vision.
IMPEDES PROGRESSION	Not feeling accepted; lack of respect.	Unable to manage self-control; little or no growth in theatre skills.	Unstable or lack of a support network; unable to resolve personal conflicts.	Unable to integrate complex theatre skills or express self as artist.	Unable to act as student-leaders; overwhelmed with ideas or responsibilities.
ADVANCES PROGRESSION	Feeling accepted; established basic social art norms.	Able to demonstrate or improve on theatre skills and manage self-control.	Strong and stable support network is formed.	Identification of self as an artist.	A deep sense of contributing and giving back to group.

In addition, the model highlights the key factors that impede and advance progression of each stage. While the developmental stages are presented as unique and distinct, they are highly interconnected, and develop in unique and unpredictable patterns. In this model, development is conceptualized as relational, unique, gradual, complex, multi-layered, circular, repetitive, messy, and it progresses in sophistication through pro-social action and dialogue. Also, even though the chart illustrates a clear distinction between youth, class group, and play group, there is great overlap between them and they strongly influence and shape one another. Also, while the five SEL competencies are presented as one SEL competency per development stage, they overlap and interconnect with each of the five stages and vary greatly from person to person, and from group to group.

Developmental Stage #1: Social Art Norms and Inclusion

Social and emotional learning. The first development stage is based on the SEL competency of *social awareness*. Typically, the development of SEL skills begins with self-awareness; however, the data indicate that social awareness appears to be a better developmental fit for youth at the start of the secondary theatre education program. Students at the first stage tend to focus more on the social dynamics of the group as they learn about the social art norms of theatre. As part of the social awareness competency, youth work “cooperatively in groups, and recognize and appreciate individual and group similarities and differences. [Also, youth] demonstrate respect for, take the perspective of and empathize with others” (Zins, Bloodworth, Weissberg, and Walberg, 2004, p. 7).

Youth. Typically youth at the first stage are junior students or students new to the theatre program. The main focus for youth is to belong and to fit in with the group. While some outgoing students like the “spotlight”, usually most students do not want to risk being embarrassed in front of their peers. Youth protect themselves from the stress of being in a group by blending in with the group. The teacher supports youth at this stage by engaging students to participate in shared and low-risk theatre activities. Also, the teacher understands at this stage there is a wide range of participation styles: active, passive, committed and uncommitted. Personal self-disclosure is typically very low in the group because youth are not yet familiar with the social art norms. Since trust takes time to form in a group, youth at

this stage tend to ‘test the waters’ slowly. Developmentally, youth want the focus of the class to be on the group activities and not on the self.

Class group. This stage typically occurs at the start of the school year with a new class or a class mixed with new and returning students. At this stage, the teacher’s primary focus is to establish, monitor, and reinforce positive social art norms as a way to create group safety and group cohesion. Examples of social art norms are respect, classroom routines, and active group participation in theatre activities. The teacher strives to create a welcoming non-threatening environment in which all students, regardless of their background or ability levels, are included. Over time, the students slowly get to know one another as they engage in low-risk group activities. Students are encouraged (and sometimes challenged) by the teacher to include one another, support one another, and to not judge each other’s work. At the beginning of the first stage, the class identity is not clear and the power dynamics within the class are in flux--the students and teacher are figuring out how to behave and function as a group. Instilling social art norms and inclusion is usually a slow process with classes at younger grades, classes made up of new theatre students, and classes made up of students not interested or unable to commit to *collective theatre-making process* and the out-of-class schedule. Overall, the students at this stage are most interested in having “fun” in a safe, stress-free, and playful environment. For classes at this stage, the teacher typically selects low risk drama activities in which students participate all at the same time in large or small groups. The teacher keeps the students’ presentation of work to peers to a minimum, and understands that the average student tends to demonstrate rudimentary theatre skills. While theatre skills are addressed in class, greater emphasis is placed on establishing strong social art norms such as team work, respect, and support of others.

Play group. Inclusion is built organically into the *collective theatre-making process* because all theatre students who want to be involved in the process are included. The student-leaders co-create a play that includes students from multiple theatre, film, dance, English, and technical theatre classes. Instead of teachers instilling social art norms to 30 students per class, a wide range of student-leaders supports the teacher in passing down the social art norms. Compared to the class group, the process of instilling social art norms in the play group is faster and more natural because the social art norms have been role-modeled by the

returning students and passed down from play to play. When youth and class groups in the first development stage enter the *collective theatre-making process*, they sense they are entering into something that is operating at a higher level and with stronger expectations. This tends to make youth and class groups at the first stage to behave more timidly at the start of the *collective theatre-making process*, and there tends to be a higher drop-out rate at this stage. Students and classes at this stage tend to be aware of the gap between themselves and the students at higher grades and/or higher developmental stages. Overall, the play group, a mix of new and returning theatre-makers and class groups, move through the first developmental stage quickly because of the clarity of the social art norms reinforced and role-modeled by the student-leaders, and also from the success of previous plays.

Impediments of inclusion and social art norms stage. The following reasons impede progression of the first developmental stage: not feeling accepted by the group, not being able to fit in, overexposure of self, not feeling good enough to be compared to others, strong overwhelming feelings of self-consciousness, or extreme levels of competition, elitism, or criticism. The above reasons impede progression at all stages, but they are most prominent at the earlier stages. Also, the drop-out rate is highest at the earlier stages, in which students do not enroll in a theatre class the following year, or they prematurely leave the *collective theatre-making process*.

Progression of inclusion and social art norms stage. The key factors that advance progression of the first stage to the next stage are a feeling of belonging, security within social art norms, and identification with the class group or the play group. The scene below illustrates the students' need to conform and to blend in with the group, as well as to survive the social dynamics of high school.

[Data] (A large group of students interact in the cafeteria simultaneously. TYLER walks into the cafeteria. They continue to talk in silence and in slow motion. SINGERS enter and walk slowly through the cafeteria standing next to TYLER.)

SINGERS: *Image is everything if you want to survive,
and change who you are and you will get by.
Hide the pain and put on a smile, the feelings are in tatters.
True identity is gone for a while, image is all that matters.
You flash your brittle smile, fooling all you know.*

You're struggling inside, fighting not to show.

(Everyone stands and faces the audience, as does TYLER. Silence. Suddenly, all students resume talking loudly and behaving as before, moving in all different directions, except for TYLER.)

[Scene excerpt from the play, *Focus*, Phase IV.]

Developmental Stage #2: Self-Management and Theatre Skills Stage

Social and emotional learning. The SEL competency that best matches the second stage is *self-management*. Through the process of developing theatre skills and working in groups, youth “regulate their emotions to handle stress, control impulses, and persevere in overcoming obstacles. [They] express emotions appropriately and work towards setting and monitoring progress toward their goals in regards to skill development” (Zins, Bloodworth, Weissberg, and Walberg, 2004, p. 7).

Youth. The main focus for youth at the second stage is developing theatre skills and managing self-control within the group. At this stage, belonging to the group is no longer enough--youth need to know that what they say and do matters to the group and the teacher. Students are more open to work in small groups and present their work to peers. They tend to mimic and emulate the senior or “cool” students. Students that are able to develop theatre skills successfully tend to increase with self-confidence and take more risks. Students unable to develop theatre skills over time tend to shut down, give up, and/or passively or aggressively undermine the group. At this stage, youth want constructive feedback and positive validation about their performance ability from the student-leaders, teachers, and peers. Although there is some self-disclosure at this stage, youth protect themselves from the stress of being in the group by engaging in theatre activities as a means to develop theatre skills. Role-playing characters help youth to ‘save face’--they can perform certain behaviours and feelings that they would not do themselves typically. If needed, youth can place the consequences of performing these actions and feelings onto the character and not themselves.

Class group. After the “honeymoon” period in the first stage, class students at the second stage are more willing to explore and test the boundaries of the social art norms. Different viewpoints, unexpected events, and power struggles emerge as class students figure

out how to function as a group. Students in the class tend to celebrate each other's work if the work is strong or perceived as "cool". The success of the class depends on the number of students who effectively or ineffectively develop their theatre and self-management skills, and whether or not the class is perceived as "cool". Overall, the unique make-up of the class group's power dynamics determine the identity of the class group and the degree to which students support one another and take risks in front of their peers. Typically at this stage, the teacher assigns students in small groups to create, rehearse and present to the whole class. The classroom teacher continues to establish strong classroom control in order to foster group safety for the class. The teacher does this by establishing clear expectations of classroom behaviours, classroom routines, and evaluation procedures. The teacher uses a wider range of teaching methods to engage youth in a wide variety of classroom theatre activities. Over time, the teacher increases the degree of difficulty, risk, complexity, and interconnectivity of the theatre work, which in turn, requires youth to develop simultaneously their self-management skills in order to cope with the increased challenge.

Play group. Each class group enters into the play group with clear expectations and opportunities for creative input based on the vision set by the student-leaders and the writing team. Students at the second stage are encouraged to manage their feelings of co-creating within an unknown process because each class (and the various subgroups nested within each class) works independently without fully understanding how their unique parts fit within the whole. Students in the play group also learn to manage their feelings of working in a very large group. Students learn when to assert their voices and opinions, and when to surrender to the creative process. In the play group, there is often a "*battle of the fittest*" in which the strongest ideas move forward and the weakest ones are dropped.

Impediments of self-management and theatre skills stage. Some key reasons that impede progression at this stage are negative feedback, poor performance ability, little improvement with theatre skills, being unsuccessful with asserting viewpoints, not being able to respect social art norms, not feeling like one has a voice, feeling like one's voice does not matter in the group, and not being able to cope with the ever-changing unknowns of the theatre process.

friends/peers/group are the most significant factor of the *collective theatre-making process*. Students are focused on forming and maintaining new and old friendships and relationships. Youth protect themselves from the stress of the group by forming a strong support network. With the formation of a strong support system, students take greater intrapersonal and theatrical risks. Also, the support system serves as a buffer for youth to withstand life obstacles and vulnerabilities. Students are most at risk of dropping out if repeated attempts to form friends or relationships in the group fail. The overall drop-out rate begins to decrease with the success of the third stage.

Class group. At this stage, the class group tends to be more relaxed, open, and theatre-friendly. Students tend to celebrate most students' work regardless of their ability levels. The students are less interested in being "cool", and more interested in feeling "close" and "connected" to peers, teachers, and the *collective theatre-making process*. Students often share in the group how the class group represents a safe haven for them. Also, they explain how the connections in the theatre class feels closer and more intimate compared to their other classes in school. The theatre teacher is in a continuous process of balancing the development of theatre skills and supporting intrapersonal relationships amongst students. At this stage, the teacher senses a shift in which students as a whole are more committed and respectful to one another and to the creative process. Also, the students in the class group are better able to monitor and reinforce the social art norms and classroom expectations amongst themselves with little guidance from the teacher. As result, the teacher at this stage is better able to guide the class to explore deeper and more intimate levels of the play's themes and the characters. As part of the curriculum, the teacher encourages students, as classmates, actors, and characters, to take emotional risks and to explore authentic human relationships and interactions. With practice and success, the expression of honest emotions becomes a new social art norm both on and off-stage. When necessary, the teacher addresses conflicts, and if they are too difficult to resolve, the teacher re-clarifies the social art norms of the *collective theatre-making process* or returns to teaching the class group at a lower developmental stage.

Play group. The data indicates that being connected to the play group is the single highest motivating factor that drives the entire *collective theatre-making process* (and the

theatre program as a whole). The act of co-creating a play organically encourages students to work together, which in turn, creates new pathways and leads to a diverse array of complex social and theatre-making actions and interactions between theatre-makers. Overall, the play group co-creates a story about the human condition, which is inspired by a pre-determined SEL-based theme (i.e., social responsibility, empathy for others, seeing another perspective, and so on). The *entire collective theatre-making process* acts as a buffer for youth to turn to youth for support within a positive environment supervised by a caring teacher who is able to clarify, monitor, and reinforce the social art norms and *collective theatre-making process*. Also, student-leaders form close relationship with peers, and often serve as mediators to defuse intrapersonal or interpersonal conflicts. Student-leaders turn to the teacher for support or guidance, and report to the teacher any hidden or unsolved conflicts that could potentially hinder the *collective theatre-making process*. The social art norms and the structure of the *collective theatre-making process* provide tools for youth, and empower them to resolve their own conflicts without or with little aid from their teachers.

Impediments of relationships and connections stage. Some key reasons that impede progression of the third stage to the next stage are unresolved power struggles, excessive gossiping, being unable to make friends, excessive competition that undermines relationships, break-up of relationships, unstable social network, and lack of self-management skills to deal with interpersonal or intrapersonal conflicts.

Progression of relationships and connections stage. Some key factors that advance progression at this stage are feelings of a strong connection with peers and teachers in the group and/or to characters in the play, and a development of a supportive and stable social network. In the following scene, Jesse, struggles to balance his relationships with two different social groups. Jesse sits at a cafeteria table with his new friends, Clancy, Alice, Tuesday, Alistair, and Rupert, who are considered by Jess's regular friends as social outcasts that deserve to be teased and ridiculed. Up to this point in the play, the audience has discovered that Jesse secretly has been eating lunch with his new friends in a private storage room, known as "the hole". Because of the anniversary of Rae's death, Jessie feels compelled to bring his new friends to eat lunch with him publicly in the cafeteria. Unknowingly Tyler watches them. Tyler is confused as to why Jesse is sitting with them and not with his regular

friends, such as his best friend, Wes. In this rewind scene, the audience discovers how the tragic event plays out in a different way because of Jesse's change of behaviour.

[Data] (Jesse and his new friends sit a table in a busy school cafeteria.)

CLANCY: Can we go back to the room now?

JESSE: No, this is your cafeteria as much as it is anyone else's. Now eat. (All take a bite of their lunch. Crowd from other tables look.)

ALISTAIR: This is the most awkward... lunch... ever.

(WES enters looking for JESSE. His girlfriend, AMBER, and friends, BLAKE and MARK follow.)

RUPERT: Yeah, I think that guy over there is eating my soul with his eyes. Uh, oh, he's coming over!

BLAKE: What's his problem?

TUESDAY: I don't know, he's been acting weird all day.

AMBER: This is our table.

JESSE: There's lots of room. Take a seat...

WES: What are you doing?

JESSE: We're eating lunch. (Pause.)

WES: You were supposed to help me with my homework.

JESSE: Oh man, I totally forgot.

WES: Yeah, you're been doing that a lot lately. And you hardly ever eat lunch with us anymore. Like, where have you been for the past month. And what is that thing. Since when do you play the guitar?

ALICE: For a while... He's been eating lunch with us.

BLAKE: You've been hanging out with them?

JESSE: Yeah, so.

WES: You were supposed to give me your homework.

JESSE: Maybe I can help you with the questions...

WES: No, lunch is almost over.

JESSE: (Pause. With confidence.) I don't want to give you my homework anymore.

WES: But they're going to bench me.

JESSE: I know... I'm sorry.

WES: Hey you'll all like this... They're changing the hole into a sports administration office.

CLANCY: What?

BLAKE: Yeah, it was decided yesterday.

AMBER: And they should because that room smells. Now move your drama somewhere else so I can eat.

JESSE: Amber... (CLANCY leaves quickly and upset.)

ALICE: Nice friends, Jesse. We felt really welcomed.

(ALICE, TUESDAY, ALISTAIR, and RUPERT leave. During the confusing, TYLER sits in WES' seat.)

WES: *Have fun in the hole, while you still can.*
 JESSE: *Why do you always have to be such a jerk? Do you even know what day it is today?*
 WES: *What are you talking about?*
 JESSE: *What day is it? (Pause.) What day is it?*
 WES: *I don't know.*
 JESSE: *It was a year ago today when Rae died.*
 WES: *That wasn't my fault.*
 JESSE: *It was our party, we planned it, and we just left her down in the basement... she was in a coma for weeks...*
 WES: *We didn't even know she was in the house. There were so many people there... Come on, you got to focus on the game tonight.*
 JESSE: *I don't want to play...*
 WES: *Just focus on getting into the quarterfinals.*
 JESSE: *Do you think I give a damn about the game.*
 WES: *You're just upset...*
 JESSE: *I'm going to organize a vigil for her tonight.*
 WES: *Now you're being stupid. You're playing the game. (Grabbing JESSE.)*
 JESSE: *No, I'm not. (Pulling away.)*
 WES: *(Holding him.) Yes, you are. We need you for tonight.*
 JESSE: *I'm not playing.*
 WES: *You're playing.*

(WES and JESSE begin to wrestle then fight. The cafeteria gets very rowdy and loud. MISS B enters and stops the fight with the help of KURT.)

MISS B: *Enough. Enough. Get down from there. Everyone clear the cafeteria. Clear the cafeteria, now! You two follow me.*
 WES: *We weren't fighting...*
 MISS B: *Save it for the principal. Now move it.*

(The entire cafeteria is cleared except for TYLER and ELLA. Tyler is confused and now does not know what to do.)

[Scene excerpt from the play, *Focus*, Phase IV.]

Developmental Stage #4: Self as Artist and Integration Stage

Social and emotional learning. Typically, self-awareness is the first SEL competency in which youth are “accurately assessing and showcasing one’s feelings, interests, values, strengths, and talents” (Zins, Bloodworth, Weissberg, and Walberg, 2004, p. 7). Nevertheless, while self-awareness is the first of five SEL competencies, it better fits the fourth developmental stage in the model because youth at the fourth stage tend to become more self-aware as themselves as artists. Throughout the first three stages youth have been

able to describe and express their feelings and thoughts as students, peers and friends, but at this stage, there is a transformative integration of theatre as a social art. At this stage, youth tend to express their feelings and thoughts more intentionally as artists and theatre-makers.

Youth. At the fourth stage, there is a heightened concentration on the youth's development of self as an "artist" (whether as performers, designers or technicians). There is a strong sense of self-empowerment with students at this stage, which stems from the successful integration of the first three stages: identifying with social art norms and feeling included, self-managing and developing theatre skills, and forming close connections and developing a supportive social network. At one end of the spectrum, most students at the fourth stage dabble with theatre-making and explore their identity as an artist. At the other end of the spectrum, a handful of students at this stage are committed to study, work, and live the rest of their lives as artists. Youth protect themselves from the stress of the group by honing their craft as artists. Students at this stage usually are well-admired and emulated by peers, have a deep understanding and commitment to the *collective theatre-making process*, work hard to improve their theatre craft, and present their theatre work with confidence and openness. These students are naturally talented and are selected for key roles on and off stage. They tend to be preoccupied with their development of self as artist and want opportunities to present their work to an audience—they feel it is their time to "shine". These youth are given a lot of praise and power by peers and teacher, and need support not to develop overbearing "egos". Youth at this stage are able to express complex connections between self as artists and the *collective theatre-making process*. Self-disclosure at this stage tends to be very high and often shared openly to the class group and play group. This kind of sharing and role-modeling organically stimulates meaningful self-disclosures from peers at all stages. The teacher routinely monitors students from developing misguided privileged attitudes by clarifying social art norms and restating the goals of the *collective theatre-making process*. In general, the students at this stage are often prepped by teachers to become student-leaders in the next stage. Nevertheless, the teacher's primary focus is to support youth to integrate complex theatre skills and to become more self-aware of their identity and voice as artists.

Class group. Class groups at this stage tend to be at the senior level and most evident during the intense rehearsal and performance times. While some students fully embrace the fourth stage, it is very difficult for a class to maintain this stage throughout the whole school year. When students are not involved in a play production, students tend to be more focused on their other academic courses. Therefore, the class group tends to shift in and out of the self as artist and integration stage throughout the year, depending on the number of play productions and presentation assignments. Also, at this stage, there is little distinction between the identity of the class group and the identity of the play group because both groups are intertwined heavily by the *collective theatre-making process*. In general, the teacher rarely has to “police” the class group, and the teacher and students often relate as co-artists.

Play group. The provincial learning outcomes of the senior theatre curriculum are integrated with the *collective theatre-making process*. Instead of developing skills through isolated in-class assignments, students are expected to work collaboratively as artists to integrate a complex range of theatre skills through the *collective theatre-making process*. With each collective theatre-making experience, students are better able to integrate these skills and gain a deeper understanding of the *collective theatre-making process* and self as artists. Overall, the play group shapes the *collective theatre-making process* around the strengths, abilities, and talents of the students and the class groups at different development stages. The teacher continuously reminds students at this stage to be aware of how younger students are emulating them (whether consciously or unconsciously), and therefore, they are responsible to act as ideal role models. Like the class group, the play group tends to shift into this stage during the intense periods of rehearsals, performances, and post-performance reflections.

Impediments of self as artist and integration Stage. Some key reasons that impede progression of the fourth stage to the next stage are excessive egocentrism, delusions of self-importance, struggling with the responsibilities of being a role model, being unable to integrate complex theatre skills to synthesize original art, unchecked competitiveness, and difficulties with expressing self as artist.

Progression of self as artist and integration stage. Some key factors that advance the progression at this stage are an identification of self as an artist, and successfully

integrating and showcasing complex theatre skills. Below is the last scene of the play before the finale group ensemble number. This was a challenging scene to write because the scriptwriters had to find a way to integrate and to synthesize all the ideas of the play together and to bring closure to the story in a truthful and honest manner. Writing a scene like this provokes students' artistry. In the scene before, the school counselor cleared the cafeteria because of a fight between Jesse and Wes. The cafeteria is now empty, except for two people sitting at different tables, Tyler and Ella. Ella hardly reacted to the commotion of the fight in the cafeteria and she stares, ghost-like, at her cell phone placed on the table. Tyler does not know how to respond to the previous scene of Jesse standing up to Wes and acknowledging remorse for the death of his sister. Tyler and Ella sit, lost in their own thoughts, unaware of each other's presence.

[Data] (TYLER and ELLA sit at different tables. RAE watches in the shadows.)

TYLER: (He looks at his watch.) This is not how I imagined it.

ELLA: Me neither. (The two make eye contact.)

TYLER: What?

(ELLA's cellphone rings. ELLA leans back from it, unwilling to answer. It keeps ringing. TYLER snaps out of his daze, then looks at his watch.)

TYLER: Aren't you going to get that?

ELLA: I can't.

(TYLER walks over to ELLA's table, and stands across from her. He picks up the phone, and holds it out to her, which she doesn't take.)

TYLER: Hello? Yeah, she's right here. (He holds out the phone to her.) It's your mom.

ELLA: (She takes phone and walks away.) Did the doctor call? What did he say? (Trying to calm down her mother. Tyler sits.) Mom, please don't cry. Yes, I'll meet you out front.

TYLER: Is something wrong with your mom?

ELLA: No, she's fine. It's me. (She sits.) They found a... they found a... (ELLA tries to hold herself together. They sit in silence.) They found a lump in my neck. I should go; I have to go to the hospital for more tests.

TYLER: I hate hospitals.

ELLA: What?

TYLER: I hate hospitals.

ELLA: Me, too.

TYLER: My dad goes a lot... because of the war...

ELLA: You related to the girl that was in a coma...

TYLER: I'm her brother.

ELLA: My mother and I were talking about her the other day...
TYLER: It was a year ago. She died a year ago today.
ELLA: I'm so sorry. (Pause.)
TYLER: Me too.
ELLA: Is that her jacket? I recognize it now.
TYLER: Yeah, it is. It's kind of old. She thought it made her look cool.

(TYLER laughs. ELLA laughs in response, then becomes scared.)

ELLA: I don't want to die...

(ELLA cries deeply. TYLER puts his hands on her hands.)

TYLER: (Silence.) Do you want me to come to the hospital with you?
ELLA: Yes, I'd like that.

(They make eye contact. Fade to Black.)

[Scene excerpt from the play, *Focus*, Phase IV.]

Developmental Stage #5: Leadership and Vision Stage

Social and emotional learning. The final developmental stage is based around the last SEL competency: *Responsible Decision-Making*. Students at this stage “make decisions based on consideration of ethical standards, safety concerns, appropriate social norms, respect for others, and likely consequences of various actions. [Students] apply decision-making skills to academic and social situations; contributing to the well-being of one’s school and community” (Zins, Bloodworth, Weissberg, and Walberg, 2004, p. 7).

Youth. Youth at this stage are distinct from the rest of their peers. Usually these students are talented, competent, social, insightful, organized, and/or articulate. Compared to their peers, they tend to have better insight into the social and artistic components of the *collective theatre-making process*. They view theatre as a social art, and make connections between art, self, group, audience, characters, and play themes. They understand how people, theatre, and ideas move through different and sometimes contradictory developmental stages simultaneously. Youth protect themselves from the stress of the group by facilitating the group or nurturing a vision. They tend to be gifted with the ability to visualize and express an artistic vision that encompasses a large group. Often students at this stage are developing their own unique artistic style, and often they desire to “push the envelope”. Sometimes, their

vision challenges the comfort levels of teachers and the public school system. Often in the fifth stage, youth have a strong desire to give something back to the group—they feel it is time for them to support others to “shine”. Overall, they are the natural leaders of the group, or they have strong artistic vision, both of which have a profound impact on the entire *collective theatre-making process*.

Class group. At this stage, the class group is most aligned with the play group and there is a leadership shift from acting to directing (or stage crew to stage managing, or dancing to choreographing). The class group is united intensely by a common vision. The teacher engages the class group at this stage through various leadership and directing principles and exercises. Typically, the leadership-based classes are filled with students in their final graduating year who are motivated deeply to co-create their strongest play to date. The class group develops their leadership skills by directing or working with other class groups made up of younger students at lower developmental stages. They are assigned responsibilities to be script-writers, set designers, poster designers, assistant directors, choreographers, band leaders, singing coach, and stage-managers. Youth at this stage are aware that they are serving as role models, but unlike the integration and artistic stage, the focus is less on the development of self and more on the development of the group as a community. The class group is encouraged to focus less on their own individual needs and make decisions based on what is best for the play and the group as a whole.

Play group. When the play group reaches this stage, the students and class groups at different development stages tend to surrender over to the student-leaders’ vision and leadership. At this stage of the *collective theatre-making process*, a great deal of dialoguing occurs between the teacher and student-leaders about the development of the play. Together the teacher and student-leaders create an artistic vision, delegate duties, provide and receive feedback on leadership skills, and problem-solve artistic, technical, and interpersonal challenges. The teacher nurtures the student-leaders and structures the entire theatre-making process around the strengths of the students. With increasing success, the teacher shares his/her power with more and more students, and the teacher and students relate more as co-leaders. The teacher and students work together to direct actors, provide feedback, negotiate which ideas are accepted and dropped, design sets, costumes and posters, and other such

tasks. The play group works through a wide range of voices to address various inspirations and challenges of co-creating a play. Student-leaders are sometimes in conflict between their roles as positive leaders and their individualistic ambition; sometimes they are torn between what is best for the play and group, and what is best for their personal agenda. The play group tends to describe the fifth stage as a heightened experience that occurs when the vision and the *social art development* is fully manifested both on and off-stage.

Impediments of leadership and vision stage. Some key reasons that impede progression at the final stage are lack of sensitivity of others, poor time-management or organizational skills, unable to prepare properly or complete assigned tasks, lack of clear boundaries, unresolved power struggles, not being able to withstand the stress of being a student-leader, and not being able to understand clearly or articulate an artistic vision.

Progression of leadership and vision stage. The key factors that advance progression at this stage are success with the leadership process, the expression and execution of an original artistic vision, and a sense of giving back and contributing to the community and the *collective theatre-making process*. The finale ensemble scene of the play included the entire cast (and crew). The chorus of the song was one the first pieces of text to be written at the beginning of the process, which ended up representing the vision of the entire play. Students used the chorus of the song to express the core message of the play: “*Side by side, we stand tall. One by one we, tend to fall.*” Before every show, the leaders of the play invited the entire cast and crew of 170 students plus adults to stand in a large circle, to hold hands, and to sing the theme song of the play. In these kinds of moments the leaders pass down the social art norms down to their younger peers, and celebrate the ups and downs of the *collective theatre-making process*.

[Data] (Last Scene of the Play. SINGERS enter and sing. The entire cast enters the cafeteria one by one and takes a position in the cafeteria.)

SINGERS: You tell the secrets one by one,
 the words stay in the walls.
 Your listening ears will never be done,
 until the world calls.

 You stay together all day long,
 the words fall free and loud.

*No one would say your thoughts are wrong,
but don't shout them to a crowd.*

*This room is a hole, please don't make us go.
We just want to stay here, forever alone.
This room is a hole, please don't make us go.
We just want to stay here, forever alone.*

*All harm is undone tonight,
you were here all along.
The same battle we all have to fight,
this is where we belong.*

(Chorus)

*Side by side, we stand tall. One by one we, tend to fall.
Side by side, we stand tall. One by one we, tend to fall.*

(TYLER is the last person to enter the stage. Everyone looks at TYLER. RAE and DEATH enter and watch TYLER. JESSE waves TYLER over to sit at their table. JESSE looks at WES. Pause. WES moves over to make room for TYLER. TYLER walks to table and sit. JESSE takes part of his sandwich and gives it to TYLER. They eat. The rest of the cast, in silence, return to their typical lunch activity. The cafeteria goes dim and a blue light shines from across the stage. DEATH takes RAE's hand. They walk into the light. Before exiting, RAE stops and looks back at her brother, TYLER, who is talking to JESSE at the cafeteria table. RAE looks at DEATH, who then leads her offstage. Gradual fade to black.)

(End of Play.)

[Scene excerpt from the play, *Focus*, Phase IV.]

Chapter Six Case Study

The artist does his [her] thinking in the very qualitative media he [she] works in, and the terms lie so close to the object that he [she] is producing that they merge directly into it.

John Dewey

Before describing the third and final component of the *social art effect*, this chapter reviews the four phrases of the *Compassion Project*. Below, a case study is presented to illustrate how the *social art effect* fosters positive youth and group development. As explained in chapter one, the data suggests, in no particular order, ten common *social art effects* that foster positive youth and group development:

1. improved theatre-making and/or performing skills,
2. improved teamwork skills/collaboration skills,
3. greater understanding of the creative process/theatre-making process,
4. gained more friends/stronger support system/felt less alone,
5. increased positive/constructive social interactions with peers and adults,
6. stronger sense of confidence,
7. greater ability to take artistic risks,
8. greater awareness of other people's perspectives/increased empathy for others,
9. stronger connection to school and/or theatre program, and
10. improved leadership skills.

Initially the research project aimed to interview and to track ten students involved in the *Compassion Project*; however, due to the newfound focus on the *social art effect*, the data for the ten case studies falls outside the realm of this dissertation. Nevertheless, in this chapter, a single case study is presented to illustrate how the conceptualization of the *social art effect* is derived from the data.

After the project was over, I invited a high school graduate, named Soraya (a pseudonym), to dialogue further about her social and theatre-making experiences in each of the four phases of the *Compassion Project*. As a brief overview, Soraya is an 18-year-old bilingual student (fully fluent in English and French), and a first generation Canadian with a strong Persian and Filipino heritage. Currently, she is in her second year of university on a full scholarship. Soraya is a gifted student and has won numerous scholarships and academic awards in English and theatre among other subject areas. She has strong writing, performing, and theatre-making skills, and I consider her to be both a talented artist and a brilliant

scholar. Each year, Soraya received the top theatre award due to her outstanding performance, analytical, and writing skills. I have come to know Soraya's family well through teaching her and her two brothers. When Soraya was in grade 8, her mother unexpectedly died of complications due to a post-cancer treatment. At this time I was teaching her older brother. When Soraya enrolled in my grade 9 drama class the following year, we forged a strong teacher-student relationship. Overall, I have taught Soraya in three theatre courses and directed her in six school plays. Between her grade 9 to 12 years, I watched her evolve as an artist and a natural student-leader. I was grateful when she agreed to participate in my research.

Soraya was selected for several reasons. Of over 200 students who participated in the *Compassion Project*, Soraya was only one of four students who participated fully in all four phases. Also, Soraya was chosen because during her four years in the theatre program, she clearly displayed social and theatre-making actions and interactions at all five developmental stages. Also, since Soraya was a high school graduate, this helped to reduce the power imbalance of our teacher-student and researcher-participant relationships. In addition, Soraya is a strong thinker and she was willing to share and to reflect personally and analytically upon her theatre works, art-making sessions, transcribed interviews, and written reflections. Finally, Soraya was selected because her performances resonated strongly with her peers and the theatre audience, and her theatre practice had a profound impact on the development of the *Compassion Project* and the co-creation of the two original plays.

After the *Compassion Project*, Soraya continued to dialogue and to write about her collective theatre-making experiences. She was told repeatedly that she was under no obligation to participate in this dialogue, and that she had free reign to express her own viewpoints. Also, she had complete control over which samples of her theatre work and transcribed interviews were selected for this chapter. Finally, she was told that she could stop the post-*Compassion Project* discussion at any time, and that she could change, delete, or add to any of her transcribed interviews and written reflections.

At the start of the post-*Compassion Project* dialogue, all of Soraya's transcribed text and script work were compiled onto one file, which totalled 64 pages and over 23,500 words. After all her data were reviewed and compiled, Soraya selected excerpts from the data that she felt comfortable sharing and analyzing. Also, pieces were selected to represent each of

the four phases of the *Compassion Project*. As a result, this chapter is restricted to her selected excerpts.

In the format of an extended interview, Soraya and I dialogued and reflected on her data both in person and over online communication. I ask her extended questions about the four phases of the *Compassion Project* and her social art experiences, and in turn, she answered and asked questions that she felt were relevant. Below, all texts written in *italics* and in quotation marks (“ ”) represent the excerpts and samples of the original data during the *Compassion Project* (referred to as *Project Data*). All texts written in regular font represent the extended *Post-Compassion Project* dialogues and written reflections *after* the *Compassion Project* (referred to as *post-project data*). In time, Soraya and I co-wrote our written dialogue using the *project data* and the *post-project data*. In the dialogue, snapshot moments are highlighted when Soraya entered each of the five development stages. In addition, snapshot moments are presented to illustrate the quality of dialogue I had with Soraya before, during, and after the *Compassion Project*. After repeatedly reviewing this case study chapter, Soraya made changes and additions to her *post-project data* in order to express her ideas more clearly. My dialogue with Soraya, as well as dialogue with other students not presented in my dissertation, strongly informed my conceptualization the *social art effect*.

An Extended Interview: Post-Compassion Project Reflections and Dialogue

David: First, Soraya, I want to thank you for agreeing to continue our dialogue for another year after completion of the *Compassion Project*. Why did you agree to participate in this extension interview?

Soroya: I agreed simply because I wanted to help in any way that I could. I think that this work is extremely important, and I am more than happy to be a part of it. And on a more selfish note, some part of me wanted to be able to say that I was helping to write a thesis.

David: Before we talk about the *Compassion Project*, could you please provide a general overview of your four years in the theatre program, in regards to your social and theatre-making experiences.

Soraya: I entered the [theatre] program a year late: in grade nine. For my first year of high school we only had the option of taking one elective class. I had been studying the violin for many years, and jumped at the opportunity to take music classes in school. However, for me it was never a question of whether or not I was going to take theatre. I had seen my brother flourish in the program, and I wanted to do the

same. I was just willing to wait. However, when my mother passed away very suddenly in grade 8, I began looking for new outlets, solidifying my decision to enter into the drama program the following year.

[STAGE ONE: Inclusion and Social Art Norms Stage.]

In grade 9, when I finally joined the program, even though I was well aware that one of its ultimate goals was the creation of valuable art, art-making was probably the last thing on my mind. Everything and everyone was new, and to a 14-year old this means one thing: social survival. We were all fish thrown into a new pond, and no one knew how to swim. I knew some of the students from other classes, but this was the first time that we found ourselves together in a class without desks, an implied structure or a set of expectations. At least for the first few months, I was almost entirely focused on fitting in, and establishing myself in the group.

[STAGE TWO: Self-Management and Theatre Skills Stage.]

After a few months of grade 9 had gone by, I began to feel more comfortable within the group. As soon as I would walk into class, I would automatically know my standing with the rest of my classmates. With this sense of cohesion and belonging came a certain liberation. It created the foundation that I needed to begin exploring the possibilities of my skill set. Socially, I was grounded enough that I felt I could begin taking artistic risks, and would still have a solid network to fall back on.

[STAGE THREE: Relationships and Connections Stage.]

Throughout my two junior years in the program (grades 9 and 10) the relationships I formed continued to grow and thrive. Notably, the relationships that were important to me were not just lateral peer-to-peer friendships but also the mentor/mentee relationships that emerged with those in the older grades though these relationships were not always explicit, or as overtly expressed, I am sure that I can speak for many in the program when I say that the admiration and emulation of those older than us gave us goals to attain. While saying “I want to be just like him!” sounds incredibly juvenile, the reality was that having someone to model my artistic development after was incredibly important. Without these relationships, it would have been difficult to see the end to the means.

[STAGE FOUR: Self as Artist and Integration Stage.]

By the second half of grade 10 I had grown comfortable in both the social and artistic sides of the program. I had a solid grounding emotionally, which was reflected in a certain the safety of my choices as a performer. However, I soon began to feel restless, and I was willing to take greater risks. Armed with the knowledge that I had a safety net in place to fall back on, I began seeking out more

challenges. From that point through the end of my high school career I was able to push myself to the edges of my abilities as an artist while remaining at the centre of who I was as a person and as a social being.

Grade 11 was a year in which I felt completely and utterly confident in my abilities, and much more safe in my own skin. I did not really try anything new or radical, but instead I gave my all to my performances and tried to excel as much as I could. Leading up to this point, I felt like I was testing the waters, and now I was able to dive in. Grade 11 held a few of my favourite performances. One such example of this was a staging of a ten-minute, two-person scene. For the scene, my partner, my director, and I made the choice to dedicate all that we could to our work. We spent countless hours in rehearsal, and for the first time, I understood as an artist a very simple concept that can be applied in almost every other area: the more that you put into your work, the more that you will get out of it. In that year, I learned that even though intuition and instinct are valuable, without the proper preparation, they will take you no where. Also, during the last term of grade 11, I began to be involved in the *Compassion Project*.

The summer between grades 11 and 12 at [my school] played host to the experience that was Writing Team. For me, being on the Writing Team was a bit jostling at first. For the past few years, the group had begun functioning as a well-oiled machine in the context of theatre performance. But now, being plunged into the world of writing came with its own set of difficulties. It was difficult to adjust to the new dynamic, in which different people brought their own strengths and weaknesses, but eventually things came together and we began moving forward in our brand-new writing-machine.

[STAGE FIVE: Leadership and Vision Stage.]

Finally, after all this, came my last year at [my school]. Though I still had places to go in terms of an artist, I began to notice a change in the way that I acted, specifically when in large groups containing members of the younger grades. I remembered being in their shoes and looking up to the students in the older grades. Now, I am in no way suggesting that in grade 12 I began to notice that people looked up to me, but rather that I was open to the idea, and more than willing to offer help to those who asked for it. In that last year, I would “take the temperature” of the rooms and situations and try my best to help in whatever way I could. By this point, I felt I owed so much of who I had become to the program that I felt a certain responsibility to give back, not only to it, but those who were going through it. In that sense, I felt a growing social responsibility, but I also began to feel an artistic change within myself. In stark contrast to the year before, grade 12 was a year of experimentation. The previous years had given me my skill-set and my confidence, and now it was time to branch out and try everything I felt I could. I began bringing music into my theatrical performances, and playing with different mediums, like slam poetry. In my final year, it truly felt like I had “found my voice.” Through no conscious decision, I was using bolder means to explore riskier content.[I even

chose to incorporate slam poetry into my valedictorian speech, delivered before my entire grad class, as well as their nearest and dearest.

David: Without going into the specifics of the four phases, why did you agree to participate in the *Compassion Project*?

Soraya: To be completely honest, when I first agreed to be a part of the *Compassion Project*, I had little to no idea about what it was. But the first phase meant that I was going to be spending two weekends with my friends, and doing something interesting with my teacher and that was enough to convince me. Of course, as soon as we began, I realized what it was that we were actually doing, and I was interested all the more. It offered the opportunity to better myself emotionally and artistically, and to share my experience with as many people as we could throughout the four phases.

David: Based on our two year ongoing discussions about social and theatre-making actions and interactions, which *social arts effects* had the strongest impact on you in the *Compassion Project*?

Soraya: Well, a few pop out more than others. I'd have to say that most prominent ones are better performing skills, stronger confidence, greater empathy and awareness of other people, and better leadership skills.

An improvement of one's theatre skills in a theatre program seems like a natural fit, but from what I could tell (and I don't want to toot my own horn here or anything) the level of theatrical development that was being fostered in the program at [my school] was far and away better than any other program I had come into contact with at the secondary level. Students were simply encouraged to pursue their artistic ambitions, and seeing others work at their crafts with such palpable passion helped me to find the drive and genuine interest in excelling in theatre.

The stronger sense of confidence may simply have been a result of strength in numbers. In the program, you were one of many. You were part of a group that had its own identity, and yet it encouraged you to find your niche within it. I am a naturally nervous and unsure person, and being part of the program was a reminder that everyone, myself included, had something special to offer.

An increased sense of empathy for others is a tangible result of my experience in the first phase of the *Compassion Project*. One of the most important themes that linger on from those sessions was that you never know what's going on just underneath the surface of someone's life – and that everyone has a story.

By my final year in the program, I was comfortable, and even enjoyed, being in leadership roles. I think that this might have been because I lived through four years of the program, working my way through the rungs before I tried to occupy the role of leader. And even though it took four school years for me to get to that place in the program, that experience gave me the self-confidence and the self-awareness to be able to assume leadership positions easily in other parts of my life. For example,

I worked as a supervisor in a work environment for a few years. I believe I was able to handle this position at such a young age because of the abilities the program gave me.

David: Let's talk about the four phases of the *Compassion Project* separately. First, what was your experience with the first phase of the *Compassion Project*, including your participation in the therapeutic enactments?

Soraya: Undergoing the therapeutic enactment (T.E.) was an experience I will not soon forget. It's funny how only a few hours over a couple of weekends helped me cope with events that took me years to fully process – and that I may still be processing today. But regardless of what I thought of the experience, the barebones truth is that the T.E. without a doubt played a role in shaping who I have become today, especially as an artist. At the beginning of my T.E. experience, though I was a relatively happy and stable teenager, there would be times when I would find myself in a state of disillusionment and anger. This was reflected in my personal relationships and also spilled over into my art making. For example, these are a few excerpts taken from the data that was gathered over the course of that weekend.

[Data] “[I] Lost a lot of things that I wanted. I would go to school and I would last the day and then I'd get home and cry and cry. Then I would scream cause I didn't know why the things that happened, happened... It wasn't fair that other people get to have their parents and I didn't. Some people had everything.”

[Project Data, Excerpt from Soraya's post-T.E. and circle talk session, Phase I.]

Soraya: Below is an excerpt from the art-making/sharing process of that first phase. I had written a short story called “The Lifeguard” and I thought that this particular passage, though it was not about the same subject, accurately reflected some what I was experiencing at the time:

[Data] “I could no longer tell which way was up, where the surface was, or how to get there. It felt like the water was trying to pull off my skin and freeze me from the inside out. I didn't know what to do; all I knew was that I was running out of air. Fast. The water was coming at me from every angle, and I could feel the million little feet that had been running along the bottom of the falls before pounding and pacing on my lungs. I needed to breathe. I needed air. Now.”

[Project Data, Excerpt from Soraya's written story “The Lifeguard”, Phase I.]

Soraya: Through intense work, my T.E. helped me pinpoint the source of my grief and gave me the tools I needed to cope with the aftermath of the sudden death of my mother. It also helped me to reach a place where I was comfortable talking about it. Before the T.E. saying the words themselves felt like a poison on my lips – almost as if the simple act of speaking it made it worse. But the T.E. helped me realize that I had put that on myself, and talking about, and having other acknowledging it by listening is in fact a very important tool in the grieving process.

[Data] *“And I think today is the day I am going to get over it. That is the sense of feeling I am getting in my gut. And it’s a really big thing for me and I’m really nervous and I’m so glad you guys are all here to support me.”*
[Project Data, Excerpt from Soraya’s pre-T.E. circle talk session, Phase I.]

Soraya: It should be noted that when I say “today is the day I am going to get over it” I am not referring to the event of my mother’s death. That is not something that one “gets over” in a day, or maybe even in a lifetime. What I meant was that I was going to “get over” the conflicts or tensions that my mother’s death was causing for me at that point in my life. High school is a time of many crossroads, and at that time I was faced with making the decision of what kind of education I wanted to pursue after high school. I was faced with the dichotomy of my passions and my abilities; simply put, I was deciding whether I would pursue science or arts. The pressures of my father and the absence of my mother were imperative in my decision making process. My saying that I was going to “get over it” meant that I was finally prepared to take the choice into my own hands and decide for myself.

My experience during the T.E. was not a one-on-one interaction whose effects were limited to two people, and I can only imagine the endless differences if it had been. During the T.E. there was a small number of other students present, as well as the facilitators. Those who were not participating directly in the enactment acted as a container keeping everyone together as we went down some pretty rocky roads. One question that crosses my mind when thinking about my T.E., and those involved in it, is that I wonder if I would have been more honest during it. I am not sure what this “honesty” would have looked like, and I can attest to the fact that I did not hold much back, but the truth of the matter is that when you are undergoing something so deeply personal in front of other people who are on the outside looking in, this in and of itself is a kind of performance, and when one performs it may not be a completely accurate version of themselves who is doing the performing, but rather one that is dramatized and exaggerated (to varying extents).

However, the presence of those observing was integral to how the T.E. affected me. As I hashed through my personal past with the help of the facilitators, the witnesses helped to give the words I was saying a certain affirmation. For the first time, I felt that when I talked about my past, I truly had a voice. Simply by listening, watching, and containing the T.E. it was as though the witnesses were saying “I see you, I hear you, and what you’re saying matters.” Later on, when the T.E. itself had been completed, and I returned to “real life”, I found that this feeling of being seen and heard carried over into the theatre program. After all, what is theatre if there is no one there to see it? One way or another, we are all asking the audience “Do you see me? Do you hear me? Does what I say matter to you?”

The following passage is something that was taken directly from the art-making that happened in the first phase of the *Compassion Project*. Each participant was given a large blue sheet of paper, onto which the shape of our bodies were traced. Throughout the two weekends, we were given various opportunities to scribble, draw, write, or do whatever we felt like with those sheets of paper. Since I am

complete garbage at drawing, I took to writing on my sheet. What I wrote was mostly aimless stream-of-consciousness, and does not make a lot of sense, even to me, but this particular passage is of importance, and in my opinion demonstrates a bit of my emotional journey during my T.E.

[Data] *Dear Mom,*

I miss you more than anything else in the entire world. You used to tell me everyday when you came home that you missed me, and I never understood. How could you have missed me, I was right there? I never really understood what missing was until I lost you. You used to tell me that there wasn't a day that passed when you didn't miss me. But now the positions have been switched. Everyday I think of you. Every single day. To be honest, there are parts of you I am starting to forget. It rips my heart in two to think that I cannot remember the sound of your voice. I don't remember what your hair smells like. All these little things that make up the memories of a person are slowly slipping through my fingers and out of my mind. But the one thing I vow never to forget is how much you loved me. How much you love me still. You are the one who taught me what love is, what patience is. You used to hug me like you never wanted to let me go. It would always have to be me who would pull away first. That is my greatest regret: that I pulled away. If I could go back to having you, I would hold you forever and never let you go. The days, the seasons, the lifetimes could pass us by, but I wouldn't care. The only place that I ever felt I really knew where I was, was lost in your arms. And I know I will see you again, just not yet. And until then, I just want to say thank you, and I love you. Because I know you are watching over me with a loving eye, I have learned to love myself. I no longer do things to please others, I do them for me. I feel safe knowing who I am, because I know you still love me, no matter what, from wherever you are. So, maman, there is something I should tell you. I am going to be a writer. Just like you always thought I should. So I have you to thank for this. It was you who (...) taught me how to read the strange shapes on the paper. It was you who taught me how to make the weird shapes with my pencil, and eventually how to make the words flow in a river of ink. And when I couldn't make the words make sense, you would write them down for me as I recited my thoughts to you. I want to thank you for showing me who I really am, and tell you I love you, and I miss you too. I love you, maman.

I'll meet you on the other side of the stars.

Your dokhtar

[Project Data, Excerpt from Soraya's blue body-sized reflection sheet, Phase I.]

David: Describe your ritual experience in the second phase of the *Compassion Project*.

Soraya: Though it is an exhausted cliché, the only way that I can describe the experiences I had during my 3 rituals as nothing less than life-changing. My very first experience came in grade 9. I was young, timid, and just barely beginning to let myself show

through my own skin. For the first half of the ritual (a name that in and of itself was terrifying to a younger me - the word "ritual" conjured up images of yearly sacrifices and special kool-aids), I was bewitched by the strangeness of it all. Watching the older students dancing, jumping, yelling, weeping, and drumming was as unsettling as it was fascinating. This was no doubt amplified by the fact that I idolized many of the older students, my brother included. As the ritual went on, I began to accept the process little by little. By the end of it, I was in tears myself, but I recovered easily and went about the rest of my evening normally enough. I remember seeing one student in particular, who was a year older than me, weeping inconsolably. After passing her in the hallway, though I hate to admit it, I said aloud, "Come on, it wasn't *that* bad... Someone just wants the attention." My friends chimed their agreement, and I tried to write the whole experience off - but something within my perspective had shifted. I couldn't seem to forget, or truly comprehend, how the whole thing had managed to affect all the other students, and to a smaller degree, me. I had cried, jumped, and yelled, but I didn't understand why.

A year passed, and another ritual came along. I was eager to sign up, partially to try and decipher the strange experience that I had undergone the year previous, but mostly for bragging rights as one of the few grade 10 students that had been to both rituals. The ritual began, and I don't know what had changed within me, but from the very beginning of the session, I fully let myself be enveloped in the experience. *Experience*. I can think of no word than can more accurately describe what I underwent that night. I can hardly remember the mechanics of the evening. What I did, how I moved, who I saw, these images are gone. I can, however, vividly recall the emotions I felt, and the extreme degree to which I felt them. In those two hours, I felt every single emotion I had ever felt, heightened. I did not feel happiness; I felt elation, ecstasy. I was not sad; I was morose, despairing. Joy, bitterness, compassion, anger. I could feel all of these passing through me, sometimes one by one, other times, all at once. I imagined myself becoming nothing less than a vehicle for human emotion, and by the end of the night, I felt an inexplicable sense of accomplishment. During the winding-down, I remember telling myself, "[Soraya], today you did the most basic, yet noble, thing a human can do; you felt. Remember today as the best day of your life."

Naturally, going into my third and final ritual (for the third phase of the *Compassion Project*), I had high expectations. However, by then, I should have learned *not* to have expectations for a ritual. I did not yet understand that each one is different and unique, not only as whole, but also as an individual, subjective experience. I went into it waiting to embark on the same emotional journey that I went on during the last ritual. But as the ritual started up, I couldn't help the feeling that something was missing. It finally occurred to me that we were missing a *leader*. Those strange older kids who had been dancing, jumping, yelling, weeping, and drumming were now gone. I looked around, picked up a drum, and started hammering out beats. In the moment it all seemed to fit - it was not till later that I realized I am an awful percussionist.

With the drumming, an incredible sense of control came over me, both in my mind and in the group. Though the year before I had let myself go, during this ritual, I could not. I felt as though I had to remain mentally and emotionally present, almost as if I owed it to the group. But at the same time as serving the group, I felt like I could control them with the simple movements of my hands. If I went faster, they went faster, if I slowed down, so did they. I was in control of the push and pull of the group, not only making me the commander, but also the witness to the emotional experiences of others. I felt honoured to be able to facilitate this kind of experience - as though I had worked my way up from the bottom, and was now looking out from the top.

I began as a skeptic, not knowing what to feel or who to believe; then becoming an active player, losing myself in the process, and finally, I evolved into a conscientious leader, floating above the rest of the process, guiding, facilitating, and witnessing.

David: How did the first two phases of the *Compassion Project* influence or prepare you for the theatre-making components in the last two phases?

Soraya: The first two phases of the *Compassion Project* definitely helped me with its final two phases. The biggest thing that I took away from phases one and two was that there is so much bubbling underneath the surface when it comes to people. Everyone has a story to tell, and all you have to do is listen. This came through for me in two ways. First, throughout the theatre-making process, I would use this information in my dealings with most everyone I came in contact with. I tried my best to help foster an environment in which everyone was safe and included. Second, on the theatre side, the material I ended up writing dealt with content that kept this in mind. My experience in the T.E. and the ritual dealt with the effects of one's home life on one's school life, and the subject matter of my roles in *The Flip Side* and *Focus* touched heavily on the same.

David: For the third phase of the *Compassion Project*, what were your theatre-making and performing experiences co-creating the play, *The Flip Side*? Also, describe any *social art effects* that fostered your social and theatre-making development.

Soraya: This may not necessarily qualify as a “*social art effect*” in the strictest sense of the term, but during the process, I got the feeling that something about *The Flip Side* allowed the writers/performers to explore controversial topics at a depth that the students had never touched before. [The school] productions have never really been afraid to go after the monsters in the closet, but for me, it felt like *The Flip Side* addressed a few subjects more directly than we had ever done before. Maybe it was the medium that was the key – slam poetry allowed for a much more candid conversation with the audience, and the time/word restrictions did not allow for much beating around the bush. It should be noticed that the audience noticed this as well. It was my impression that *The Flip Side* could speak to certain audience members in a way that was more focused and in-depth.

For the third phase of the *Compassion Project*, I wrote my own slam poem, *Never Been Kissed*, as shown below. The way that this piece came about is as much a mystery to me as to anyone else. The content for this poem is not one that had been bouncing around my head for a long time, waiting for an opportunity to hop out. Instead, it was a spontaneous and complete creation that took me by surprise.

There is no doubt in my mind that the first two phases of the *Compassion Project* brought me to a place where it was possible for me to express something like this. It made me aware of what was bubbling just below the surface of people's lives, including my own. It was also during these initial phases (more so the first) that I began to feel the need to express myself through rhythm and musicality. During those weekend sessions, I began experimenting (much to the other participants' chagrin) with my voice, a guitar, and the ideas of pace, rhythm, cadence, and beat. Even during the ritual in phase two, I was one of the people in the centre of the ritual, drumming out the beat.

These two events prepared me emotionally for the class when my teacher [remove my name] would tell us that theatre should be (I will take the liberty to paraphrase) "violent, original, stimulating, and everything that makes us wince." That day, for some reason, I was inspired. As soon as I got on the bus heading home, couplets and rhymes began appearing in my head, and the moment I could, I opened my laptop and started spewing out my slam poem *Never Been Kissed*. It should be noted that this poem is a work of FICTION and is in no way related to the experiences in my own life.

[Data] *Never Been Kissed*
by Soraya

A kiss
From the moment your eyes meet
To the moment your lips meet
To the moment your smiles meet
It's a kiss
And there's nothing out there like this
But I've never been kissed
And I've never felt self-conscious
Before this
But as I looked around the bloodshot party circle
I realized I was the only one who hadn't jumped that hurdle
And my friends who didn't know acted like they
Pitied me
And my friends who pitied me acted like they
Didn't know
And so I took another sip of the red-hot fire
And let it quench my fervent desire to fit in
And on my right I heard
"You've never been kissed?"

*And on my left I heard
"We're gonna have to have to fix this"
And I saw him stand up
In a room that was spinning
And walk over to me
With a face that was grinning
With the makings of a plan
He told me
"I can help you with that"
But before I could even catch his name
He took my vodka-deadened arm
And walked my clumsy feet to a bedroom
The size of a closet
The size of the skeletons it kept
Did I want this to happen?
Did I know what was happening?
And as I landed on the bed
I thought
"This can't be happening yet"
But it was
And it was all too real
And it was happening faster than I could feel
And he whispered
"Fuck me"
And I said
"Yes"
And he whispered
"Fuck me"
And we undressed
And we were all elbows and tongues
And awkward eyes and panting lungs
And I remember that it hurt
And I remember that there was blood
And it looked like a few millilitres
But it felt like a few million lives
Of all the women who've had regrets
And wished that things hadn't happened yet
Until it was all over
And he feigned sleep
Until it was all over
And I had to creep out of the room
And into my shame
And I remembered that I didn't even know his name
Did I want this to happen?
Did I know what was happening?
And so I walked my moon-lit way home
Into the safest place I've ever known*

*But everything was different
And I whispered
“I’m sorry”
To my sleeping father
And I whispered
“I’m sorry”
To my dead mother
Because she was the only one who would have seen
Did I want this to happen?
Did I know what was happening?
Because we would be forever waiting for a love that’s unattainable
But a kiss
A kiss is something that’s
Unexplainable
Uncontainable
And electric
From the moment your eyes meet
To the moment your lips meet
To the moment your smiles meet
You never know what’s happening
All you know is that it’s a kiss
And that there’s nothing out there like this
So no,
I’ve never been kissed.
Not even after this.*

[Project Data, Excerpt of Soraya’s script work, *The Flip Side*, in Phase III.]

Soraya: The writing of this piece came swift and sudden – almost as if it was another person who had taken over my hands and was forcing the words out. That afternoon I felt unexpectedly inspired to write. I didn’t know what, but I knew that I had to get something out. The reasons why I chose this specific content are still unknown to me. I have never lived any experience even remotely close to that of the fictional character, yet I somehow felt like I could relate and that I was giving a voice to those who had. I found a certain amount of truth in the idea that all emotions are physiologically identical and it is only the cognitive labels attached to them that allow us to differentiate anger from love from jealousy from sadness. On that level, I felt like I had experienced a similar shattering event [my mother’s death] that played a huge hand in my life thereafter, and could therefore relate.

At this point, I had surpassed the stage of simply wanting to excel artistically or create meaningful relationships. Rather I found myself being a leader to those around me had grown important to me. This particular piece was an excellent vehicle for that, as most could connect with it on an emotional level. There were also those who had lived a very similar experience, and who found a voice through the piece. Just as my T.E. had answered the questions “Do you see me? Do you hear me? Does what I say matter?” this piece answered three yes’s to those who had

lived it. Because of the audience’s ability (and willingness) to connect with the piece, I viewed it as wildly successful.

[Data] *“I already have some experience with co-creating collectively, and I am quite familiar with its rewards. However, this is the first time that I found myself in a leadership role. I found the leadership aspect of it extremely rewarding. It brought me a great sense of pride to watch the other performers on stage and I fed off of their success.”*

[Project Data, Excerpt from Soraya’s post-The Flip-Side reflections, Phase III.]

Soraya: Though I viewed my work in *The Flip Side* as a success, and I felt extremely rewarded in both my leadership and performance roles throughout the process, it was extraordinarily draining. I can attest to having a mild nervous breakdown at school, as I was feeling the strain in my personal and academic life.

[Data] *“I am more aware of what can be going on outside of people’s lives at school. Just like it was tough for me to participate in school after experiencing so much emotionally in performance every night, it must be even tougher for someone to really experience something and still be expected to participate in school.”*

[Project Data, Excerpt from Soraya’s post-The Flip-Side reflections, Phase III.]

Soraya: However, though there were drawbacks, this piece brought me one of my fondest memories of my high school career. At the provincial festival, after we gave a well-received performance, I was pulled aside by a student from another school who told me in confidence that this poem described in detail her exact experience. That moment allowed me to bring my abilities as an artist, and my social role in that community into harmony. And even though this piece dealt with heavy material, I consider it to be one of the highlights of my career in the program.

[Data] *“I gained a real sense of leadership and accomplishment that I believe I can apply in my academic and social life.”*

[Project Data, Excerpt from Soraya’s post-The Flip-Side reflections, Phase III.]

David: For the final phase of the *Compassion Project*, what were some of your co-writing, theatre-making, and/or performing experiences in the original play, *Focus*, and how did the fourth phase impact on you socially and/or artistically? Again, describe any *social art effects* related to this phase.

Soraya: The creation of *Focus* had an unbelievably collaborative feel to it. It was set out in the very beginning that there would be no “main characters” in the show – naturally, certain characters would have a greater impact on the narrative, but in its development, no one’s word would carry more weight than another. Within the group, this only made the group stronger as a whole. From time to time, there would be flare-ups, but they were short-lived and no one got hurt. This was in stark contrast to my impression of earlier years’ productions in which thinly-veiled power struggles were taking place.

Focus housed a blending together of three different aspects of my creative self: the actress, the writer, and the musician. Never before in the program had I felt the need to express myself through all three outlets at the same time. In fact, I never considered myself “one of the musicians” in the program – in my mind that spot had already been filled by others of greater musical prowess. However during my T.E. some of my musical abilities began to surge to the surface and I explored that art form almost as heavily as my writing and my acting. Perhaps it was the parallels between my personal story and that of the character Rae (i.e., absent parent) that drew me to revisit the art I had explored during my T.E.

The following is an excerpt from the play *Focus*. I had a hand in co-writing the following passage with a few other students. I performed the role of *Rae*, Tyler’s sister. In this pinnacle scene, Tyler finally discovers the truth about what lead up to my character’s death, and by the end of the scene he realizes his hatred towards WES and his peers is misdirected.

[Data] (The cafeteria is full. TYLER walks towards WES. At another table, CLIFF begins to play his guitar. TYLER stops and turns to listen to the music.)

TYLER: Where’d you learn that?

CLIFF: Hey. I’ve been thinking about you all day. Tyler... right?

TYLER: Where’d you learn that song?

CLIFF: Rae taught me the song.

TYLER: You knew my sister?

CLIFF: Yes, but... we should talk about this privately, maybe tonight.

TYLER: No, tell me now. (Beat.) How do you know Rae?

(Blackout except a spot on CLIFF and TYLER. Soft music is played.)

CLIFF: Well, one night, around nine, I was coming home late from my band practice, and I realized I forgot my history homework at school. As I was walking to my locker, I heard some music coming from the cafeteria. There was Rae, your sister, sitting at that table, singing.

(A soft light appears on Rae sitting on the cafeteria table playing guitar. The stage is empty except for RAE, TYLER, and CLIFF. She stops playing guitar.)

CLIFF: (To RAE) Hey. (RAE is silent. Long pause.) What are you playing?

RAE: Something gloomy. (Beat.) Just fulfilling my duty as a teenager.

CLIFF: It’s good.

RAE: No, it’s really depressing.

CLIFF: That’s okay. (Pause.) What you are doing here?

RAE: You know, as much as I hate this place, this is the only spot where I can actually make music.

CLIFF: Here?

RAE: Yeah, it’s not such bad place, once you rid of the teachers, the students, the homework, and everything else. (CLIFF laughs.)

CLIFF: I usually like to write in my room.

*RAE: Whenever I play in my house my dad goes nuts and we have these big fights...
(awkward pause.) I just can't be at home right now.*

CLIFF: So your dad doesn't like your music, either?

*RAE: No, it's not like that. He gets these massive headaches...
(RAE continues to mime talking.)*

CLIFF: (To TYLER.) Then we talked. I talked about my band, school, going to McGill, then she talked about your mom, you, your dad, Afghanistan

RAE: After he got shot, he wasn't the same anymore... it's like there is some stranger living in my house and all I want is my dad back...

CLIFF: (To TYLER.) Later, she taught this song she was working on.

(RAE plays her guitar. She sings.)

*RAE: What else don't you remember?
Did you forget her, the little girl the bigger secret
How am I supposed to keep it
Do you remember long ago holding my hand as we crossed the road
Telling me to be careful
But you were never, you were never, you were never careful
I'm still your little girl, I'm still your little girl
I'm still your little girl, I'm still your little girl
I got a broken home, I'm only ok when I'm all alone
Put on a face, pretend I've grown, Hide my scars and change my tone
And you won't need to know me, And you won't need to know me
And you won't need to know me,
Cause I'll be gone
I'm still your little girl, I'm still your little girl
I'm still your little girl, I'm still your little girl
I'm still your little girl, I'm still your little girl
Daddy, I'm still your little girl
And I'll be gone
Do you remember long ago holding my hand as we crossed the road.*

(She stops playing and sobs.)

CLIFF: (To TYLER.) We jammed until it was time to lock up the school. That's when I made a huge mistake. (To RAE.) Hey Rae, would you like to come to a party tomorrow night?

*RAE: (Smiling.) Sure, I would like that.
(The lights fade out on RAE; only TYLER and CLIFF are seen.)*

CLIFF: We agreed to meet at Wes's party, but I got there really late.

TYLER: You invited her?

CLIFF: Yes, but when I got there Wes was already calling the ambulance.

TYLER: Wes called the ambulance?

[Project Data, Excerpt from *Focus*, co-written by Soraya's group, Phase IV.]

Soraya: The line “*I’m still your little girl*” that is heavily featured in Rae’s song is not hard to mistake for events that happened in my own life. Just as Rae had to deal with the sudden loss of the father she knew, I had to deal with the sudden loss of my mother. This made it all the more challenging to not only allow myself to go to that “place” emotionally, but also to allow this fictionalized version of my own story to be shared with such a large number of people, night after night. However, in the end, the added personal risk was worth it as the audience’s reaction was yet another affirmation in the form of answers to the questions “Do you see me? Do you hear me? Does what I say matter?” Being witnessed as Rae gave such a loud voice to the events of my past (just as the T.E. did) that I found myself being more present in the here-and-now.

The biggest impact that this particular scene had on me did not happen in terms of my writing, or in terms of my performance. Instead, its biggest effect was the emotional one that came with the knowledge that my father would be watching. The scene itself deals with the absence of a father figure, and though my father was in no way absent to the same extent during my childhood, our relationship did undergo certain strains and hardships. But the knowledge that he was watching impacted me. To know that, despite our disagreements about my passions, my father was watching me do what I loved to do, made me fearless.

My experience in *Focus* reinforced to the tenth degree the connection between family lives, social functioning, and art making. Just as Rae could not function as both an artist and a member of her school community while her family was being turned upside down, I found myself facing the same barriers (albeit to a lesser degree) until I went through the lengthy process from T.E. , to *Ritual*, to *The Flip Side*, and finally to *Focus*. The whole experience came full circle, but its effects on me as an art maker and a social being, are still on-going as I expect they will be for a very long time.

The following is something that I wrote a few days after FOCUS had lowered the curtain for the last time:

[Data] “*The curtain closes. My ears and eyes are bombarded with a cacophony of sights and sounds. Laughter here, tears there and more embraces than I can count. I am lost in a sea of people but one face stands out. His eyes are red, his cheeks are tear-stained and his features are a mirror of mine. My little brother is crying but not the small sobs of everyone else. He is weeping like a little boy who has lost his way, and I think I know why. I make a beeline for him and hold him as he cries. In that moment I was able to be more of a sister to him than I have been able to most of his 15 years. He whispers to me in between sobs, "I wish mom was here". I tell him back, "I know ... I know ... but she's so proud of you. And so am I."*

[Project Data, Excerpt from Soraya’s post-*Focus* reflections in Phase IV.]

David: Thank you Soraya for participating in the *Compassion Project* and for taking the time to share and to reflect on your story and social art experiences.

Soraya: For the sake of not being redundant, or too clichéd, I will simply stick to the two words “thank you”, because they are the only ones powerful enough to describe my gratitude for my inclusion in this project. The *Compassion Project* and the Drama program, I will not hesitate to say, have changed my life. Because of them, I am a different person than I might have been. And not in miniscule, or overlookable ways, but rather in tangible, quantifiable broad strokes. So thank you.

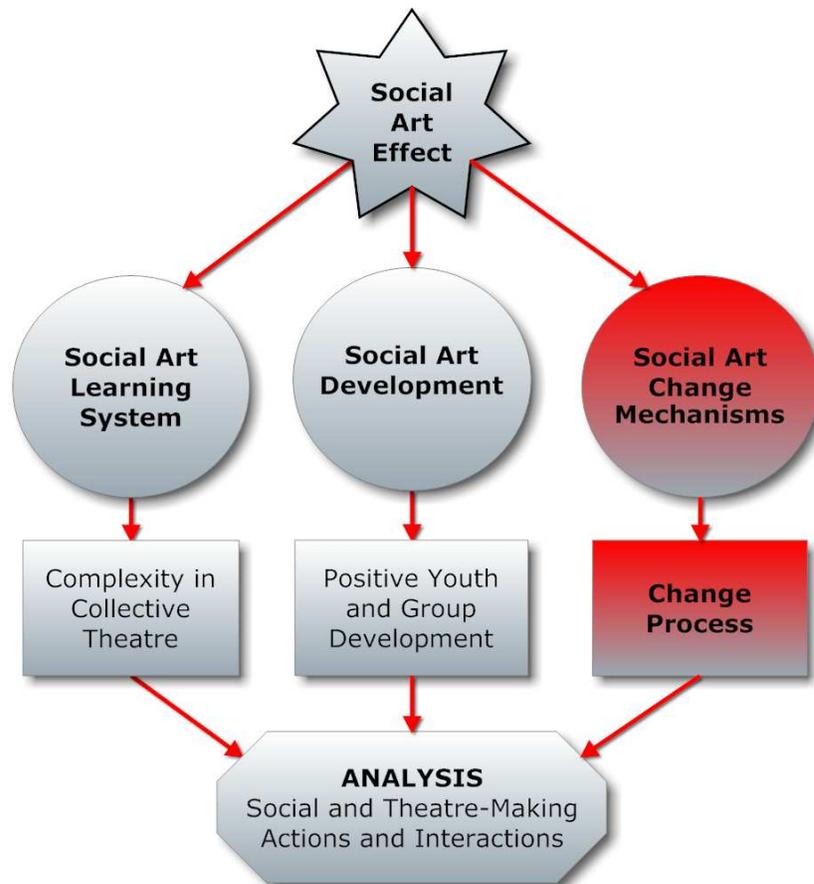
Chapter Seven
Discussion:
Social Art Change Mechanism

[Data] “The social part for me was the blend and cooperation of multiple grades together. I felt very socially active... and I felt like a true leader. The social part benefited my love and devotion to the drama program as I finally felt I stood up and socially led a group of people. The art started once people began to mesh concepts and create something that was beyond anything planned. Once the social part began to click and work, the art was created from that. I don’t feel the play was created from individuals at a computer but from the communal social energy we had shared as grade 12’s and even more so from the energy we created throughout all grades. Once the entire cast of the play established a social connection, the art was easy to follow. The social connection created comfortable conditions and undisputed support, which allowed for a breeding ground of art to rise up from the general cast. I truly believe the play was when the entire cast was all together, doing a ritual of some sort. Those were the moments I felt most creative, most social and most artistic.” Student B. K.

A/r/tography is concerned with the self-study of arts-based teaching practice. A/r/tographers are engaged in the immersion and crystallization of the art-making process, and become increasingly more aware of the emergence of new meaning and knowledge that unfold from the art-making experience. A/r/tographers examine the spaces in between art, art-making, art-makers, communities of art-makers, and other factors related to the art-making world; they aim to explore the complexity and contradictions of a given topic, to examine in-between spaces, and to view things with a fresh perspective. Irwin and Springgay (2008) state that a/r/tographers do not provide answers and proofs but rather share and illuminate understandings. A/r/tographers engage in intensive recursive and reflexive practices, “making their inquiries timely, emergent, generative and responsive to all those involved” (Irwin and Springgay, 2008, p. xxiii). In this discussion chapter, the change conditions are examined in the social and theatre-making actions and interactions that stimulate positive youth and group development

As described in previous chapters, there is a wide range of research and knowledge that illustrate pedagogical practice of theatre education and collective theatre; however, there is very little research that examines the change process of youth and groups engaged in the *collective theatre-making process*. The purpose of this chapter is to better understand how the group impacts the art-making, and how the art-making impacts the group. Overall, this chapter examines the *social art change mechanism*, which is the third and final component of the *social art effect* (See Figure 7.1).

Figure 7.1: The Third Component of the *Social Art Effect*



The *social art change mechanism* is the sum of conditions in the *collective theatre-making process* that stimulates positive youth and group development. Based on the a/r/tographical observations, practice, and data analysis of the *Compassion Project*, ten *social art change mechanisms* are identified: *In Between Theatre Project and Vision*, *Social Art Norms*, *Diverse Pathways of Social Art Interactions*, *In Between Social Interaction and Self-Disclosure*, *Imitation*, *Witnessing*, *Adaptation of Critical Moments*, *In Between Competition and Collaboration*, *Large Group Cohesiveness*, and *In Between Synergy and Amalgamation*.

The ten *social art change mechanisms* are derived mainly from the wide range of students' written responses to various research questions. Details about the data and research questions are described in chapters one and three. The computer program, *Max Qualitative Data Analysis* (MAXqda) was used to organize, categorize, and interpret the data. Based on the diverse range of student written data, 862 student responses were selected. Any data not related directly or indirectly to the social art interplay was put aside. The 862 student responses were categorized into a wide range of themes; some responses were labeled as

multiple themes. Once the data was clustered into themes, recurring patterns and repeating topics were reviewed and assimilated together. Overall, a bottom up approach was utilized to move from the specific data and observations to broader generalizations and themes. Also, a circular process of inductive reasoning was used to eliminate redundancy, to merge common ideas, to illuminate the core subject matter, and ultimately, to highlight ten *social art change mechanisms*.

Below, the ten *social art change mechanisms* are presented as separate mechanisms, but in reality, they are overlapping, highly integrated, and greater than the sum of their parts. Also, the list of ten *social art change mechanisms* is not exhaustive; they overlap heavily with the ten complex qualities explained in chapter four, and with the five developmental stages as explained in chapter five. In addition, samples of students' post-performance written reflections are presented throughout this chapter as a way to illustrate how the ten *social art change mechanisms* were derived from the data.

Social Art Change Mechanism #1: Dwelling In Between Theatre Project and Vision

[Data] "Co-creating collectively showed me that no matter how different we all are... we can all come together to make one idea come to life." Student C. D.

The first *social art change mechanism* that stimulates positive youth and group development is ***dwelling in between theatre project and vision***. With over 25 years of co-creating original scripts with youth, I have experimented with several collective theatre-making models (i.e., Gonzalez, 2006; Saldana, 2005; Tarlington and Michaels, 1995; Way, 1981). During this time, I have experimented with curriculum models that were teacher-centred, learner-centred, learning-centred, performance-centred, and production-centred. As illustrated in chapters four and five, both theatre projects were project-centred and vision-centred. For this study, a *theatre project* is a co-curricular framework that illustrates the *collective theatre-making process* used to co-create and perform an original theatre creation. A *vision* is the theatre creation yet to appear. Like planning for a large wedding, a theatre project is driven by an intensified awareness of a significant upcoming public event. Yet the theatre project is not limited to the vision of the final theatre product, but rather, the theatre project is the entire *collective theatre-making process* from start to finish: talking, sharing, writing, rehearsing, designing, staging, relating, problem-solving, performing, celebrating,

reflecting, and so on. Using a metaphor, the vision is the carrot that propels the cart, the theatre project, ahead. Alternatively, the *theatre project* is the journey, and the *vision* is the destination--the *theatre project* is the process of travelling towards a single common *vision*.

[Data] “To me the art is when I am dancing for the audience and painting them a picture.” Student M. R.

The *collective theatre-making process* consists of a wide range of social art actions and interactions in which theatre-makers work collaboratively to co-construct an original theatre creation to be shared with and performed for an audience. Throughout the *collective theatre-making process* theatre-makers experiment with a wide range of theatre elements such as a script work, character playing, improvisation, still images, songs, chants, music, musical instruments, dances, choreographies, lighting, costumes, props, movement, set, sound effects, miming, poetry, monologues, dialogues, scenes, ritual, ceremony, and so on. As explained in chapter five, the process of experimenting with the theatre elements stimulates social art actions and interactions. Whenever theatre-makers are lost or confused with the social art experience (which occurs frequently), the vision redirects theatre-makers to the end goal of the *collective theatre-making process*, which is to collaborate as a team to co-create a theatre creation. During critical moments of conflicts and disagreements, the co-curricular framework of the theatre project provides guidelines for theatre-makers to work through and overcome differences. Overall, the *collective theatre-making process* is structured by a project-centred and vision-centred curriculum that stimulates a wide range of social art actions and interactions, which is the base of all *social art change mechanisms*.

Social Art Change Mechanism #2: Social Art Norms

[Data] “Social connections are built and created through the art element of this theatre program.” Student A. S.

The second *social art change mechanism* is the accumulation of *social art norms*. In group therapy, Yalam and Leszcz (2005) explain that every group organically creates a set of unwritten norms which indicates how the group functions. In education, usually at the start of the school year the teacher establishes with the class clear rules, boundaries, and classroom procedures, such as one person speaks at a time, permission is required to leave the room,

respect for one another and the space, and so on. Overall, the success of a theatre project is heavily dependent on the establishment of social art norms. *Social art norms* are the rules, expectations, boundaries, and procedures of the social and theatre-making actions and interactions within the *collective theatre-making process*. Obviously, theatre-makers are not mindless mules pulling the cart of the theatre project or chasing the carrot of the vision; they heavily influence the social art norms, which, in turn, influence how the theatre project curriculum and the vision of the theatre creation unfold.

[Data] “The most difficult moment of the play process for me was trying to keep everyone backstage quiet.” Student P. L.

In general, social art norms vary slightly from project to project; they are a mix of standard pedagogical norms (such as respect for all), local traditional norms derived from previous theatre projects (such as all grade 12 students get the final bow), and temporary norms established by and limited to the unique culture of the current group (such as the group singing a special warm-up song before each performance). While the social art norms are not written down typically, they are discussed and negotiated throughout the entire process, which morph and become more refined over time. In a sense, the social art norms establish a common language and vocabulary for theatre-makers to communicate, interact, and co-create with one another. Rohd (1998), an American collective play-building leader, explains that with each new play creation, the group organically creates a unique language that establishes the norms and functionality of the group, and in turn, the common language becomes the glue that unites the group.

In the *collective theatre-making process*, the social art norms are passed down from year to year, but with each new group the social art norms morph and evolve in different ways. For example, at the beginning of each rehearsal one group engages in routine theatre games as a warm-up, while another group engages in regular circle talks. In other cases, one group agrees to provide open and direct constructive feedback in front of peers, while another group agrees to provide only positive comments in front of peers, and leave the constructive feedback for the teacher or for private one-on-one discussions. Throughout the process, social art norms are taught, discussed, reinforced, monitored, practiced, role-modeled, deconstructed, transformed, reconstructed, scrutinized, and celebrated. Overall, well-

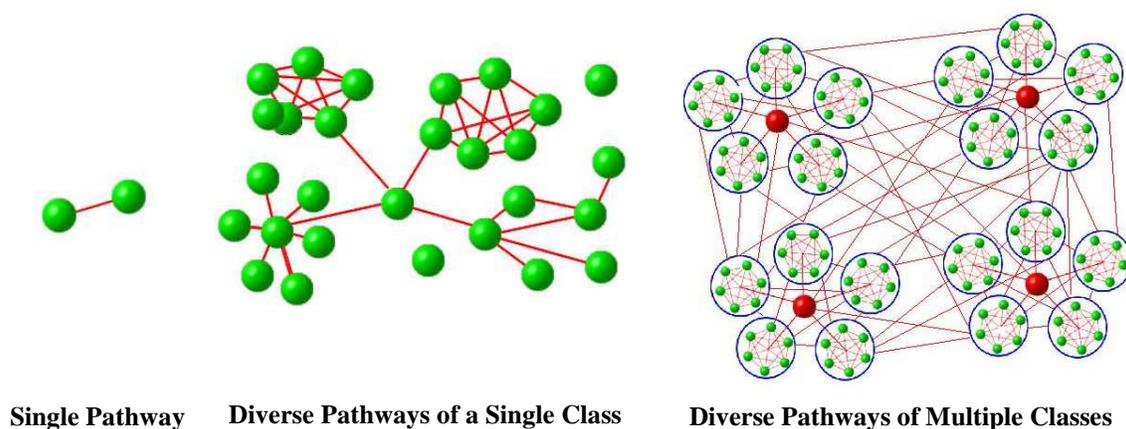
established social art norms provide safety, structure, and guidance for theatre-makers, which in turn, increase the chances of theatre-makers experimenting and taking greater risks in their social and theatre-making actions and interactions.

Social Art Change Mechanism #3: Diverse Pathways of Social Art Interactions

[Data] “This play forced people who normally wouldn’t want to be together, to work together and depend on each other.” Student W. C.

The third *social art change mechanism* is the system of ***diverse pathways of social art interactions***. Drawing from youth group counseling, Shechtman (2007) writes that “group interaction is a primary mechanism of change” (p. 203). Furthermore, she writes, “in adolescent groups we found that socializing techniques emerged as a frequent therapeutic factor, which we hardly find in adult groups. This is a reasonable finding for adolescents, who are seriously occupied with peer relationships” (p. 206). As explained in the literature review, social connections and friendship greatly influence youth development, and chapter five describes the *social art development*. Again, the *social art development* is the study of individual and group development of theatre-makers’ social and theatre-making actions and interactions. Overall, I was very curious to better understand what went on between group members, group leaders, subgroups, and the entire group, and how they interacted with one another.

Figure 7.2: Samples of Pathways



As shown in Figure 7.2, a single pathway, like a single strand of a web, is the connection between two theatre-makers united by various social art interplays. *Diverse pathways*, like the mesh of a web, are a complex array of social art interplays that construct

the *social art learning system* of a single class or multiple classes combined together. Overall, there are three levels of diverse pathways that stimulate positive youth and group development. At the first level, development stems from theatre-makers and small groups being exposed to a few isolated and independent pathways. Building upon the first level, development at the second level stems from theatre-makers and small groups being exposed to the complexity of diverse pathways of the *social art learning system*. Building upon the first two levels, development at the third level stems from theatre-makers and small groups being influenced and led by theatre-makers and student-leaders at higher developmental stages.

[Data] “I’m actually used to hanging out a lot more with other Internationals than Canadians, so the play represented something really important for me because I got to know better more Canadian students.” Student B. M.

There are various examples of diverse pathways in the *collective theatre-making process*. At the single pathway level, pairs or small groups work together in isolation and independently in class on group assignments. At the diverse pathway level, small groups from different theatre, dance, film, and technical production classes merge their art-making assignments together to co-create an original play. At the diverse pathways of different developmental stages, senior directing students direct younger students in theatre classes at lower grades. In general, students report in their written reflections that diverse pathways stimulate social and theatre-making actions and interactions, foster the formation of new connections and new friendships between theatre-makers, and help to break down the barriers of grades, gender, cliques, race, and level of abilities between theatre-makers. Based on the data, the effects of the change mechanism increased exponentially as more and more theatre-makers from various classes, grade levels, and ability levels were mixed together at different developmental stages.

Social Art Change Mechanism #4: Dwelling In Between Social Interactions and Self-Disclosure

[Data] “The reason why I turn into a blubbering ball of crying goo when we talk in the circle is because this is easily, the greatest thing I’ve ever done, and it overwhelms me.” Student R. S.

The next change mechanism is *dwelling in between social interactions and self-disclosure*. There are often boundary confusions about *social interactions* and *self-disclosure*

in the *collective theatre-making process*, so more attention is given to this particular *social art change mechanism*. *Social interactions* are the communications and actions of the group dynamics, which may or may not be related to the *collective theatre-making process*. *Self-disclosure* is the process of sharing, publicly or privately, deep and personal thoughts and feelings with one or more people, which may or may not be related to the *collective theatre-making process*. One of the key strengths of the theatre program stems from the theatre-makers' ability to support one another. The group serves as a buffer for theatre-makers to cope with day-to-day personal struggles. Sometimes the social interactions of theatre-making help students take some time away from their personal problems. Sometimes a break from the theatre-making actions provides space for students to self-disclose, which has the potential to deepen the connections between theatre-makers and the *collective theatre-making process*. Figure 7.3 summarizes the four types of social interactions and self-disclosure that are and are not related to the *collective theatre-making process*.

Figure 7.3: Social Interactions and Self-Disclosure

	SOCIAL INTERACTIONS	SELF-DISCLOSURE
RELATED TO THE COLLECTIVE THEATRE-MAKING PROCESS	<p>SOCIAL ART ALIGNMENT Social communications are related to the collective theatre-making process.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Highly structured and functional ➤ Dialogues are about the <i>collective theatre-making process</i>, such as co-creating, problems-solving, and rehearsing. ➤ Maximize opportunities in the classroom 	<p>SOCIAL ART REFLECTIVITY Personal and private thoughts, feelings and reactions about the collective theatre-making process are shared.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Highly reflective and pedagogically sound ➤ Dialogues are reactions to and reflections of the <i>collective theatre-making process</i> ➤ Over or under self-disclosure could hinder the <i>collective theatre-making process</i> ➤ Balance and contain sharing opportunities in the classroom
NOT RELATED TO THE COLLECTIVE THEATRE-MAKING PROCESS	<p>SOCIAL TALK Social communications are separate from the collective theatre-making process.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Highly unstructured and social ➤ Helps to build and maintain normalcy in the classroom ➤ Dialogues are often light and about typical "day to day" non-theatre life experiences ➤ Can be distracting ➤ Minimize opportunities in the classroom 	<p>PRIVATE SHARING Personal and private thoughts and feelings unrelated to the collective theatre-making process are shared.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Highly personal and deeply private ➤ Helps to build and maintain interpersonal relationships ➤ Some self-disclosure helps to deepen the theatre-making experience ➤ Over self-disclosure can be distracting to the <i>collective theatre-making process</i> ➤ Balance and contain sharing opportunities in the classroom ➤ If needed, refer to outside support agents

[Data] “We were sitting in the dressing room going over the scene we had written, blocked and rehearsed about a hundred times. We all knew the scene like it was our own story. Yet for some reason in that moment, a member of our group chose to open up to us. As a reclusive person, we generally heard very little about how [he or she] was feeling. But in the messy dressing room under the harsh florescent lights, he gave us a snapshot into his world. He told us of how the story we had written and would soon perform to an audience of 700, really told his own story. He talked about his parents, his struggles and how they had made him who he was. Although I had known him for 5 years, and worked closely with him for months, in that moment I felt I knew him for the first time.” Student C. Z.

Social Art Alignment is when social communications and actions in the classroom are related to the *collective theatre-making process*. This type of social art interaction is highly structured and functional. The social dialogues are about the *collective theatre-making process*, which surrounds typical theatre-making actions such as co-creating, problems-solving, and rehearsing. The theatre leaders aim to maximize social art interplays in the classroom.

Social Art Reflectivity is when personal and private thoughts, feelings and reactions about the *collective theatre-making process* are shared with selected theatre-makers, teacher, student-leaders, and/or small, class or play groups. The process of self-disclosing personal reactions to the *collective theatre-making process* is sound pedagogically because it is reflective and rooted in inquiry-based learning. Feedback from theatre-makers provides valuable information about how to adapt and improve the *collective theatre-making process*, and to address critical moments that unfold organically from the process, such as theatre-making barriers and interpersonal conflicts. In addition, self-disclosure helps to deepen interpersonal relationships and personal safety. Often when there is too little self-disclosure in the group, it is a sign that theatre-makers do not feel safe in the group, and this in turn, often leads theatre-makers to avoid taking risks and to work at a rudimentary and uninspired level. At the opposite end, over self-disclosure and too much attention focused on problems and conflicts could hinder the *collective theatre-making process*. Therefore, leaders aim to balance and to contain the amount of personal sharing about the social art experience in the classroom.

Social Talk is when social communications and actions in the classroom are unrelated to the *collective theatre-making process*. This type of communication is highly unstructured and social, and helps to build and maintain a sense of normalcy in the classroom. Some social talk helps theatre-makers and groups to ease naturally in and out of the business of theatre-

making. Usually, social talks are light in tone and are about the students' "day to day" life experiences unrelated to the collective theatre-making tasks at hand. When unchecked, social talk can be distracting and can make the *collective theatre-making process* dysfunctional. Therefore, leaders aim to minimize social talk opportunities in the classroom.

Private Sharing is when personal and private thoughts and feelings are shared and unrelated to the *collective theatre-making process*. This type of sharing is highly personal and deeply private, and helps to build and maintain deep interpersonal relationships and friendships. As described in chapter five, self-disclosure typically occurs in third to fifth stages of youth and group development. While self-disclosure is not a necessary requirement for theatre-making, some self-disclosure deepens and inspires the theatre-making experience, and propels the *collective theatre-making process* forward in new and life-fulfilling directions. As stated above, too little or too much self-disclosure hinders the group. When there is too little self-disclosure, the group works mechanically and art tends to remain at an undeveloped level. When there is too much self-disclosure in the group, theatre-makers tend to get distracted from the core purpose of the *collective theatre-making process*. If not monitored carefully, too much emphasis placed on talking about and sharing "personal drama" with one another and the group can balloon into a group crisis and fragment the cohesiveness of the group. Therefore, theatre leaders aim to balance and contain self-disclosure in the classroom as a way to unite the group and stimulate the *collective theatre-making process*. When needed, theatre leaders redirect the theatre-makers to re-focus the social interactions and self-disclosure around the *collective theatre-making process*.

[Data] At the beginning and throughout, it was hard for me to realize how much of an impact this piece had on me because the process felt so natural and I didn't feel like I was taking risks to push myself. Now though, as I reflect it's become evident that this production impacted me enormously, but it didn't feel jarring or anything because it was my decision to share things about myself and no one forced it on me. I struggled from an eating disorder when I was younger, and since recovering have never wanted to talk to people about it because I didn't want them to treat me any differently, and also I felt embarrassed about it. When we started writing our pieces, seeing how receptive and nonjudgmental of an environment it was, I knew it was the perfect opportunity for me to finally get it off my chest. Once I wrote my piece and delivered it, it felt like the final step in putting it behind me because it wasn't just with 'me' anymore, and now it literally feels like it happened to a different person. I feel lucky that I had this type of chance, because I know a lot of people never get the opportunity to let go of a struggle like that. There is definitely something to be said for strength in numbers, and recovering by expressing your problems artistically. This was unbelievable!! Student F. H.

As part of the *social art norms*, three *self-disclosure* guidelines are followed in the theatre program. First, confidentiality in the classroom cannot be guaranteed. Self-disclosure is a key goal in group therapy, which is bound by confidentiality. Yet, self-disclosure in a classroom setting has ethical implications because confidentiality in a public setting, such as a public classroom, cannot be guaranteed. While theatre-makers are asked to respect one another's privacy and to not talk about each other's stories outside the classroom, this cannot be monitored properly, especially by secondary theatre teachers who teach several classes and around 100 different students every day. Greenberg (2003) wrote that even within a carefully controlled group setting with children or youth, it is very difficult to guarantee confidentiality. This is even truer today where youth have access to a wide range of social media tools to communicate with one another, such as facebook, and electronic messaging. Therefore, theatre-makers are reminded continuously that once something is shared with the group, it becomes public knowledge. While theatre-makers are encouraged to respect each other's stories, they must take responsibility and handle the consequences of self-disclosing.

Next, while the group provides a caring support system for social interactions and self-disclosure, which can be highly therapeutic, theatre-makers are reminded that the *collective theatre-making process* is not a substitute for therapy. The primary function of the group is the social and theatre-making actions and interactions of the collective theatre-making, and to move the theatre project towards the overall artistic vision. Therefore, while theatre-makers may self-disclose to the group, it is essential that, when required, they can self-contain and "shelf" personal stories for the sake of the *collective theatre-making process*. Theatre-makers who are unable to contain their personal problems, or who are under great distress may require additional one-on-one support from staff leaders, and if needed, staff leaders may need to refer these students to external support agents such as school counselors, parents, and other social services.

A final guideline about self-disclosure is supporting theatre-makers to better understand their social limits. Theatre-makers need to watch the warning signs of spending too much time and energy self-disclosing and/or supporting peers self-disclosing difficult personal issues. Naturally, the bond of friendships grows stronger and deeper when friends share common interests with one another, as well as personal stories and feelings with one another. Ideally, the amount of self-disclosure is mutual between theatre-makers, and there is

a payoff for each person who invests in the relationship. While it is ideal for youth to turn to friends for support, it is important for youth to understand when they are in “over their heads”. Friendships become strained when the relationship is based on one person doing most of the “talking and unloading” and the other person doing most of the “listening and supporting”. Many theatre-makers, often student-leaders, feel a sense of responsibility to their relationships in the group, and sometimes ignore warning signs, such as resentful emotions or feelings of being a hostage in a relationship. The key is to notice and to correct the difficult relationship at the early stages before it becomes too strained. A strong indicator of a strained relationship is when a person feels repeatedly overwhelmed or burdened from the process of supporting another person. Students need to recognize these warning signs and turn to caring adults for support, such as a teacher, a school counselor, or a parent. Another warning sign is when the relationship or the personal issues interfere repeatedly with the *collective theatre-making process*. As a general rule for theatre-makers, “personal dramas” should not outweigh the learning process of making theatre (“make theatre, not dramas”). Overall, in addition to providing social support for one another, theatre-makers are also responsible for keeping social interactions and self-disclosure in check, and for keeping the primary focus on the *collective theatre-making process*.

Social Art Change Mechanism #5: Imitation

[Data] “One of the most positive experiences that I had during the play was during one of the dances. The moment didn't happen on stage, it happened backstage. During the dance, there was one move where they threw their hands up and threw out their hands as their arms lowered. By the Friday night, every single person was doing that motion with the dancers as we stood backstage. It was amazing to see everyone standing around waiting for their part then all of a sudden throw their hands in the air in complete unison. It just showed how well we knew the play and how we were all connected doing the same thing.” Student I. P.

The fifth *social change mechanism* is **imitation**, which draws from social learning theory and social development theory. *Social learning theory* focuses on learning that occurs within a social context (Bandura, 1986). *Imitation* is a type of social learning that derives from observing the actions of others, and then copying these actions. *Social development theory* indicates that the social interactions precede development, and concepts such as learning, consciousness, and cognition occurs at the end of socialization and social

behaviours (Vygotsky, 1978). In short, when theatre-makers engage in copycat behaviours they hook into a primal pre-conscious state of being that is very similar to a parent-infant relationship. Once bonds and relationships are formed, it is easier pedagogically for learning to follow.

In this study, development stems from theatre-makers and groups observing and imitating a diverse range of social art actions and interactions of peers and groups at different developmental stages. Bandura (1986) explains that *imitation* is the process of learning rather than the product of the reproducing actions and content. In terms of applying this concept to this study, *imitation* in the *collective theatre-making process* is connected to a four step learning process: observation, imitation, modification and internalization. First, students observe other theatre-makers engage in social art behaviours. Then, they imitate these social art behaviours. Through repetition of observations and imitations, they modify the social art behaviour around their own needs, likes, dislikes, strengths, and limitations. Through the process of observing, imitating, and modifying, theatre-makers internalize the modified social art behaviours into their identity and regular practice.

Based on the data analysis, *imitation* was found in all four phrases of the *Compassion Project*. For example, theatre-makers were engaged in a wide range of imitation-based theatre activities, such as flocking and mirroring. Mirroring is a theatre activity in which people imitate another person, which produces an effect similar to looking into a mirror. Flocking is another theatre activity in which people imitate a single leader, similar to the image of birds flying in a V formation. Other examples of imitation-based theatre activities used in the project were chanting, singing, dancing, movement, and choral speaking. Imitation-based theatre activities were used in phase two during the experimentation and repetition of movements in the viewpoints and ritual exercises. For instance, the students improvised various movements and sounds in relationship with a single desk. Once three or four movements and sounds were established, students in small groups were confined to experiment with only these established movements and sounds; they were able to modify them in terms of size, volume, tone, repetition, and others. Through the process of imitating and modifying the movements and sounds, students explored a wide range of theatre possibilities based on the theme of safe and caring schools. This exercise paved the way for the creation of *The Flip Side* in phase three.

[Data] “When the entire cast, teachers, and tech crew were all holding hands in a big circle being completely silent, that was one of the most powerful moments in my life.” Student S. E.

In general, imitation-based theatre activities require theatre-makers to move and to create sounds in unison, with experimentation and variations in theatre elements, such as pace, tempo, shape, size, and volume. Students described the imitation-based theatre activities as repetitive, routine, tedious, tiresome, primal, communal, symbiotic, ritualistic, and spiritual. Moving and sounding in unison is a low-risk activity that helps to stimulate safety and inclusion in the group (which is the first stage of development). Imitation-based theatre activities provide a safe way for theatre-makers to practice following and leading one another, to give and take, and to work together as a single cohesive unit. In addition, the experience of moving and sounding together helps theatre-makers to respond empathically with one another, and to identify, bond, and connect with the group. Through developing bonds and relationships at a pre-conscious level, imitation-based theatre activities help theatre-makers to develop trust and openness to the learning process. Overall, imitation is a core foundation of theatre-making and social development, and is highly connected to the *social art change mechanism* of witnessing.

Social Art Change Mechanism #6: Witnessing

[Data] “On Thursday night, the first night-time performance, I can recall one moment that impacted me. During my second scene on stage, I was at the end of one of my bigger lines and the crowd erupted into cheers. For the first time, I froze on stage and listened to the people hoot and howler. This was the first moment that I felt truly happy that I was a part of that scene and a part of FOCUS. After that I felt I belonged with this group of talented actors and I was finally comfortable.” Student N. G.

The next *social art change mechanism* is the process of **witnessing**. In this study, *witnessing* is the interpersonal process of a *witness* observing, attending, and providing emotional, social, and theatre-making support to theatre-makers. A *witness* may be central to the *collective theatre-making process*, such as teachers or theatre-making peers, or tangential to the process, such as an audience made up of family members, friends, school staff, and school peers. The process of *witnessing* is the flip-side of *imitating*. While the development of young people stems from the process of observing and imitating others, the development

of young people also stems from the process of being witnessed in return. Attachment theory indicates that healthy babies (and young children and adolescents) require a significant caring person, such as a parent, to witness to their everyday actions and behaviours (Watson, 2003). Witnessing is not the mechanical act of watching, but rather, a process of caring and responding to another person. Witnessing is an act of love—it is about being present and deeply seeing the core essence of another person.

Witnessing helps a child to develop an attachment to the witness. Grotstein (2007) describes Bion's container-contained relationship in which a witness (typically a significant primary caregiver, such as parent) is the container that contains the child; the witness serves as a support buffer for the child to withstand life obstacles and stressors. The concept of the container-contained relationship stems from individual and group therapy in which the therapist and the group function as witnesses for clients or individual group members. Containment is different from control. While the witness of a parent or teacher needs to be responsible for the adult-child relationship, the witness does not in fact control the child. Like gardeners providing soil, water, and sunshine to their plants, witnesses are responsible for the quality of the containment and welfare of the child's social and emotional development.

[Data] "One of the most memorable moments for me was when my two grade 10 actors (who I had directed back in Term 1) came and hugged me, with tears streaming down their faces. One of them told me that seeing me act on stage inspired them, and that I had been an inspiration to them ever since I directed them in November. This was one of the best moments of my life, because I was so proud of them and it was so moving to hear that I had had such an impact on them too. This made me realize how much the older grades have an effect on how performers younger than them perceive not just the play, but the drama program as a whole." Student F. T.

In this study, there are many examples of witnessing. For example, theatre teachers and classmates witness theatre-makers perform in class or during rehearsals. Parents at home witness their children work on their assignment or rehearse their roles. An audience of family, friends, and school peers witness the major plays. Student-directors witness younger peers as they direct them through various scene studies. *The Flip Side* play was designed so that theatre-makers served as a built-in audience; during the performance the entire group remained on stage or sat with the audience to witness the performances (as themselves or in role).

The data indicate that theatre-makers were motivated strongly to be seen, heard, and appreciated by witnesses. Grotowski (1968) states that theatre, at its most rudimentary level, only needs two people: a person to perform and a person to watch the performer. In terms of the theatre curriculum, the cheers, applauds, questions, talks, comments, and feedback from a wide range of witnesses motivated theatre-makers to engage in and improve on their theatre-making skills. Witnesses, both real and perceived, influenced how the theatre-makers interacted and produced theatre because they wanted to impress and/or emotionally impact the witnesses. Witnessing can also have a positive or negative impact on the development of theatre-makers. Since theatre is a public act, witnesses can stimulate public shame, which can limit, block, and/or shut down human development and the *collective theatre-making process*.

[Data] “It was strange to hear people voice my own thoughts.” Student K. L.

Theatre-makers tend to be most influenced by the witnessing of theatre-making peers, especially the ones that they respect and emulate. Theatre-makers provide a range of witnessing that stimulates diverse pathways of social art interplays that a teacher alone could not possibly provide as a single witness. The process of peers-witnessing-peers reinforces social art norms and challenges theatre-makers to cross social barriers, such as grades, age, gender, race, cliques, and others. In addition, peers witnessing peers serve as a barometer to indicate how the general audience will respond most likely to the performance of the theatre creation. Usually theatre-makers are motivated to witness and to provide positive and constructive feedback for one another because they are investing in making the play better and stronger. Overall, the change mechanism of positive youth and group development occur in the moments when theatre-makers observe and imitate one another, and when theatre-makers are witnessed in return.

Social Art Change Mechanism #7: Critical Moments

[Data] “The hardest time for me was the first couple of rehearsals when the play was starting to come together. I found it very hard to keep up with what was going on and I was starting to become stressed out. Once we got a good grasp of our scene, I started to see how it was fitting in with the rest of the play.” Student O. B.

The seventh *social art change mechanism* is **critical moments**. The concept of *critical moments* derives loosely from the counseling term *critical incident*, which is a sudden and unexpected event or situation that evokes strong emotional and distressing reactions and interferes with one's ability to cope or function during and after the distressing incident (Woolsey, 1986). Unlike critical incidents that are typically traumatic, *critical moments* are positive and/or negative pedagogical tension points and conflicts that organically arise from social art interplays. Critical moments can hinder or serve the *collective theatre-making process* depending on the theatre-makers' ability to adapt to them.

[Data] *"I think the biggest challenge was just the stress of re-writing and re-doing line/movements every time we performed. I got through it by just telling myself to relax, which was good because in the end it turned out AMAZING!!"* Student G. H.

The *Compassion Project* presented a wide range of opportunities for theatre-makers to adapt to critical moments that stemmed from social and theatre-making actions and interactions: new script ideas, sick actors, disputes over a design, weak audience reactions, technical roadblocks, recasting roles, unrealized character development, and others. Overall, critical moments typically ranged from theatre-making conflicts to personal, interpersonal, and social conflicts. Some students wrote in their reflections about their struggles with connecting to characters, scenes, peers, or groups. Some students wrote about their fear of appearing "silly" or "stupid" in front of the audience. Some students wrote about feeling disconnected or confused about the vision or storyline of the play. Some struggled with break-ups, while others had a difficult time coping with the long rehearsals and falling behind in school. Some struggled with not knowing how their smaller roles connected to the larger vision.

[Data] *"The moment for me that I found most memorable was the horrible, humiliating sinking feeling you get when you see everyone else around you bonding and making this great connection, while you're not. How you hear people talk about the play and the fantastic experience they had and... how people say the stresses and friendships from outside of the play are completely different and that everyone who is in the play whether they be grade 10 or 12 can be friends. But even so you still have the cliques with even more opportunities to leave you out, like running off to lunch without calling you so you're left alone at the theatre. Pretending you've got something too."* Student J. M.

Pedagogically, the stress and tension of critical moments help people to grow and learn. Csikszentmihalyi (1990) explains that an optimal amount of stress is required for

people to enter into a state of flow and to learn a new skill. In complexity in education, Davis and Sumara (2006) indicate that certain amounts of tension and uncertainty are required in a system for learning to occur. They explain that very little emerges when the learning system has too much order, stability, redundancy, or equilibrium—the lack of tension prevents new learning and growth to occur because the system is locked in by its status quo and routines. At the opposite end, they explain that learning is difficult to manage when the system has too much chaos, instability, anarchy, or disequilibrium—the opportunity for learning is limited or shut down because the system is overloaded with overwhelming possibilities. In both cases, the learner is resistant to or unable to adapt to the learning system.

[Data] “At the beginning of the project, I wasn’t very keen because it seemed like it was playing on all of my weaknesses. We had to write artistic and honest poems, use minimal physicalization and strong vocalization and it all had to be focused around safe and caring schools. I was contemplating not doing the project, but by committing to working on my weaknesses I felt I became a more well rounded performer. Artistically, I learned that taking risks is more gratifying than playing it safe.” Student R. C.

As discussed in chapter two, Larson and Brown (2007) highlight two key points in their research on the emotional development of youth involved in a secondary musical theatre program. First, ongoing negative interpersonal interactions tend to hinder the theatre production process, and second, ongoing positive interpersonal interactions tend to advance the theatre production process. They found in their study that a high number of unresolved interpersonal conflicts interfere with the theatre process. Yet, on an artistic level, Lepage (in Charest, 1995) explains that conflict and tension can serve the theatre-making process. For Lepage, sometimes tension in rehearsals often opens up and leads to exciting new performances or technical discoveries. In this case, critical moments are less viewed as mistakes, errors, mishaps, and dead-ends, and more viewed as natural and healthy components of the experimental trial and error learning process of the *collective theatre-making process*—creative missteps have the potential to evoke unexpected curiosity, inquiry, dialogue, and beautiful art.

[Data] “Writing a play like Focus meant so much to me. One person's actions can affect the outcome of an entire day and being the drama kids taking part in such a powerful message of caring, this moment left me devastated. After warm-up for our Thursday matinee, I was walking towards stage right to make my way downstairs. Suddenly, I was frozen in my footsteps as I heard "let go of him!" I looked into the alcove only to see [a student holding another student] in a head-lock, punching him in the side of the head. Teachers were

separating the boys instantly, but what I had just witnessed was already sinking in... this shocked me because [the boy] was learning about safe and caring schools AND he was a part of our main stage show, yet his actions put me in tears of fear that not even our own drama students were absorbing this important message.” Student V. M.

Overall, *critical moments* stimulate development in youth and group because they force theatre-makers to address problems and conflicts that organically unfolded in the *collective theatre-making process*. They are forced to step outside their comfort zone, and stretch their learning potential and their development as theatre-makers. Theatre-makers require support, guidelines, and creative outlets to decipher between productive and counter-productive critical moments. Some critical moments are distressing and interfere with the *collective theatre-making process*, while other critical moments are invitations for new ideas, new connections, new reflections, and new openings to be explored—out of the tension emerges new possibilities. Together, staff and theatre-makers balance ways to minimize counter-productive critical moments, and to maximize productive critical moments that stimulate new and exciting theatre-making possibilities.

Social Art Change Mechanism #8: Dwelling In Between Competition and Collaboration

[Data] “Artistically, I learned how to let others take the stage. Before this project; a bit even rehearsing, I felt resentment toward my classmates. I was jealous of the stage time they were given instead of me. Because of this process, I have learned humility. I have let my selfish needs go, and have accepted that other people need the stage too.”
Student L. D.

Another *social art change mechanism* is the spaces ***dwelling in between competition and collaboration***, which is interconnected with *critical moments*. The data indicates that *competition* could not be removed from the collaborative nature of collective theatre-making, and that the spaces in between competition and collaboration contributed immensely to the development of both critical moments and the theatre creation. Even though theatre-makers co-create a play in a collaborative environment, they also co-create a play in a ‘survival of the fittest’ environment in which only the best ideas within a given circumstance at a given time advance forward. While a large group of theatre-makers provide more collaborative opportunities (and greater opportunities for inclusion and self-expression), a large group also increases exponentially the quantity and complexity of critical moments. With a greater number of participants, more theatre-makers vie to make space for themselves within the

collective theatre-making process. Groups strive to create scenes on par with or better than the most successful scene--with success being defined as positive reactions and feedback from peers and the audience. In addition, there was the competition of stage positioning (Who is seen? Who is heard? Who is more upstage?), the competition of dialogue (Who has the most lines? Who speaks when? Who has the most interesting/funniest lines?), the competition of relationship (Who is in my group? Who is not in my group? Why should I pay attention to you?), and the competition between cast and crew (Who is noticing and valuing the crew? What has more importance—performance or production?).

Artistically, Lepage (in Dundjerovic 2007) describes competition as an essential creative component of the theatre process. Although competitions can be exclusive and lead to marginalization, competition can always be a powerful motivator. Competition helps humans to extend past their threshold, and by pushing past one's thresholds, new discoveries and achievements can be made. In a sense, theatre artists and designers compete against themselves by working together in a collaborative fashion to push their limits and co-create a new play better than their previous theatre creations. On the other hand, Anderson (2012) writes about drama education:

The challenge in teaching is in providing a learning experience through tasks that are challenging for students but also achievable. Collaborative and creative work both challenges and consolidates student learning because the students in group work have to take mutual responsibility for their learning. Teachers in a collaborative learning environment must participate in this mutual responsibility for student learning as well. Collaboration in itself is a process that teachers actively have to teach. (pp. 128-129)

Overall, students need support from teachers to explore ways to balance the competitive and collaborative aspects of the *collective theatre-making process*.

[Data] “The most difficult part of the process for me was realising that I would actually have to dance onstage alongside some of the most talented dancers at our school. Finding the confidence to get onstage and put myself on the line in front of an audience was so difficult, but it was the unconditional support from my peers that permitted me to maximize my creativity, knowing that even if I fell or forgot the steps, my community would be there to cushion that fall, or be there to remind me of my steps. The love that our program shares is very rarely found, and it was the love that helped me find confidence in myself.” Student A. W.

Below are two examples of theatre-makers working in the spaces *in between competition and collaboration*. In the first example, a grade 10 student wrote about a negative experience. Near the end of one theatre project she unexpectedly replaced an actor

who had to drop out of the play due to date conflicts with the provincial high school drama festival. Due to lack of time in the final technical rehearsal, several grade 12 student-leaders took it upon themselves to aggressively “direct” the grade 10 student in front of the entire cast. She left the final rehearsal feeling upset, embarrassed, confused, and angry. Upon individual and group discussions, students began to realize that the tension was fueled by the competitive spirit of wanting to “be better” than the other schools in the festival. In turn, the critical moment led the group as a whole to discuss and to develop new social art norms about when and how students are allowed to direct and give feedback to peers. In this case, competition drove the group to create collaboratively a powerful play that advanced to the provincial high school drama festival, and in collaboration, the group returned to its collaborative roots whenever the competition counterproductively affected the theatre-makers and the *collective theatre-making process*.

[Data] “When you take a risk, people realize how vulnerable you’re making yourself and more often than not will congratulate you instead of shooting you down.” Student D. A.

In another example, a student was dissatisfied with her slam poetry and she became very anxious that her poem was going to be cut from the play (out of about 400 student written poems only one-sixth of them were chosen for the final performance). As a result of this critical moment, she collaborated with some peers to help her rewrite the poem. This adapted slam poem ended up being so powerful that it was selected to be the last piece of *The Flip Side* because it tied the entire play together thematically. In this case, the student’s competitive drive motivated her to rewrite a poem worthy of being accepted for the theatre performance, and it was the spirit of collaboration that allowed her to achieve her goal. Without the support of her peers, most likely her poem would have been dropped, and she would have merged in with a different group (and this critical moment would have opened her to new theatre possibilities).

Overall, when competition is nested within the foundation of collaboration, the spaces in between competition and collaboration provide theatre-makers the motivation and support to adapt and transform the critical moments of the *collective theatre-making process* into fresh and surprising directions.

Social Art Change Mechanism #9: Dwelling In Between Group Cohesiveness and Power in Numbers

[Data] “We learned that it doesn’t matter what we do on stage as long as we do it together.” Student J. Q.

The ninth *social art change mechanism* is *dwelling in between group cohesiveness and power in numbers*. Whether the group is large or small, the data indicates that the strength of the *collective theatre-making process* is linked directly to the strength of cohesiveness of the group. In the field of group counseling, Shechtman (2007) writes, “an emphasis on group processes suggests that the group itself is the vehicle of change” (p. 203). Furthermore, she writes that for adolescents “group cohesiveness appears to be the major mechanism” (p. 204). As a way to explain to students the importance of group cohesiveness, I read to them a famous Greek quote:

A farmer who had a quarrelsome family called his sons and told them to lay a bunch of sticks before him. Then, after laying the sticks parallel to one another and binding them, he challenged his sons, one after one, to pick up the bundle and break it. They all tried, but in vain. Then, untying the bundle, he gave them the sticks to break one by one. This they did with the greatest ease. Then said the father, “Thus, my sons, as long as you remain united, you are a match for anything, but differ and separate, and you are undone. [quote by Aesop]

Yalom and Leszcz (2005) broadly defined *group cohesiveness* “as the result of all the forces acting on all the members such that they remain in the group, or, more simply, the attractiveness of a group for its members” (p. 55). In this study, I conceptualize the forces that act on group members as the social and theatre-making actions and interactions that motivate theatre-makers to work (or not work) together as a unified group.

In general, whether the group is small, medium, or large, theatre has the potential to foster positive youth and group development; however, a large group has unique benefits and limitations. Large groups, such as groups of 100 to 200 theatre-makers per production, increase the quantity and complexity of productive and counter-productive critical moments. Some students reported feeling lost, overwhelmed, disconnected, frustrated, confused, redundant, inconsequential, and/or insignificant in the large group. The large group sometimes intimidated the theatre-makers or failed to provide them with adequate support. Sometimes there was not enough time to address and to resolve the critical moments, and students were forced to become self-reliant and to cope with them on their own. In this case,

some of these students felt they benefitted from these struggles, even though they did not like it; other students simply quit altogether or “went through the motions”, feeling disconnected from the process. In all cases, students had an opportunity, whether in the circle talks, private one-one-one talks or on paper, to express their positive and negative experiences and to share ways to improve the process of working in a large group.

[Data] “Working with a large group in Drama is both a blessing and a curse. When there are so many students, it's easy to feel lost, or as though there's not enough stage time for an individual. However, once someone moves past the egotistical feelings of "I want to be the star," he or she can realize that the work produced from the large group as a whole is profound. The impact of [so many]people cooperating and working together to create a meaningful piece is extraordinary for both the actors and the audience. In addition, the feeling of being a part of something so full of love is amazing. I have felt no greater feeling of acceptance than I have in [School Name Omitted] Drama Program.” Student Y. G.

In spite of the limitations of working in a large group, the data indicates overwhelmingly a wide range of the benefits of large groups. The majority of the students reported a greater rate in finding more support, connections, and/or friendships in the large group, compared to working in isolation and independently in small groups. The large group provided diverse pathways for theatre-makers to work and to connect with a wide range of peers in both smaller and subgroups. While theatre-makers were not able to connect with everyone in the large group, they reported a heightened sense of interconnectivity, and a greater range of opportunities to connect with more people. For example, students described the impact of having a large quantity of theatre peers acknowledging one another outside of the theatre space, such as nodding or waving hello to one another in the hallway. Students reported that the power of having 100 to 200 peers acknowledging one another throughout the school day helped them to feel less alone and it reminded them continuously of their connection to one another, the vision, and the *collective theatre-making process*. The power of group cohesiveness was so significant to this group of theatre-makers that they co-created the play, *Focus*, based around the concept of interconnectivity, as illustrated in the following original lyrics. In addition to being the theme song of the play about safe and caring schools, it was also sung before every show in the preshow ritual in which the entire cast and crew of over 170 people stood in large circle holding hands together singing...

*[Data] Side by side, we stand tall. One by one we, tend to fall.
Side by side, we stand tall. One by one we, tend to fall.
[Scene excerpt, Original lyrics by students in Focus, Phase IV.]*

The *power in numbers* provides other benefits. Students report that a large group provides a wider support system and helps them to better cope with difficult or unexpected life obstacles or situations, compared to coping on their own without the large group support. In terms of complexity theory, a large group provides enough redundancy so that the *social art learning system* is able to progress even when individuals are absent or behave counter-productively. A large group establishes a strong identity in a school, and the power of numbers helps the group not to feel marginalized or trivialized in school. A large group provides a strong voice in the school community, which includes a greater number of parents advocating for the value of theatre and arts education in schools. A large group has years of theatre experience; instead of starting with a brand new group each year, a large group tends to include a large percentage of returning students who contain, role-model, reinforce, and pass down social art norms to beginning students. Also, a large group allows mentorship to occur between student-leaders and younger theatre-makers. A large group includes a wide range of student-leaders, and this helps to release the teacher-director from being placed at the centre of the group; the responsibilities of the *collective theatre-making process*, as well as the reinforcement of social art norms and the monitoring of social art interplays are delegated and shared with a wider number of students. This, in turn, allows opportunities for positive role-modeling and the development of student leadership.

On a practical level, a large group helps to fill the seats of the audience, which helps to make the organization fiscally responsible and sustainable. Finally, a large group helps when it is difficult to motivate students in a theatre class because a handful of students with unsupportive attitudes or counter-productive behaviours make the room unsafe for theatre-makers to experiment and to role-play. In short, a large group builds a community. The presence of a large cohesive group counteracts negativity and sets a powerful social art tone in which unkindness and ridicule are frowned upon, and risk-taking and expressiveness are valued and celebrated.

[Data] “I feel like I now have 180 brothers and sisters and can’t wait to make them all proud.” Student Q. T.

Social Art Change Mechanism #10: Dwelling In Between Synergy and Amalgamation

[Data] “The play is a perfect example of teamwork. It’s not about one person, but about how each one puts in his or her effort and it all contributes to the bigger picture.” Student H. D.

The tenth and final *social art change mechanism* is *dwelling in between synergy and amalgamation*. This change mechanism is tightly linked to the first mechanism of *in between theatre-project and vision*. If the theatre project is the co-curricular framework of the *collective theatre-making process*, and vision is the theatre creation yet to appear, then synergy and amalgamation explain how the collective theatre creations are produced. The process begins with theatre-makers working in small subgroups on smaller theatre creations, such the creation of distinct scenes, songs, or dances. The collective theatre creation is the accumulation, alignment, and interconnectivity of the diverse array of smaller theatre creations.

Overall, *synergy* and *amalgamation* are viewed as the yin and yang of theatre-making. Derived from the Greek word, *synergia*, meaning working together cooperatively, *synergy* is the effect of combining of two or more parts, which is greater than the sum of the individual parts (Oxford, 2011). *Amalgamation* is the process of combining or uniting multiple entities into one form. In both cases, synergy and amalgamation are the synthesis of creating something new. The process of synergy involves the birthing, labouring, opening up, unfolding, releasing, nurturing, rearing, and cultivating of the smaller individual theatre creations, and the process of amalgamation involves merging, pushing, pulling, shaping, joining, combining, mixing, forcing, and nudging all the smaller theatre creations into a single giant collective theatre creation. Yet, synergy and amalgamation are not separate entities; they are interconnected and greatly inform one another throughout the *collective theatre-making process*. For example, theatre-makers in subgroups are encouraged to take ownership of their smaller theatre creation; on the other hand, they also need to surrender control of the smaller theatre creation to the overall collective theatre creation. In this conceptualization, synergy is like the growth of a hybrid flower; theatre-making unfolds from the bottom up, grows, and generates from its elementary structures. Typically, the word amalgamation is associated with the corporate image of a company being taken over from the top down. However, with the *collective theatre-making process*, amalgamation is more like the current of a river—there is an ongoing gravitational pull towards the vision.

Both Charest (1995) and Dundjerovic (2007) explain that Robert Lepage, one of Canada's most successful theatre artists, based his concept of theatre on the ideas of transformation and connection. Lepage believed that theatre creation could neither be regulated nor tamed. The creative process grows naturally and organically, much like the rhizomatic nature of a/r/tography, and the co-creators follow the meandering currents of the creation. The invisible made visible nature of theatre, as described by Peter Brook (1968), cannot be forced. There is a delicate interplay between the co-creators and the creations. In Lepage's view, co-creators do not guide the creation, but rather the creation guides them. The answers to the obstacles or directions of the play are not inside the co-creators' heads, but rather, they are discovered within the creation process. Neither the director nor the actors, and not even the text, create the play; rather, the integration of all the parts gives expression to the whole.

[Data] "I felt the play was like a huge painting and we all contributed our piece to the puzzle – our own story. The individual pieces were good, but the play was (collectively) one of the more amazing things I've experienced." Student R. Y.

Based on the data, theatre-makers tend to enjoy the synergy experience because it is highly creative, relational, and personally meaningful. Theatre-makers tend to better accept and appreciate the gravitational effects of amalgamation after they experience synergy within their own smaller groups and smaller theatre creations. Yet, not all theatre-makers and subgroups experience synergy. Without synergy, the success of the amalgamation decreases because theatre-makers do not feel a sense of connection to, ownership of, and control over their smaller theatre creations. Without amalgamation, the success of synergy decreases because theatre-makers feel a lack of direction in how the wide arrays of disconnected smaller theatre creations are connected to the overall vision. Ideally, synergy occurs before amalgamation to make the theatre-making process become more meaningful and interconnected, but since the "show must go on", theatre-makers need to understand that the momentum of the amalgamation process eventually takes over whether or not the subgroups experience synergy and co-create successful smaller theatre creations.

Overall, amalgamation is not like a melting pot, but a mosaic. Amalgamation is not the process of assimilating to the status quo, but rather, an understanding of how the theatre project is greater than sum of its parts, and how its strength stems from the accumulation and

inclusion of diverse, contrasting, and colourful viewpoints, social art interplays, and smaller theatre creations. With each smaller theatre creation co-created by theatre-makers and small groups, new openings unfold, which in turn, lead to new explorations and discoveries. Eventually theatre-makers and subgroups make artistic choices and become bound to the development of their smaller theatre creation from inception to full manifestation. Most smaller theatre creations are experimental and short-lived, while others evolve to contribute to the overall vision of the play.

[Data] “THIS IS A LOVE EXPLOSION!” Student E. B.

Students report a sensation of being pulled into the *collective theatre-making process*. As the vision of the theatre project becomes more visible and clearer, the gravitational pull towards manifesting the vision gets stronger, and in turn, students feel more compelled to work together and to produce excellent theatre work. At first the *collective theatre-making process* is slow to progress, but as soon as the theatre-making structures begin to generate from its elementary structure, a huge momentum towards creating powerful art begins to form, which in turn, increases exponentially the *social art effect*. Students describe a magnetic sensation of “being pulled in” by the *collective theatre-making process*, which intensified over time. As the theatre-making parts become more visible, more polished, and more interconnected, theatre-makers report a heightened level of interactivity and interconnectivity amongst the group. Whether students feel a sense of connection, disconnection, surrendering, or resistance to the theatre creation that stems from the collective theatre making process, students describe the momentum of the amalgamation process as something greater than themselves. This welcomed or unwelcomed progress force theatre-makers to cope, adapt, and interact with a wide range of social art interplays and critical moments.

Often theatre-makers new to the *collective theatre-making process* do not understand the degree of collaboration and hard work it takes to integrate a large number of people and a complex array of theatre-making practices into a unified vision. While they do not understand the complexity of the process, students describe a gravitational pull towards the vision of the theatre creation. As the project unfolds, theatre-makers described a heightened sense of excitement--a vibration, an electrical sensation—of something meaningful unfolding in the theatre-making space. Overall, *synergy* and *amalgamation* are interconnected tightly to the

other *social art change mechanisms*; the cohesiveness of the ten *social art change mechanism* creates heightened levels of interconnectivity and interactivity, and allows the vision to unfold organically from diverse social and theatre-making actions and interactions, which in turn, stimulates the *social art effect* and fosters *positive youth and group development*.

[Data] “Socially, [the theatre project] was the most amazing experience of my life. Being on stage was great but being backstage was almost better. Spending our time hanging out in the dance studio and change room, laughing, talking, giving massages and having “dramie snuggles”. This was us becoming a family. We ate together, laughed together, even changed together. We lost our inhibitions and allowed ourselves to be comfortable. I personally loved when we all got together... and had our own speech. We talked about becoming closer to people we wouldn’t normally be friends with, about love and how drama is our family. This was the play for me. It was the best experience I’ve ever had and I am so thankful to be a part of it. Artistically, I thought the play was fabulous. The set was stunning, the dances flawless, and the singing beautiful. I’m so impressed by everyone’s hard work, it truly paid off.”
Students T. C.

Chapter Eight Summary

I regard the theatre as the greatest of all art forms, the most immediate way in which a human being can share with another the sense of what it is to be a human being.
Oscar Wilde

The overarching research question for my thesis was, “How does the *Compassion Project* foster positive youth and group development?” Figure 8.1 represents a summary of my research findings, which I explored throughout the thesis.

Figure 8.1: Summary of Research Findings

STUDENT INQUIRY	TEACHER-DIRECTOR INQUIRY
<p style="text-align: center;">Topics Explored in <i>The Flip Side and Focus</i></p> <p>Order of Most Common Script Topics</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>(found in 10 more scenes)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conflicts with Friend/Connections with friends/interpersonal relationships • Disconnection from social group or peers/feeling like an outsider • Conflict in or lack of romantic relationships/relationship abuse • Bored in classes/disengaged from learning • School pressure/Pressure to do well in school • School Bullying/School Violence • Lack of self worth/hatred towards self/self-harm • Putting on a social mask/conformity/popularity/concerns of maintaining social image <p>Order of Least Common Script Topics</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>(found in between 1 to 9 scenes)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gender role pressures • Sexual Identity/Sexual abuse/Sexual orientation • Standing up to bullying/social injustices • Want more in life/school • Mental disorders • Substance abuse • Giving up hope/failed dreams • Conflict or lack of connection with parents or family • Anarchy/Fear of complex world/fear of the unknown • Poverty/Social class • Caring/art-making to create a better world/improving school culture • Cancer/life and death matters 	<p>Social Art Effect</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. improved theatre skills 2. greater ability to take artistic risks 3. improved teamwork skills/collaboration skills 4. greater understanding of the creative process/theatre-making process 5. gained friends/stronger support system/feels less alone 6. better engagement in positive/constructive peer interactions 7. stronger sense of confidence 8. stronger connection to school 9. greater awareness of other people’s perspectives 10. improved leadership skills <p>Social Art Learning System</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Complex Theatre 2. Messy Theatre 3. Blind Theatre 4. Sly Theatre 5. Emerging Theatre 6. Adapting Theatre 7. Edge of Chaos Theatre <p>Social Art Development</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Inclusion and Social Art Norms Stage 2. Self-Management and Theatre Skills Stage 3. Relationship and Connections Stage 4. Self as Artist and Integration Stage 5. Leadership and Vision Stage. <p>Social Art Change Mechanism</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Theatre Project and Vision 2. Social Art Norms 3. Diverse Pathways 4. Social Interactions and Self-Disclosure 5. Imitation 6. Witnessing 7. Critical Moments 8. Competition and Collaboration 9. Large Group Cohesiveness 10. Synergy and Amalgamation

I began the *Compassion Project* focusing on the topic of safe and caring schools; however, over time my students' inquiry process greatly influenced and shifted my own inquiry process in new directions. Through discussions with students and review of the data, I gradually shifted my inquiry process to ask more questions about the students' social and theatre-making experiences. My ongoing dialogue with Soraya in chapter six demonstrates an example of how I engaged in discussions with students about their social art experiences. During formal and informal discussions with youth (both one-on-one and in groups), students reviewed, provided feedback, and made suggestions on my understandings of the *social art effect* and its three components. In the following sections, I highlight some of the challenges of this research, discuss the contributions of research, and provide possibilities for further research.

Challenges of Research

Student identity. While I aim to conceal the identity of my students in my writing, my students have presented and performed their fictional and semi-autobiographical scripts to the public. Even with the concealment of the students' identity in my writing, people connected to the school's theatre community may still be able to detect the identities and script works of the students. For example, the students' performances were videotaped and distributed to family, friends, and the local community. As a way to address this concern I separated the students' script texts and written reflections, and presented them in different chapters. Also, I did not select pieces that identified an individual's unique features. This is true for all students, except for Soraya. In her case, I invited Soraya to select her own data pieces in which she felt comfortable sharing. All highly sensitive pieces, especially the transcribed text from her therapeutic enactment, were kept private and confidential.

Representation of youth. One key limitation of this study is that my findings do not represent the overall school population. Since the theatre program entails long rehearsal hours, and requires participants to possess verbal, reflective, interpersonal, and self-management skills, the program does not represent students with different learning needs. For instance, participants in this study tended to have vivid imaginations and embrace theatre's abstract "as if" concept. This study would be difficult for participants that have performance anxiety and trust issues, who find difficulty in separating fantasy from reality, and who have

trouble controlling “acting out” behaviours. For some youth, the exploration of the imagination may seem insignificant or even a luxury, and may not help them practically to deal with real and immediate life crises or struggles. Consequently, staff did not recommend students for this study who were facing severe crises such as suicide attempts, death in family, extreme psychological disorders (i.e., schizophrenia), substance abuses, severe eating disorders, self-mutilation, and others self destructive behaviours. These students were referred to school counsellors or other mental health services. In addition, even though the theatre program is built on a philosophy of inclusion, the large group and the social art norms of theatre excellence could make it challenging (and intimidating) for certain students to enter, remain, and/or find a voice in the theatre program.

Originally I aimed to reach “at-risk” marginalized youth outside the theatre community; however, as explained in chapters one and three, the project mainly involved students within the theatre program. Therefore my understanding of positive youth and group development is not representative of the overall secondary student population. It is limited to youth who were drawn and open to the collective theatre-making experience at my particular school. In general, my study did not reach youth who prefer to work alone or privately, and who do not want to share, perform, or disclose real, fictional, or semi-autobiographical stories. Based on the number of theatre participants in the *Compassion Project*, my conceptualization of the *social art effect* represents an estimated 20 to 25 per cent of the school’s population.

Scope of study. One could argue that this dissertation could have been narrowed down to one phase, primarily phase three or four; however, I was drawn towards this study because I wanted to examine the complexity and interconnectivity of various theatre practices, and to examine the interrelationships between theatre, education, and psychology. Consequently, due to the complexity of this qualitative study, it would prove difficult to replicate this research. Since the theatre program is an ever-changing adaptive living system, a different researcher investigating this same project would most likely arrive at different understandings and conceptualizations. Therefore, this study does not aim to provide quantitative or definitive findings, but rather to illuminate my inquiries, practices, and new understandings as a reflective secondary theatre teacher.

Contributions of Research

[Data] “As the curtains closed Saturday night, everybody broke out with cheer and tears. I really didn’t understand why a lot of people were crying but as I looked around and the tears of joy, sadness and multiple hugs were flying around I really felt a part of me was being torn apart. I had become so close to everybody and I felt as if I had a place where I belonged. A second family I guess you could call it. The grade 12s were leaving this family as all the younger grades moving up in their position. The more I thought about it, the harder I cried. I may not have the best school life or life at home, but here I felt safe. Everybody in FOCUS really appreciated what our drama program has, especially me...”

[Student B. K., Post-Focus Reflection, Phase IV.]

Giving voice to youth. Taylor (2006) challenges qualitative theatre education researchers to resist producing one grand narrative crafted by the researcher, and to embrace research with multiple interpretations and multiple-text approaches. As shown in the student’s quote above, I attempt to balance my voice as the teacher/director/researcher, and the students’ voices as the theatre-makers. I present the students’ voices by showcasing their theatre script work, and their verbal and written reflections. Overall, my understanding of the *social art effect* derives heavily from the actions and interactions of students and myself as the teacher-director.

This research is unique in that it collects data by giving voice to youth through the process of theatre-making. The *Compassion Project* encompassed multi-textual approaches, and students were able to express themselves in diverse ways. Since the process was more “theme” driven and less “star” driven, the theatre experiences widened the scope for multiple perspectives about safe and caring schools to be voiced and heard. Overall, the *Compassion Project* provided opportunities for over 200 students to tell their real, fictional, and semi-autobiographical stories in a diverse range of private and public ways, such as theatre-making, scriptwriting, performing, therapeutic enactments, rituals, slam poetry, interviews, focus group discussions, and reflective writing.

In total, the students presented seven performances of *The Flip Side* and five performances of *Focus* to over 3000 community members. Also, *The Flip Side* was selected in the regional festival to advance to the May 2010 Sears BC Provincial High School Drama Festival. Overall, this play collected five awards, including Outstanding Regional Production and Outstanding Ensemble.

Developing new plays. In addition to the contribution of two new plays, *The Flip Side* and *Focus*, the *Compassion Project* also stimulated the creation of additional plays outside the school system. Chris Gatchalian, a local playwright, as a visiting guest artist in phase one, and he was very inspired by one of the therapeutic enactments of a particular student. With permission, he scripted his own fictional play, *People Like Vince*, about a pre-teen coping with a family member struggling with bi-polar disorder.⁷ While Chris's play stands independently from the *Compassion Project*, his playwriting practice served as a model for students in phase one to create their own art, to experience firsthand the evolution of the creative process, and to better understand how the power of theatre and imagination bridge human stories to the outside "real" world.

In addition, after years of being insulated within the safety net of the secondary and university school systems, my research in the *Compassion Project* led me to extend my practice and to share my new knowledge to the local Vancouver theatre community. Recently, a queer theatre company, *Screaming Weenie*, hired me as the project facilitator for a six-month theatre-making project, *All the World's a Stage*. As the project facilitator, I support seven emerging and non-professional theatre artists from diverse backgrounds to develop and produce their own play about cultural, queer/sexual, and Canadian identities.⁸ The new play will have a three-night run in March 2012 in the *Recital Hall* at the *Vancouver Playhouse Theatre*.

Contribution to a/r/tography. I selected a/r/tography as my methodology because it allowed me to pay attention to the unfolding meanings and connections that are derived from various art-making and reflective teaching practices. A/r/tography, as an arts education inquiry-based methodology, has much to offer the field of secondary theatre education and theatre teacher education. For the past three years, I integrated a/r/tography into my theatre education practice to support both high school students and teacher candidates at UBC to better understand how to reflect on their theatre-making and theatre teaching practices.

⁷ Chris Gatchalian's play, *People Like Vince*, was commissioned, work-shopped, and produced by Vancouver's *Green Thumb Theatre*. His play is scheduled to tour in B.C. schools for the 2011-2012 season.

⁸ The *All the World's a Stage Project* is a joint BC provincial and City of Vancouver funded project. The project involves a mentorship program for participants to be mentored by local professional theatre artists. In addition, I facilitate the group in a collective theatre-making process about their experiences and cross-cultural understandings of six overlapping concepts: culture, queer, Canadian, English, transition, and place.

The addition of a new theatre-based rendering, the *fourth wall* and its five theatre dimensions, expands the field of a/r/tography. The *fourth wall* serves as a theoretical lens for drama/theatre leaders and participants conceptually to organize how to reflect on their theatre teaching, learning, theatre-making, and reflecting practices. Through this work, I have shared my research and understandings with educators, researchers, students (university and high school), and the general public at conferences, teachings, and workshops. In turn, this has stimulated dialogue, awareness, feedback, and knowledge about the *social art effect* and *theatre for positive youth and group development*.

Further Research

More research needs to be conducted to better assess if the *social art effect* applies only to theatre students or to the entire school population. Also, can the *social art effect* be applied to other theatre students in other schools and elementary grades? How does the *social art effect* apply to theatre students in different types of theatre programs? How does the *social art effect* apply to students in other academic programs, such as physical education, science, and applied technology? How can the *social art effect* be utilized or adapted to reach and support non-theatre and/or “at-risk” students? How can the conceptualization of the *social art effect* be utilized to develop a theatre/education/psychology-based human wellness program in the school or counseling system for youth?

School and home connections. One unexpected outcome of the *Compassion Project* was that even though I encouraged students to explore safe and caring schools (and conflicts at schools), students often ended up exploring core relationships with significant family members at home. This particular exploration in the inquiry process greatly influenced the development of the two co-created plays in phases three and four. For example, in the script, *Focus*, Tyler’s school conflict was interconnected heavily with his unresolved family issues at home. In the play, *The Flip Side*, nearly half of the slam poems about safe and caring schools were directly or indirectly connected to family matters.

Upon tracking and dialoguing with the TE students in phase one who were also involved in the others phases of the *Compassion Project*, I noticed that when they addressed and resolved some of their family issues, they seemed better able to address and to resolve school issues. As students dialogued, wrote, and role-played stories about school and home

connections, they seemed better able to address their conflicts at school. Further research on the school and home connection is required to foster positive youth and group development more effectively in schools.

Final Remarks

Overall, my research journey on the *Compassion Project* was relational, evolutionary, unpredictable, always in flux, and led to the exploration of an unexpected phenomena—the *social art effect*. As a secondary teacher-director, I am often occupied with facilitating multiple theatre projects and hundreds of students simultaneously, and as a result, I tend to work instinctually, with little time for reflection. *A/r/tography* invited me to pause, reflect, and dwell deeply in the in-between spaces of my researching, teaching, and collective theatre-making practices. Through my writing, I examined the complex social and theatre-making actions and interactions of teacher/director, learners/theatre-makers, classrooms/stages, curriculum/plays, and learning/change. Also, by rooting my work in the enhancement position, I was able to examine the change process.

In addition, *a/r/tography* provided me with the theoretical framework to conceptualize my theatre teaching practice through the rendering of the *fourth wall*. I conceptualize the *fourth wall* as in-between spaces for the engagement of students, teacher-director, players, theatre-makers, audience, and researchers united by the imaginary world of the play and the real life experiences of inquirers. One aim of my writing was to present my students and myself as *a/r/tographers*, where together we participated on both sides of the *fourth wall* as players and audience of the *collective theatre-making process*. My findings on the *social art effect* are not conclusive or exhaustive, and neither do I claim that students' experiences in the *Compassion Project* were strictly positive or life-changing. The data indicates a wide range of positive, negative, rewarding, challenging, indifferent, and transformative human experiences.

In closing, I strongly believe teachers are social agents of youth development and change. As Canadian schools become more diverse in social media, it is imperative for researchers to continue to seek ways to meet our youth's ever-changing developmental needs within our complex world. In my writing, I emphasize the importance of integrating social learning and/or social development theories into the curriculum, and I explain that social

conditions precede learning conditions. We can become better educators by integrating social-based concepts into our pedagogy as a means to promote better learning experiences, to nurture healthy development in youth, to empower youth to work together in peaceful and constructive ways, and to foster safer and more caring schools. In my theatre program, I believe by building a play, we build a healthy community, and ideally, a more compassionate world.

I end my dissertation with the final scene of the play, *The Flip Side*. As a closing slam poem, this student responds to a discouraged student who, earlier in the play, expressed a slam poem to her teacher where she is not merely sitting at a desk, but rather waiting for the flip side of school--the social side of learning in schools (for more details, see the last poem in chapter four, "I'm Not Sitting at a Desk"). Near the end of the play, which is the transformative moment, the straight rows of 24 desks are re-arranged and bunched together as a unified whole to form the shape of a stage. This stage of desks serves as a platform to give voice to students to speak out--loudly--about safe and caring schools.

[Data] SCENE: I'm Not Standing On a Desk

(All 107 characters that have finished their slam poems are positioned throughout the entire stage. The last and final student stands up on the stage of desks. All look at her.)

*K.M.: I'm not standing on a desk.
I'm standing on a midday daydream notebook.
Where we scrawl our homework
our grocery lists
our suicide notes
and our love letters.
I'm not standing on a desk,
I'm swimming in a sea of them!
Forgetting what's real then waking up and being...
Math class.
I'm not standing on a desk.
I'm dreaming
I'm wishing
I'm seeing
I'm kissing
On a four legged stage.
They say the pen is mightier than the sword
but nothing else strikes a chord
like sitting at a desk and finding the perfect word.
If all the world's a stage and all the men and women merely players,*

*then some of the greatest plays have been written right here.
I'm not standing on a desk
I'm standing on words
I'm standing on rhythm
I'm standing on reality
I'm standing on the past
I'm standing on a test and I haven't studied
I'm standing on a full bladder and the teacher won't let me go
I'm standing on- Oh my god, formal is next week.
And how can I stand on algebra when my heart has just been broken!
I'm standing on the end of all firsts
I'm standing on the curse of being young
I'm standing on creation.
So I'm telling you
I'm not...*

(Silence. All look out to the audience.)

(Fade to Black.)

END OF PLAY.

[Scene excerpt from the play, *The Flip Side*, Phase III.]

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Appendix A

The *Compassion Project* Invitation Letter

Making a Difference in School

“Be the change you wish to see in the world...” – Gandhi

February 5, 2009

Summary

The Compassion Project is a voluntary extra-curricular theatre-based social and emotional literacy program where students from diverse backgrounds explore stories about their barriers, hopes, and dreams in school. The overall aim of *The Compassion Project* is to foster social and emotional literacy at school through the process of storytelling, role-playing, and art-making. *The Compassion Project* is divided up in three phases: I. Small group work, II. Challenge Day, and III. Presentation to [school name omitted] Peers and Family of Schools. Ten students will participate in Phase I-III, and other students who wish to participate will participate in Phase II-III.

In Phase I, ten students are selected to meet as a group to develop social and emotional literacy and to create original art (visual art, dance, poetry, scripts, poems, music, songs, theatre, or others). While this project is arts-driven, no artistic ability is required.

In Phase II, students organize and lead Challenge Day. Challenge Day involves students to invite three peers, one family member, and one staff to participate in a full day social and emotional literacy program. Together, students, staff, and families are challenged to break down barriers that separate people and to share emotions and personal stories with one another. During Challenge Day everyone is “challenged” to explore practical ways to improve the social and emotional literacy of their school, where *every child lives in a world where they feel safe, loved, and celebrated*. Challenge Day has been tentatively scheduled for Saturday, September 26, 2009.

In Phase III, students organize and create a theatre-oriented presentation to promote social and emotional literacy to their peers at [school name omitted] (e.g., grade assembly, planning 10 classes), and to their family of schools (e.g., grade 7 to 8 transition). At this point, the original ten students in *The Compassion Project* will include additional students from Challenge Day and others. Depending on the needs of the group, theatre students may be included to participate with the presentation component of the project.

Some benefits for students to participate in *The Compassion Project* are:

- ★ 40 hours of **free** group counseling (arts-based social & emotional literacy program)
- ★ Art-making mentorship (with Chris Gatchalian, Canadian author, with Green Thumb Theatre)
- ★ Opportunity to “be the change” they want to see in the world (specifically at their school)
- ★ Independent study credits (100 hours could equal 4 credits for graduation)
- ★ Development of social and emotional literacy

Enzula Tavormina, [school district name omitted] elementary teacher-counsellor, will serve as the primary leader of *The Compassion Project*. David Beare, [School Name Omitted] theatre teacher, will be conducting some UBC research on this project. Both David and Enzula have a M.A. in counseling psychology at UBC, and they have a background in drama therapy and theatre, which will be integrated into this theatre-oriented social and emotional literacy program. Dr. George Belliveau will serve as David’s UBC research supervisor.

**Appendix A
(Continued)**

Phase One TimeLine

WEEKEND RETREAT #1

Thursday, April 23 4:30-9:30 (5 Hours)
Friday, April 24 9:00-5:00 (7 Hours + 1 Hour Lunch)
Saturday, April 25 9:00-5:00 (7 Hours + 1 Hour Lunch)

WEEKEND RETREAT #2

Friday, May 1 4:30-9:30 (5 Hours)
Saturday, May 2 9:00-6:00 (8 Hours + 1 Hour Lunch)
Sunday, May 3 10:00-2:00 (4 Hours)

3 Week Post Meeting

Monday, May 25 3:15-5:45 (2 ½ Hours)

**Appendix A
(Continued)**

<p>PRE-PROJECT PHASE <i>(Group Selection)</i> Jan 2009</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ★ Dissertation proposal ★ Ethics review ★ Selection process of ten students ★ Parent Consent Form & Students Assent Form completed ★ Interview #1 ★ BC Safe Schools Survey #1 ★ Developmental Assets Survey #1
<p>PHASE I <i>(Process Group)</i> Feb to May 2009</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ★ Group Process (theatre-based social and emotional literacy program, aspects of forum theatre & drama therapy) ★ Group meets regularly once a week, plus two weekend retreats and a small presentation/performance ★ Development of social and emotional literacy (Bracket & Curuso, 2007; Maurer, Brackett, & Plain, 2004) ★ Personal sharing, story-telling, creating theatre-based art of barriers, hopes, and dreams in school ★ Small presentation of students' stories, learning, and art with family, friends, staff, and peers. ★ Interview #2
<p>PHASE II <i>(Challenge Day)</i> June to September 2009</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ★ Summer Retreat (one or two days; dates decided by group) ★ Meetings in September (dates decided by group) ★ Group plans Challenge Day ★ Challenge Day: Sat., Sept. 26, 2009 10 am-4 pm (& Fri, Sept 25) ★ Each person invites 1 family, 3 peers & 1 staff ★ Students facilitate games and activities to promote social and emotional literacy in school ★ Presentation of students' creative work(s) of art ★ Interview #3
<p>PHASE III <i>(School Project)</i> October to December 2009</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ★ School Project (decided on Challenge Day) ★ Weekly meetings (dates decided by group) ★ Presentation of students' theatre-oriented art to school, elementary feeder schools, UBC, etc. ★ Interview #4 ★ BC Safe Schools Survey #2 ★ Developmental Assets Survey #2
<p>POST-PROJECT PHASE <i>(Reflection)</i> January to August 2010</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ★ Transcribe data ★ Analyze data ★ Students verify findings ★ Write dissertation ★ Dissertation defense (including a live theatre presentation or video with students)

Appendix B

Five Person-Centred Key SEL Competencies

As shown below, Zins, et al. (2004) illustrated a framework of five person-centred key SEL competencies:

- 1. Self-awareness**—accurately assessing one’s feelings, interests, values, and strengths; maintaining a well-grounded sense of self-confidence
- 2. Self-management**—regulating one’s emotions to handle stress, control impulses, and persevere in overcoming obstacles; setting and monitoring progress toward personal and academic goals; expressing emotions appropriately
- 3. Social awareness**—being able to take the perspective of and empathize with others; recognizing and appreciating individual and group similarities and differences; recognizing and using family, school, and community resources
- 4. Relationship skills**—establishing and maintaining healthy and rewarding relationships based on cooperation; resisting inappropriate social pressure; preventing, managing, and resolving interpersonal conflict; seeking help when needed
- 5. Responsible decision-making**—making decisions based on consideration of ethical standards, safety concerns, appropriate social norms, respect for others, and likely consequences of various actions; applying decision-making skills to academic and social situations; contributing to the well-being of one’s school and community. (p. 7)

Appendix C

Summary of SEL Research

Overall, Walberg and colleagues (2004) summarized the leading research on SEL in their book, *Building Academic Success on Social and Emotional Learning: What Does the Research Say?* They wrote that the most current research on SEL indicate a consistent message:

- Safe, caring, and orderly environments are conducive to learning.
- Caring relations between teachers and students foster a desire to learn and a connection to school.
- Socially engaging teaching strategies, such as cooperative learning and proactive classroom management, focus students on learning tasks.
- When teachers and families work together to encourage and reinforce learning communities, engagement, and positive behaviour, students do better.
- When peer norms support academic performance, students try harder.
- When the instructional content is made more interesting by applying SEL to reflecting on the content, students are more engaged.
- When students are self-aware and more confident about their learning abilities, they try harder.
- When students can self-manage their stress and motivations, and set goals and organize themselves, they do better.
- Students who are aware of the tasks being assigned, make responsible decisions about completing them, and use problem-solving and relationship-management skills to overcome barriers, they perform better and learn more.
- When SEL prevents high-risk behaviours such as drug use and anti-social behaviour, these behaviours do not interfere with learning or co-occur with a constellation of other problem behaviours that reduce effective functioning. (p. 210)

Appendix D

Drama and SEL Links British Columbia Ministry of Education Drama K-7 Curriculum

Below are some drama outcomes linked to Social and Emotional Learning outcomes located in the British Columbia Ministry of Education, Integrated Resource Packages, Art Education, Drama K-7 (2010).

It is expected that students will:

Grade K to 1

- demonstrate a willingness to express their feelings and ideas
- demonstrate a willingness to work co-operatively

Grade 2 to 3

- describe their feelings and ideas to be used in a dramatic work
- demonstrate respect for the contributions of others

Grade 4, 5 & 6

- select feelings and ideas expressed in the group to use in dramatic work
- express ideas and emotions using verbal and non-verbal communication
- use images and emotions expressed in various art forms to develop dramatic work
- use drama structures to develop stories that present problems and their possible solutions

Grade 7

- select a means of communication to express ideas and emotions in dramatic work
- demonstrate leadership and responsibility within the group
- demonstrate respect for the perspectives of self and others

Appendix E
Drama and SEL Links
British Columbia Ministry of Education Drama 8-10 Curriculum

Below are some drama outcomes linked to Social and Emotional Learning outcomes located in the British Columbia Ministry of Education, Integrated Resource Packages, Art Education, Drama 8-10 (1996).

It is expected that students will:

Grade 8

- demonstrate trust through collaborative drama
- demonstrate the unique ability of drama to unify a diverse group
- demonstrate an appreciation for the diversity of others and their various perspectives
- make choices among a variety of ways to express thoughts, feelings, and beliefs
- suggest and try a variety of appropriate solutions to a given problem
- make and act on reasoned and thoughtful decisions
- reflect on and express their experiences both in and out of role
- reflect the cultural variety of their communities in their dramatic work
- identify and examine relationships between real-life experiences and dramatic presentations

Grade 9

- demonstrate trust in others through class activities and individual and ensemble performances
- demonstrate the unique ability of drama to unify a diverse group
- restate the thoughts, feelings, and beliefs of others
- choose appropriate ways to express thoughts, feelings, and beliefs
- use a variety of strategies to make choices in problem solving
- accept responsibility for decisions and solutions
- reflect on and clearly express experiences both in and out of role
- reflect the cultural variety of their communities in their dramatic work
- demonstrate an understanding that theatre is created in response to the needs of the community

Grade 10

- demonstrate trust in self and others through class activities and individual and ensemble performances
- demonstrate the unique ability of drama to unify a diverse group
- use subtlety and nuance in expressive communication
- compare their own thoughts, feelings, and beliefs with those of others
- defend choices made in problem solving
- negotiate and compromise to solve group problems
- demonstrate an ability to internalize the experiences of another while maintaining their own identity
- consistently use precise language to reflect on experiences both in and out of role
- realize, in production, relevant issues of cross-cultural importance
- create drama that demonstrates a responsibility to the community
- use knowledge of diverse cultures and historical periods in developing work

Appendix F

The Compassion Project

Making a Difference in School

“Be the change you wish to see in the world...” – Gandhi

Parental Consent Form for Research at [School Name Omitted]

Principal Investigator: Dr. George Belliveau, Associate Professor,
Department of Language and Literacy Education, UBC
Phone: (604) 822-8654 Email: george.belliveau@ubc.ca

Co-Investigator: David Beare, Doctoral Candidate
Department of Language and Literacy Education, UBC
Phone: (604) 903-3600 Email: dbear@nv44.bc.ca

Thursday, April 30, 2009

Dear Parents:

We are writing to seek approval to conduct a research study with your child. This study is entitled: ***The Compassion Project: The A/r/tography of a Theatre-Based Social and Emotional Literacy Program to Foster Positive Youth Development***. Our research team includes Dr. George Belliveau, an Associate Professor in the Department of Language and Literacy Education (LLED) at UBC, and David Beare, a doctoral LLED student who is conducting this research as his doctoral dissertation. David Beare also is a theatre teacher (of thirteen years) at [School Name Omitted]. The proposed study will be conducted at [School Name Omitted] with grade 8 to 11 students that participate in *The Compassion Project*.

Your child expressed interest in participating in this research. Please read the consent form, and if you feel participation in this research is appropriate for your child, please sign and date the last page of the consent form. Please keep the first three (3) pages for your records.

Summary of *The Compassion Project*

The Compassion Project is a [School Name Omitted] voluntary extra-curricular theatre-based social and emotional literacy program where a small group of students from diverse backgrounds role-play and tell stories about their barriers, hopes, and dreams in school. The overall aim of *The Compassion Project* is to foster social and emotional literacy at school. Over time, students organize and present a theatre presentation on social and emotional literacy to their peers at [School Name Omitted] (e.g., grade assembly, planning 10 classes), and to their family of schools (e.g., grade 7 to 8 transition). All personal stories are kept private and confidential within the small group, and all stories and theatre presentations presented to the public are fictional. Enzula Tavormina, a [School Name Omitted] teacher-counsellor, will serve as the group leader of *The Compassion Project*.

Appendix F (Continued)

Parent Consent Form

Interviews

Students participating in this research will be interviewed four times between forty to sixty minutes each, spread out between May 2009 and March 2010. The interview questions will focus mainly on the students' experiences of creating their works of art, and their barriers, hopes, and dreams in school. All interviews will be both videotaped and audio-taped.

Survey

Students participating in this research will complete a secured on-line Developmental Assets Profile Survey.

Videotapes of all Interviews, Sessions, and Presentations

All interviews, sessions, and presentations will be videotaped. Videotaping of sessions will only focus on participating students who volunteer and have written consent. No video images will be used for public presentation purposes.

Confidentiality

Any and all participant responses in this research study will be kept anonymous. All data will be securely kept for five years. Paper files will be locked in a filing cabinet in the co-investigator's office, and will be shredded after this time. All digital videotapes and audiotapes will be downloaded to a portable hard drive and locked in a filing cabinet in the co-investigator's office. All digital files will be deleted and the disk reformatted after five years.

Protection of Participants

Participants will be fully informed that their participation in the study. Participation in this study is entirely voluntary and participants may choose to decline or withdraw from the study at any time without any repercussions. Since the co-investigator, David Beare, is also a teacher at [School Name Omitted], none of the participants will be evaluated or graded by David Beare during the course of this study. Declining to participate or withdrawing from this study will in no way affect the participant's grade with any of their courses.

Students will be reminded of their rights to stop, not participate, or not answer any of the questions, at any time. Also, at any time, during or after the project, participants have the right for any video images or audios of themselves to be deleted or altered. Before the research is made public (and performed) students will have the option to view, verify, change, and provide feedback on it. The identity of the participants will remain confidential with the use of a pseudonym, concealment of unique features, and addition of fictional information.

Appendix F (Continued)

Outcome of Research

Participants will be made aware that selections of their transcribed interviews and their art may be used for presentations of public, educational, or academic purposes. Students will have opportunities to participate in the creation of the scripted research, such as selecting sections of their art and transcribed interviews to be used in the presentation and analysis. No videotaped images or audios of the participants will be used

Access to Data

Only the following people who will have access to the data:

1. David Beare, the co-investigator.
2. Dr. George Belliveau, the primary investigator.
3. Enzula Tavormina, the teacher-counsellor leader of *The Compassion Project*. She has a M.A. in counselling psychology at UBC and works for the [School Name Omitted] school district as an elementary teacher-counselor.
4. Brett Jamieson, a [School Name Omitted] alumnus and member of *The Compassion Project*, will be responsible for audiotaping and videotaping, and downloading all digital videotapes and audiotapes to the portable hard drive.

Contact

If you have any further questions please contact the co-investigator, David Beare [school contact information omitted], the vice-principal overseeing the project, Dave Overgaard [school contact information omitted], or principal investigator, Dr. George Belliveau (george.belliveau@ubc.ca, 604-822-8654).

If you have any concerns about the research or the treatment of the research participants you are encouraged to contact the Director of the UBC Office of Research Services and Administration (604-822-8598).

It is our hope that the findings of this research will inform education policy and practice with respect to fostering positive youth development and social and emotional literacy in our secondary schools.

Thank you for your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,

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Vancouver, British Columbia, V6T 1Z4
[School contact information omitted]

**Appendix F
(Continued)**

Parental Consent Form for Research at [School Name Omitted]

Consent and Approval:

I have read the above document outlining the research study: ***The Compassion Project: The A/r/tography of a Theatre-Based Social and Emotional Literacy Program to Foster Positive Youth Development***, and give my child, _____, approval to participate in this research at [School Name Omitted] between May 2009 and March 2010.

I have kept a copy of the first three (3) pages of the Parental Consent Form for Research, dated Monday, Thursday, April 30, 2009, for my own records.

I understand that my child is required to sign the Student Assent Form for Research. I have discussed with my child that he/she has the right to stop or not participate in all or any parts of the study, at any time.

_____, 2009
Name of Parent/Guardian Signature of Parent/Guardian Date

Appendix G

Diagrams of Planetary Dance Ritual (Halprin, 1987)



Intention: "To make an offering to the Planet connecting with people around the world" (pp. 45-51).

