

Working Paper 24

Engaging Young People in School Through the Arts

**SCRAYP:
Youth Arts With An Edge -
An Evaluation**

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October 2003

First published October 2003 by the:

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ISBN 0 7340 2967 5

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Acknowledgements

I would like to thank all the artists and managers at SCRAYP and the students and teachers at the schools for their assistance in writing this evaluation. Thank you especially to: Viv Sercombe, Dave Everist and Dave Kelman at SCRAYP for their conversations and insights; Philippa Schapper at Footscray City College who, in between doing yard duty, taking an extra class and then doing bus duty, managed to find the time to talk with me, arrange the students' interviews, find all the students to fill in the surveys and still remain friendly and analytical; Stephen Smithyman at Melton Secondary College for his help in organising students from all schools to complete surveys, completing some of the student interviews and his insights into the program; Brigid Henley at Maribyrnong City Council for her ongoing guidance; and Helen Cahill at the Australian Youth Research Centre for her continuing help, guidance and editing throughout the evaluation.

Executive Summary

Increasingly the arts are being used in a wide range of health promotion and community building strategies. Through involvement in arts activity, participants have been shown to develop supportive social networks and report increased feelings of well being (Jermyn, 2001).

As part of locating **Youth Arts with an Edge (SCRAYP)** within this broader context, this evaluation was commissioned by Maribyrnong City Council with funding from the Department of Justice (Crime Prevention Victoria). **Youth Arts with an Edge**, formally known as the **School Community Regional Arts Youth Program (SCRAYP)**, was to be evaluated from a 'crime prevention perspective' and linked into the development of the Maribyrnong City Council's Safer Communities Policy Framework and Implementation Plan.

The evaluation focused on the processes that SCRAYP used and the responses from the young people to these processes in relation to the goal of improving social competency. An improved social competence has been identified as a protective factor against risk taking and criminal behaviours (National Crime Prevention, 1999). It also focused on how drama engages young people, and whether this involvement improves their connection to peers, school and their community and enhances self-esteem and resilience.

The evaluation involved consultation with two SCRAYP programs: at Footscray City College (FCC) and at the Melton Cluster (of three secondary schools) (MC). Information has been collected from students, teachers and artists using interviews, surveys and observation. FCC was a voluntary after-school program for 10 weeks. MC was a targeted intervention for students at risk that ran for one day a week, off the school site, for 10 weeks. Both programs culminated with a performance to a range of school and community audiences.

What does SCRAYP mean for the young people?

The young people at FCC described being in SCRAYP as '*fun and a way to make school fun*', '*a chance to work across the different school year levels and make friends across the year levels*' and '*a way to reduce the stress of school and class work*'.

One MC student said: '*they don't control you. They let you have your fun and still be able to do everything. You can talk and do your work at the same time. Like in fact you are learning work and they're*

fun.'

An important question for the schools and the young people is how the processes used in SCRAYP enhance the well being and learning of the students involved. Integral to enhancing wellbeing and learning is the development of self esteem and positive self concept. The development of self esteem and positive self concept enhances outcomes for the young people in regard to connectedness to school, peers and the community (Holdsworth, Cahill and Smith, 2003). Phillips (1990) identifies three connecting factors that effect the development of positive self concept. These include: a sense of **control**; a sense of **bonding**; and a sense of **meaning**.

When asked explicitly about the frequency of experiencing these factors, it was the sense of **meaning** and the sense of **bonding** that were rated most highly by the students in both programs. There was a strong sense that they had done something worthwhile and that, during that process, they had worked together well as a team. The students indicated a lesser sense of **control** over the process. While overall they responded positively that they had done the work and decided what happened, fewer identified that they had done this 'lots of the time'.

The students from the two programs gave quite different responses about the outcomes of programs. The students from FCC indicated positive change to both peer connection and school connection. The response from students in the MC was more polarised. They indicated positive change to peer connection but much less change to their school connection. They responded that they improved their connection with their peers and the program but, for many of them, that did not improve their connection to school. Although this may appear a less positive result, peer connection is a vital factor for young people to re-engage with school (DETYA, 2001).

SCRAYP processes to enhance connection

One of the key factors for connecting the young people to the program was the development of an **inclusive process** of which the students felt part. The students responded very positively to working together as a team and improving the way they cooperated throughout the SCRAYP program.

SCRAYP used several processes to develop and encourage such team cohesion. They used both large and small group processes to allow opinions to be heard and ideas to be generated.

The way that the script was constructed made the SCRAYP process **accessible to a wide range of young people with differing levels of literacy**. Acting in the workshops to develop scenes and characters and then using the words of the young people in the script, made the performance possible for young people who were not confident or did not have the literacy level to learn long pieces of dialogue and script.

Many survey responses from students relate to how important it was to **build relationships between the artists and the students**. Students in the MC in particular rated very highly the relationship they had developed with the SCRAYP artists.

The students identified a **wide range of skills and attitudes** that they developed and used. These included contributing ideas, establishing priorities, helping solve problems, practical drama techniques, confidence to perform and taking responsibility.

Another important part of the process was **building relationships between students**. The majority of students in both programs responded that getting to know the other students in the program better had been one of the most positive outcomes.

Students were also asked about their **connection to teachers**. Students at both FCC and MC commented positively on the relationships that they had developed with the teachers supervising the SCRAYP program. The teacher involved with the SCRAYP program provided the link back to the school. The relationship that the students develop with that teacher or teachers was vital to the transfer of benefits derived from the program to the school setting.

Integral to any program being a success in schools is the **partnership** that must be developed between the school and the SCRAYP personnel. While the programs functioned effectively most of the time, and very positive relationships were developed between the students and the SCRAYP personnel and between the majority of the teachers in the program and SCRAYP personnel, there were also some difficulties. In the vast majority of situations these difficulties were discussed and ways to work through the difficulties were developed. When discussing the partnerships between SCRAYP and the schools, themes were identified of:

- understanding the different cultures;
- organisational support;
- joint planning and development time;

- communication; and
- the mix of students involved.

These SCRAYP processes led to different outcomes including:

- **Engagement in the classroom**

The response from the student surveys reflected the differing clientele that the artists were working with in the two programs. Students in the FCC survey had a more positive response to SCRAYP helping them to work better in their classes. However, the students in the MC did not respond so positively. Over half of these students commented that being involved in SCRAYP had made little or no difference to the way that they worked in class.

- **Development in self esteem and confidence**

Students from both programs reported a positive change in their ability to communicate with others. All but two students at FCC and all students in the MC reported that there had been some improvement in how they felt about themselves.

Recommendations

Recommendations to enhance the outcomes and sustainability for young people in the school setting were:

Program development

- Joint planning with schools to develop shared goals, vision, values and understandings;
- Professional development of staff at the schools to encourage and support the transfer of appropriate drama methods into a range of curriculum subjects;
- Raising awareness of all staff at the schools through attendance at staff and other briefing meetings by SCRAYP personnel;
- Integrating the arts across the curriculum by having an artist work in the classroom with teachers on an ongoing basis.

Program implementation

- Lengthening the program from 10 to 20 weeks;
- Nominating a staff team at the school to be responsible for working with SCRAYP personnel;
- Ensuring that there are effective lines of communication between school staff and SCRAYP personnel;
- Ensuring a mix of students are involved in the program.

Conclusion

Overall, SCRAYP has provided an effective crime prevention program. It has successfully developed and used drama processes that improve the social competence of the young people involved in their programs, through enhancing positive self concept and self esteem. This improved social competence increases the protective factors that the young people have against risk taking and criminal behaviour.

Introduction

Increasingly the arts are being used in a wide range of health promotion and community building strategies. Through involvement in arts activity, participants have been shown to develop supportive social networks and report increased feelings of well being (Jermyn, 2001). In particular, drama strategies have been used as a means to successfully engage young people and the community in participatory, group-devised programs that promote well being and engagement in areas such as literacy, conflict resolution, returning to education, indigenous and mental health (Wyn, Stokes and Tyler, 2002; VicHealth, 2002).

As part of locating **Youth Arts with an Edge (SCRAYP)** within this broader context, this evaluation was commissioned by Maribyrnong City Council with funding from the Department of Justice (Crime Prevention Victoria). **Youth Arts with an Edge**, formally known as the **School Community Regional Arts Youth Program (SCRAYP)**, was to be evaluated from a 'crime prevention perspective' and linked into the development of the Maribyrnong City Council's Safer Communities Policy Framework and Implementation Plan. The program is part of a broad definition of primary crime prevention, which is seen as an early intervention that promotes behaviour and attitudes inconsistent with later crime, violence and delinquency. Examples of these interventions include school programs and community education (White and Coventry, 2000).

SCRAYP had programs in seven schools or clusters of schools in the western region of Melbourne in 2002 including:

- Marion College, Sunshine;
- Kensington Community School, Kensington; Footscray Primary School and Footscray North Primary School, Footscray;
- Tottenham Language Centre, Tottenham;
- Footscray City College, Footscray; and
- the Melton Cluster of Melton Secondary College, Wilson Park Secondary College and Kurranjang Secondary College in Melton.

This evaluation is looking at one part of the SCRAYP program: that of developing partnerships and programs with schools. The focus was on two programs from the SCRAYP schools program: Footscray City College (FCC) and the Melton Cluster (MC).

The SCRAYP program allows young people to explore community safety through the discussion of issues that impact on the lives of the young people and link to their perceptions of security in the community. Issues including violence, drug use, gangs, peer pressure, relationships, and family relationships emerge. "The young people are looking for a means of understanding their society and their role within it" (Kelman, 2002).

This evaluation focused on the processes that SCRAYP uses and the responses from the young people to these processes in relation to the goal of improved social competency. An improved social competence has been identified as a protective factor against risk taking and criminal behaviours (National Crime Prevention, 1999). The evaluation did not seek to measure whether there had been any change in risk taking behaviours among the client group. Rather it focused on how drama engages young people and whether this involvement improves their connection to peers, school and their community and enhances self-esteem and resilience.

The SCRAYP program works across the sectors of education, health and justice to enhance outcomes for young people. Examples of links to particular frameworks and initiatives include:

- **The National Action Plan for Promotion, Prevention and Early Intervention for Mental Health** (Commonwealth Department of Health and Aged Care, 2000). This plan identifies protective factors that reduce the likelihood of mental health problems and disorders for children in the school context. Protective factors are identified as: a sense of belonging; positive school climate; pro social peer group; required responsibility and helpfulness; opportunities for some success and recognition of achievement; and school norms against violence. As is discussed in the evaluation, involvement in SCRAYP can be seen to enhance a number of the protective factors especially providing an opportunity for the young people to experience achievement, success and recognition.

SCRAYP helped us become more self confident and have something we achieved. It gave some of us the confidence to perform in front of an audience. (student interview)

- The Department of Education and Training's **Social Competencies** initiative (2002). This

initiative identifies the importance of education processes in which students:

- establish and maintain a range of positive social relationships;
- manage interpersonal difficulties and refrain from harming self and others; and
- contribute collaboratively and constructively to peers, family, school and the wider community (DE&T, 2002).

As will be discussed in detail in the evaluation, involvement in SCRAYP enhances the development of these competencies in young people.

- A more structural approach to enhancing students' well being is defined in **The Framework for Student Support Services** (DOE, 1999). This framework outlines four interrelated levels of activity currently undertaken by schools to support young people and enhance resilience. These include:
 - *primary prevention*, which relates to all students, with the aim of building belonging and promoting well being;
 - *early intervention*, which involves timely activities for students identified as at risk with the aim of strengthening coping and reducing risk;
 - *intervention*, which provides a range of student support services for smaller numbers of students with serious problems with the aim of providing access to support and treatment; and
 - *postvention*, which involves having planning in place to provide an appropriate response to emergencies and tragedies with the aim of managing trauma and limiting impact (DOE, 1999: 7).

The program at Footscray City College (FCC) can be described as a primary prevention activity with the focus on building belonging and promoting well being across a broad population. The program in the Melton Cluster (MC) was more appropriately seen as one of early intervention, aiming to build belonging and enhance well being in a targeted group of students defined as 'at risk'.

The SCRAYP Program

A comprehensive outline of the SCRAYP methodology (Kelman 2002) is included as an Appendix to this report. The report will refer to this methodology as needed to provide greater detail for the processes used.

What is SCRAYP?

SCRAYP programs focus on a rich and exploratory process to generate an original performance where the young people enter into a partnership with the artists to create a piece of art unique to the young people. This work expresses what the young people want to say (Kelman, 2002).

SCRAYP: Youth Arts with an Edge is a drama based program that works with young people from a diverse range of cultural backgrounds in the western suburbs of Melbourne. SCRAYP links with schools to provide programs for young people, some of who are disengaged from school and are deemed to be at risk. SCRAYP also has community arts programs that work with young people at the Footscray Community Arts Centre (FCArts). SCRAYP has a full time Executive Director, a part time Training and Project Manager and a part time Cultural Community Development Manager. A training program for young artists is conducted at the SCRAYP offices at FCArts. The young artists then work in the schools program and the community program (Y3p) alongside more experienced artists. Each of the school programs has a team of artists who work on the development of the performances. Throughout the programs in schools, the artists have group planning sessions prior to the school workshops and skill development sessions.

Aims and objectives of SCRAYP:

Aim

- To empower young people to express their thoughts and feelings through art and, by doing so, deepen their understanding of themselves and society.

Objectives

- Increase self-esteem and self-awareness;
- Explore issues relevant to the young people;
- Make coherent artistic statements about society;
- Challenge prejudices, stereotypes and destructive behaviours;
- Give young people a platform for their

thoughts and feelings to be heard by their wider community;

- Develop a greater understanding of art – form and skills associated with them; and
- Develop emotional intelligence, language use and conceptual thought (Kelman, 2002).

School Programs

Schools either contact SCRAYP enquiring about participation, or SCRAYP publicises its programs to schools in the Western Region of Melbourne. Interested schools then complete an expression of interest and attend a seminar where schools and artists who have been involved in SCRAYP during the previous year present to the interested schools.

Once committed to the process, schools and SCRAYP sort out the financial details depending on the ability of the schools to pay for the program.

Funding

The SCRAYP Schools Program in 2002, including the FCC and the MC projects, had financial contributions from the schools. This was negotiated with each school and project independently depending on the size and scale of the project. Each school put funding towards the program with the bulk of the funding coming from SCRAYP Project funds.

Program Descriptions

The following program descriptions are based on information gathered from interviews with students, teachers or artists, and from participation in workshops, meeting and planning sessions when issues and processes were discussed.

SCRAYP at Footscray City College

How did it all begin?

SCRAYP had worked with Footscray City College previously in 2001 to develop a performance. To reconvene the program for 2002, meetings were set up with the Assistant Principal and SCRAYP personnel to define the parameters for the performance. The school wanted to engage young people who had not previously been involved in drama, and who were socially on the edges of the school community. They were interested in engaging students who remained predominantly in a set friendship group

that was defined by shared ethnicity or a particular youth subculture. While they wanted to have a lively performance of a high standard, the main aim was the engagement of the young people in the process.

The SCRAYP artists made contact with the school through the Assistant Principal (AP) and the Student Welfare Coordinator (SWC). The program was initially advertised in the school bulletin. The AP and SWC also approached some young people who they thought would benefit from involvement with the program.

A group of five artists with a range of skills including direction, rap and writing were involved in the program. While these were predominantly younger artists who had been through the artist training program developed by SCRAYP, Dave Kelman (Training and Project Manager) and Dave Everist (Cultural Community Development Manager) provided support for them and ran some of the workshop sessions.

The program was placed outside the drama curriculum and outside school hours to try to engage students not previously involved in drama. The program ran once a week for 10 weeks (after school on a Monday for two hours) at the school. The program was open to all students from Years 7 to 12. Attendance was voluntary. Around 25 to 30 young people were part of the program.

Developing the script and the performance

Four or five SCRAYP artists ran a series of workshops with the students during the 10 weeks. The aim of the program was to work with the views and issues that were concerning the young people, to develop a performance that was relevant to them and reflected their view of the world.

In general the workshop involved a warm up of about 20 minutes, general information about the session, then the whole group working together in a big scene, followed by some small group work involving acting, watching and commenting. Workshops closed with general encouragement and discussion of issues arising. (See the Appendix for further explanation of this process.)

The play was about members of a female gang who murder a young male gang member. They are defending a young woman who is pregnant and dumped by the murdered young man. The play explored the implications of the murder from different points of view including the ghost of the murdered man, who reflects on his life and what it could have been.

Developing the Script

The script was created in stages. Parts of the script were developed and workshopped with the young people to develop the plot. The final script was written by a writer from SCRAYP but as much as possible of the young people's words from the

workshops were included in the script.

Performance

The play *In the Tough City* was performed three times for three different audiences: the first to a small audience of teachers and friends; the second to 100 Year 9 students; and the third to 100 family members, friends, school mates, teachers and interested people.

SCRAYP artists team

Tibor Gede: *writer/director – directed the performance*

Chi Vu: *writer facilitator – wrote and edited the script*

Toula: *director – facilitated workshops*

Joel Ma: *musician/MC – created the raps with the young people*

SCRAYP at the Melton Cluster

The schools included Melton Secondary College, Kurranjang Secondary College and Wilson Park Secondary College.

How did it all begin?

SCRAYP had not worked with the Melton Schools before. SCRAYP was presented to a Managed Individual Pathways (MIPs) meeting in that area and one of the schools rang SCRAYP to discuss the possibility of a SCRAYP program involving the three secondary schools in the area. The schools attended an information session and meetings were set up between the three schools to arrange dates and workshop spaces. The SWC from one school took responsibility for organising the schools.

A 'taster session' was organised at Kurranjang Secondary College to introduce the program to the students. About 50 students attended. The workshop involved the students telling the artists about Melton, while the artists acted to the students' direction.

The program was organised to run one day a week for 10 weeks at two alternating community halls in Melton. It was planned that a different school would be responsible each week and send a teacher to sit in on the program. Four to five artists would work with the 30 young people each week for the whole day.

The Melton program was, in the main, an intervention program that involved withdrawing the students from school to attend it. In general the students were not attending school regularly, had behavioural issues at school and were disengaged from the schooling process.

The workshop process and developing the script

The artists started the workshops with a story and structure that could be adapted to reflect the experience of the young people growing up in Melton. The artists and students developed an adaptation of a folk-tale. The story was based on a

robbery committed by four characters who then have the money to fulfil their wishes but have to live with the consequences of those wishes. The play was about making choices and about how what may seem to be the right choice can have unexpected outcomes.

The workshop process was similar to that used at FCC but had to be extended to accommodate working with the young people for the whole day rather than for two hours as at FCC.

Performance

19 students were involved in the final performances in Melton. *Call of the Devil* was performed four times. The first performance at Melton Secondary College was to friends of the cast; the second to 100 family, friends and teachers in the Melton Community Hall; the third to the whole school at Wilson Park Secondary College; and the last to 50 Year 9 students at Kurranjang Secondary College.

SCRAYP artists team

Dave Kelman: *director/writer*

Tibor Gede: *facilitator*

Joel Ma: *facilitator*

Research Design

The Australian Youth Research Centre worked with SCRAYP prior to the start of this evaluation process. In May 2001, the Australian Youth Research Centre conducted a preliminary consultation with SCRAYP personnel to assist them in defining their vision, goals and objectives for working with young people and delivering the program. This included a half day workshop with six SCRAYP workers.

This workshop was followed by a further consultation day in December 2001. The full day workshop involved representatives from the SCRAYP board, artists, the Department of Education and Training - Western Region, the Maribyrnong City Council, schools, the Footscray Community Arts Centre and other interested community members. This workshop focused on assisting participants to develop an implementation plan for SCRAYP.

The focus for the evaluation was the developed in consultation with representatives from the Australian Youth Research Centre, Maribyrnong City Council and SCRAYP.

The evaluation was based on consultation with two SCRAYP programs: Footscray City College (FCC) and the Melton Cluster (MC). The extensive consultation process included many stakeholders in the SCRAYP programs at these two sites. Information has been collected from students, teachers and artists using interviews, surveys and observation. Triangulation of the data has been made possible by the use of multiple perspectives on the intent and impact of the work.

Interviews

Interviews were conducted with young people, artists and teachers at the beginning and end of both the FCC and MC programs. The students and teachers were interviewed at their schools. The artists were interviewed at the Footscray Community Arts Centre (FCArts).

Program commencement

Prior to the start of the interviews, the artists were briefed on the plan of the evaluation at one of their program planning days.

Round 1 of group interviews

The student interviews were of approximately 50 minutes duration. Five students were interviewed at FCC. Six students were interviewed at the MC.

The teacher interviews were of approximately of 30 minutes duration. Two teachers (the Student Welfare Counsellor and Assistant Principal) from FCC were interviewed. One teacher (the SWC) from the MC was interviewed.

The artist interviews were approximately one hour in duration. Four artists were interviewed at FCArts.

Program completion

Round 2 of group interviews

A second round of interviews were conducted with young people, teachers and artists at the completion of each of the two programs.

The same five students were interviewed at FCC for approximately 50 minutes' duration. One teacher (the AP) was interviewed for approximately 40 minutes' duration.

Seven students, including most of the previously interviewed students, were interviewed at the MC for approximately one hour's duration. The teacher involved in the program interviewed two participants not available at the time of the second interview.

Two phone interviews were conducted with two teachers from the MC.

The artist interviews were approximately 45 minutes in duration. Six artists were interviewed at FCArts.

Ongoing informal interviews with SCRAYP personnel and supervising teachers were conducted throughout the program with issues being brought up and discussed during conversations and email contact.

Observation

The evaluator visited the program sites at FCC and the MC and observed the programs during their operation, attended the performance at FCC, attended the after-program school evaluation at FCC, and took part in the evaluation day conducted by SCRAYP management for the artists, planning sessions at SCRAYP and post-workshop debriefing sessions between the school personnel and artists.

When attending the evaluation day at FCArts with SCRAYP artists and management, the evaluator presented the survey responses from the students at FCC. Discussion of the responses by all participants at the day followed.

Surveys

SCRAYP impact tools (survey) were originally devised for the Student Action Teams Evaluation conducted by the Roger Holdsworth and Helen Cahill from the Australian Youth Research Centre (Holdsworth, Cahill and Smith, 2003). The tools were modified for the SCRAYP evaluation to better reflect the nature of SCRAYP processes.

These impact surveys were given out to all participants: young people, teachers and artists. Impact surveys were returned by young people and teachers but not by the artists. All students involved in the FCC program were surveyed (31 students) while 12 out of the 19 students in the performance at Melton were surveyed. The surveys were collated and analysed for the students in both programs (43 in total) but the number of teachers returning the surveys (3) was too small to be statistically usable.

It was originally planned that artist surveys would be completed at the SCRAYP evaluation day prior to the artists receiving the results of the student surveys. On the day, it became more useful to the evaluation process to discuss the results of the student surveys first. This meant that the artists' responses would be less objective as they would then have had prior knowledge of the students' responses. This, coupled with the extensive work commitments of the artists, meant that the surveys were not completed.

Response to Surveys

School: Footscray City College (FCC)
31 respondents

Year Level: Year 12 - 10 students
Year 11 - 4 students
Year 10 - 12 students
Year 9 - 4 students
Year 7 - 1 student

Gender: Male - 11
Female - 20

School: Melton Cluster (MC)
12 respondents

Year Level: Year 10 - 5 students
Year 9 - 7 students

Gender: Male - 7
Female - 5

The students were asked to circle a response to each of the 13 statements indicating how the program worked: team work; level of participation; conflict resolution; and input into content. They were also asked to circle a response to each of 12 statements about the outcomes for the young people due to their involvement in SCRAYP - in regard to themselves, school and their peers. (See pages 16-17 for the tables.)

Each of these responses were then provided with a value and averaged. This provided a

comparative indicator for the different statements. All the items were then **ranked** from lowest to highest and a ranked scale value of H1, H2, L2, and L1 allocated.

The table below is an example of the process used. In the tables on pages 16-17 the weighted total and the numerical indicator have not been presented. To simplify the table, only the ranking (from L1 to H1) has been used.

We did something worthwhile (m):

Not at all (x 1)	0
A little (x 2)	0
Some (x 3)	3
Quite a bit (x 4)	7
Lots (x 5)	21
Weighted total	142
Indicator	4.58
Ranking	H1

Individual items were then accumulated to provide three factors which could be termed 'sense of bonding', 'sense of meaning' and 'sense of control'. These were then used to sort and analyse the response of the students to the way that they worked in the SCRAYP program. Similarly, combined measures of the outcomes for the students in regard to 'connection to the program', 'connection to school', 'connection to peers' and 'development in self-esteem' were formed. These outcomes were used to sort and analyse the student responses. These outcomes are discussed after the tables are presented.

What Does SCRAYP Mean for the Young People?

The young people at Footscray City College described being in SCRAYP as: *'fun and a way to make school fun', 'a chance to work across the different school year levels and make friends across the year levels'* and *'a way to reduce the stress of school and class work'*.

One Melton student said: *'they don't control you. They let you have your fun and still be able to do everything. You can talk and do your work at the same time. Like in fact you are learning work and they're fun.'*

An important question for the schools and the young people is how the processes used in SCRAYP enhance the well being and learning of the students involved. Integral to enhancing wellbeing and learning is the development of self esteem and positive self concept. The development of self esteem and positive self concept enhance outcomes for the young people in regard to connectedness to school, peers and the community (Holdsworth, Cahill and Smith, 2003).

Phillips (1990) identifies three connecting factors that effect the development of positive self concept. These include:

- a sense of **control**;
- a sense of **bonding**; and
- a sense of **meaning**.

The way that these factors interact to develop positive self concept is illustrated below.

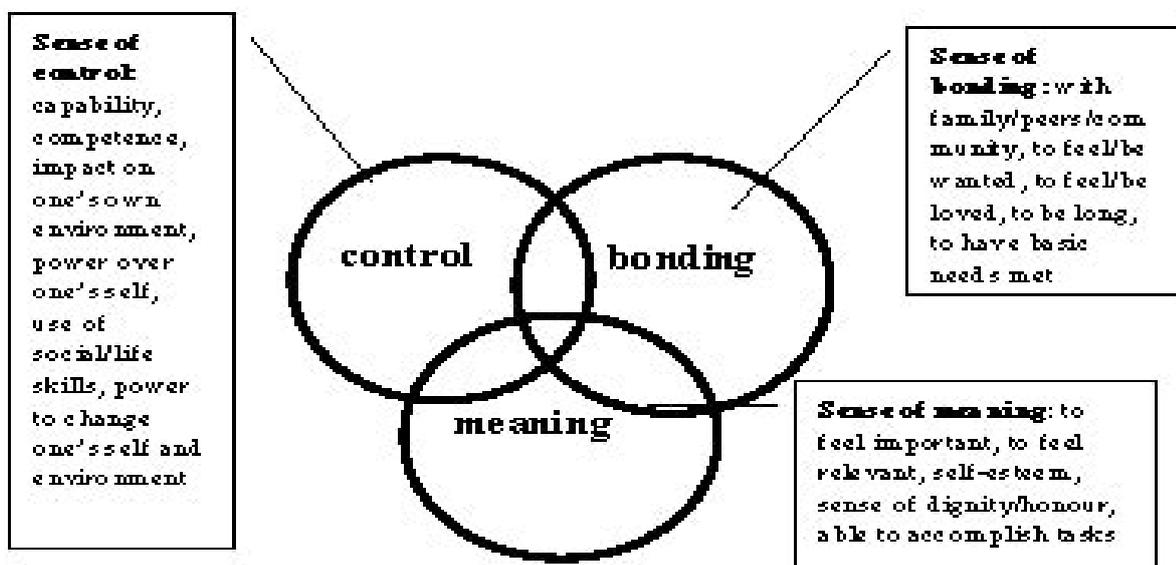
Cahill (2002) links this Basic Human Needs and Self Concept Framework to the fundamentals of drama. She cites O'Toole (1992) who identifies the significant underpinning elements fundamental to the dramatic process as control, power, purpose and meaning. He defines drama as "primarily concerned with identity and community – the need to be and the need to belong" (O'Toole, 1992: 150). This then is linked to the outcomes that the students are experiencing from the program in regard to connection to peers, program personnel and the school.

What do student responses show us?

The three identified factors (sense of bonding, sense of meaning, and sense of control) can be used to sort and then analyse the response of the students to the way that they worked in the SCRAYP program. These are recorded in Table 1.

Sense of **bonding** included:

- We worked as a team;
- I feel proud of the way we worked together;
- We overcame difficulties as they came up;
- We worked well even when we disagreed; and



Basic Human Needs and Self-Concept (Phillips, 1990)

- We improved our teamwork and cooperation skills.

Sense of **meaning** included:

- We did something worthwhile;
- We developed ideas we thought were important to act out;
- I feel proud of what we achieved;
- We developed scenes that reflected issues that were important to us

Sense of **control** included:

- Everyone got a chance to be heard;
- I got to have a say;
- We decided what happened in the performance; and
- We were the ones who did the work.

Similarly, students' responses to the changes occurring because of participation in the SCRAYP program are grouped under four outcomes (connection to the program, connection to school, connection to peers, and development in self-esteem). These are recorded in Table 2.

Connection to program included:

- I developed a relationship with the SCRAYP artists;
- I got a better relationship with the teachers in charge of SCRAYP.

Connection to school included:

- We got to leave a positive mark on the community;
- I feel more a part of this school;
- I got a better relationship with the teachers in charge of SCRAYP;
- I feel better about coming to school;
- I got to feel more important around the school;
- I work better in class now;
- I got a better relationship with some of the other teachers in the school.

Connection to peers included:

- We got to know each other better;
- I am better able to communicate with others;
- Other students told me they wished they could have been part of the performance.

Development in self esteem included:

- I feel better about myself;
- I am better able to communicate with others.

In both the FCC and the MC programs, the sense of meaning and the sense of bonding were rated most highly by the students. There was a strong sense that they had done something worthwhile and that, during that process, they had worked together well as a team. The students' responses indicate that they

felt they had less sense of control over the process. While overall they responded positively that they had done the work and decided what happened, fewer indicated that they had done this 'lots of the time'.

The students from the two programs gave quite different responses about the outcomes. The students from FCC indicated positive change to both peer connection and school connection. The response from students in the MC was more polarised. They indicated positive change to peer connection but much less change to their school connection. They responded that they had improved their connection with their peers and the program but, for many of them, that did not improve their connection to school. Although this may appear a less positive result, it should be noted that peer connection is a vital factor for young people to re-engage with school (DETYA, 2001).

Differences between the programs

Differences between the FCC and the MC programs should be taken into account when comparisons are made across the tables, particularly for the second table regarding school outcomes. The FCC program was on the school site with voluntary participation, for two hours after school with a broad range of young people attending from a number of year levels. The MC program was essentially a withdrawal program for students in Years 9 and 10 with identified behavioural and related educational issues who were disengaged from the schooling process. It was conducted off the school site during school time for a day at a time.

There were also differences in how the script was developed which could have an impact on students' feelings about the level of ownership. At FCC, the students and artist developed the whole story, while in the MC, the students were given an outline of the story and developed the characters. Taking all this into account, there are still similarities between the programs and students' responses to them.

It is interesting to note that the Student Action Teams Programs (funded by Crime Prevention Victoria and VicHealth) that have been operating through the Department of Education and Training in Victoria over the last three years have had similar results (Holdsworth, Cahill and Smith, 2003). This places SCRAYP within a range of programs, including other drama programs, that are participatory, involve

Table 1a: Footscray City College: Describing how you worked in SCRAYP:
(Factors: m: meaning, b: bonding and c: control)

	Not at all 1	A little 2	Some 3	Quite a bit 4	Lots 5	Ranking Low to high
We did something worthwhile (m)	0	0	3	7	21	H1
We worked as a team (b)	0	0	5	5	21	H1
We developed ideas we thought were important to act out (m)	1	0	2	13	15	H1
Every one got a chance to be heard (c)	0	0	4	11	16	H1
I feel proud of what we achieved (m)	1	0	1	11	18	H1
I feel proud of the way we worked together (b)	0	0	3	8	20	H1
We overcame difficulties as they came up (b)	0	1	5	9	16	H2
We worked well together even when we disagreed (b)	0	2	8	10	12	H2
We improved our team work and cooperation skills (b)	0	6	6	13	13	H2
We developed scenes that reflected issues that are important to us (m)	1	0	7	11	12	L2
I got to have a say (c)	0	2	8	11	10	L2
We decided what happened in this performance (c)	0	1	4	15	10	L2
We were the ones who did the work (c)	0	2	10	13	5	L1

Table 1b: Melton Cluster: Describing how you worked in SCRAYP:
(Factors: m: meaning, b: bonding and c: control)

	Not at all 1	A little 2	Some 3	Quite a bit 4	Lots 5	Ranking Low to high
We did something worthwhile (m)	0	0	0	3	9	H1
I feel proud of what we achieved (m)	0	0	0	4	8	H1
I feel proud of the way we worked together (b)	0	0	2	4	6	H2
We worked as a team (b)	0	0	1	5	6	H2
We improved our team work and cooperation skills (b)	0	0	0	5	7	H2
We overcame difficulties as they came up (b)	0	0	2	3	7	H2
We worked well together even when we disagreed (b)	0	2	2	2	6	L2
I got to have a say (c)	0	1	2	4	5	L2
We developed ideas we thought were important to act out (m)	0	0	3	7	2	L2
Every one got a chance to be heard (c)	0	1	1	7	3	L2
We were the ones who did the work (c)	0	0	5	7	0	L1
We developed scenes that reflected issues that are important to us (m)	0	2	1	6	2	L1
We decided what happened in this performance (c)	0	2	4	5	2	L1

Table 2a: Footscray City College: Describing outcomes*(Connection to the program (Pr C); connection to school (SC); connection to peers (Pe C); and development in self esteem (SE))*

Because I was in SCRAYP:	Not at all 1	A little 2	Some 3	Quite a bit 4	Lots 5	Ranking Low to high
We got to know each other better (Pe C)	0	1	3	4	23	H1
We got to leave a positive mark on the community (SC)	1	1	10	5	14	H1
I developed a relationship with the SCRAYP artists (Pr C)	1	1	6	14	9	H1
I feel more a part of this school (SC)	2	6	2	8	12	H2
I got a better relationship with the teacher/s in charge of SCRAYP (SC and Pr C)	1	4	6	6	13	H2
I feel better about myself (SE)	2	2	7	8	11	H2
I am better able to communicate with others (Pe C and SE)	3	5	3	6	13	H2
I feel better about coming to school (SC)	5	5	5	6	10	L2
I got to feel more important around the school (SC)	5	5	6	4	11	L2
I work better in class now (SC)	6	2	6	10	7	L2
Other students told me wished they could have been part of the performance (Pe C)	4	4	7	10	6	L2
I got a better relationship with some other teachers in the school (SC)	6	5	7	6	7	L1

Table 2b: Melton Cluster: Describing outcomes*(Connection to the program (Pr C); connection to school (SC); connection to peers (Pe C); and development in self esteem (SE))*

Because I was in SCRAYP:	Not at all 1	A little 2	Some 3	Quite a bit 4	Lots 5	Ranking Low to high
We got to know each other better (Pe C)	0	0	0	0	12	H1
Other students told me wished they could have been part of the performance (Pe C)	0	0	1	3	8	H1
I developed a relationship with the SCRAYP artists (Pr C)	1	0	1	1	9	H1
I got a better relationship with the teacher/s in charge of SCRAYP (SC and Pr C)	1	0	2	1	8	H1
I am better able to communicate with others (Pe C and SE)	0	0	3	3	6	H1
I feel better about myself (SE)	0	1	3	3	5	H2
We got to leave a positive mark on the school or community (SC)	1	2	0	4	5	H2
I work better in class now (SC)	2	6	0	1	3	L1
I feel better about coming to school (SC)	4	4	2	0	2	L1
I got to feel more important around the school (SC)	4	2	2	1	3	L1
I feel more a part of this school (SC)	5	1	2	0	4	L1
I got a better relationship with some other teachers in the school (SC)	3	2	6	0	2	L1

Connection to the program

In looking at these results and at student and artist responses, we can identify program factors that build student connection to the program - where students value their participation. This involves:

- a) developing inclusive processes;
- b) encouraging diversity;
- c) managing the group dynamic;
- d) building relationships;
- e) developing skills and outcomes.

Developing inclusive processes

One of the key factors for connecting the young people to the program was the development of inclusive processes of which the students felt part. The students responded very positively to working together as a team and to improving the way they cooperated throughout the SCRAYP program.

SCRAYP used several processes to develop and encourage such team cohesion. They used both large and small group processes to allow opinions to be heard and ideas to be generated. They used a range of drama exercises and games to facilitate group development. A number of students mentioned that the relaxation and massage activities helped them get to know the other students. The students in the MC mentioned that it was important to have activities at the beginning of the program to get to know the students from the other schools.

I liked everything about SCRAYP and how they encouraged anyone to participate no matter what their background may be.

We don't have drama at my year level so it's really different to what we are doing. It's stuff that I wouldn't get a chance to do in school. That's part of the reason why I enjoy it so much.

Dave Kelman describes the development of an inclusive process at FCC.

The early weeks of the project were exploratory and involved young people creating characters they found interesting and enjoyable to act. These unstructured improvisations were a useful barometer of the group's underlying interests and concerns but needed to be further explored through structures provided by the artistic team to have any real value. For example a piece of bizarre comic acting which presented a young woman as a 'psycho' led to a serious exploration of violence in the play. Likewise a somewhat clichéd improvisation about teenage pregnancy was developed into an important sub plot in the final performance.

The workshops focused on building a group dynamic and on generating ideas. There was then a need to develop a structure that could lead to creating a script for performance. The theme of "a community with a shadow of fear" was set up for

the next workshop. The young people discussed the attraction to violence. One boy spoke of the pull from his culture to be part of a gang and the behaviour that went with that, how he realised that he wasn't going anywhere and how he wanted to move away. All the young people became involved in this discussion and an activity was set up to workshop the theme. One of the artists played a 'wannabe' gangster attracted to the idea of violence. The technique of 'hot seating' was used (Kelman, 2002; Newlands, 1990). The young people threw him questions about living in a community of fear: what was it like to walk down the street? The artist answered in rap, using questions to throw the issues back to the young people: 'What do you think? You know what people around here think of me.' All the young people in the room shared the experience and began to understand that world. The ideas generated were then explored using small group improvisations.

At the MC a similar process was used. The students were asked to develop four Melton characters. They worked as a whole group, with the students calling out characters to the artists. The students were testing the boundaries with the artists - what was permissible and what was not - but were also expressing real concerns. The artists ran with the characters suggested such as the whore and druggie and then reworked the characters with the students to develop depth and different perspectives. The artists wanted to create a space to work and build the characters rather than say no to them when first suggested.

Anti-naturalistic devices were used to question the choices of the young people. Angels, devils (a device suggested by the young people) and the metaphor of hell were used to reflect choices back to the young people. The devil and the money became metaphors for talking about the lives of the young people.

The characters were built up and monologues developed and written by the young people around the different characters. Different techniques such as 'empty chair' and 'forum theatre' were used to engage the young people (Kelman, 2002; and Newlands, 1990). Using empty chair, one girl explored her relationship with her mother. The girl provided the voice of the young woman while the rest of the group provided the questions. This technique provided protection to explore issues in the mother/daughter relationship. The character developed belonged to everyone, and was not just created by the writers of the script.

Catering for different literacy levels

The way that the script was constructed made the SCRAYP process accessible to a wide range of young people with differing levels of literacy. Acting in the workshops to develop scenes and characters and then using the words of the young people in the script,

made the performance possible for young people who were not confident or did not have the literacy level to learn long pieces of dialogue and script.

We have already done the scenes already (in the workshops). You know the scene and know what to say. You just have to go over the script a couple of times so you know where to come in. They are the words that we have come up with ourselves. That's what's in the script.

You are not really nervous to say stuff and do stuff. They say 'we are going to make up a play. We don't tell you all the words you are going to speak. You have to make up your own words and improvise it.

At the MC the script reading was a positive experience for the students with involvement from all the students. Once the script was written, the students had readings of the script. The artists organised each of the young people to try out a number of different parts. Some of the young people had fairly low literacy levels but had a go at reading the parts with the support of the rest of the group. While it had been hard to get the group focused initially and engaged for a day, the group concentrated very well on the script reading for over two hours at a time. The teacher involved commented that this was much longer than many of these young people had ever focused on a reading activity before.

The relevance of the issues and ideas generated by the young people make it a concrete experience that the young people can relate to. The young people are not being asked to deliver a script with abstract concepts that has no relevance to their lives. A teacher commented that the artists are 'right into the issues that the kids feel and this gets the kids involved.'

I enjoyed SCRAYP because it was relevant to us and we came up with the ideas.

You don't have to be careful of what you say. You can base it on your ideas. It's all open.

At FCC the young people felt they were talking in their own language. The performance was called *In the Tough City*. The young people described it as a play with light and dark that has a resolution. Members of a female gang murder a young male gang member. They are defending a young woman who is pregnant and dumped by the murdered young man. The play explored the implications of the murder from different points of view. The ghost of the murdered man also reflects on his life and what it could have been. The young people felt the message of the play was about understanding life in a poor neighbourhood, what you do to survive, and learning to take responsibility for your life and actions. They felt the rap that was developed as part of the performance gave the message of the play.

In the Tough City Rap

In school they tell you life matters
But when I look at the streets I see life is callous
Where I'm from, everything is damaged
Windows are smashed and shopfronts are savaged
People panic if you look at them to long
And cross the road if you're on the same footpath they're on.
The dealers and cops both run the street
The street where the homeless find a bus stop to sleep
If you see it everyday you don't feel the pain
Your either ashamed or quick to cast blame
And everybody's playing the same game
But the rich can afford to have the rules changed.
Now a carload of kids is on the attack
In the rich part of town from the wrong side of the tracks
They'll chase down an unsuspecting kid on the block
Cause his family got more than what their family got
And they balance the scales with fists hard as nails
Release their frustration, maybe end up in jail
It's futile and cruel and nothing like what they teach you in school

Encouraging diversity: Cross-Cultural sharing

Cross-cultural sharing happened at a number of levels throughout the SCRAYP program. At FCC there were different youth subcultures that had to mix together to put on the final performance. Initially the young people from the different subcultures were more comfortable in their own hip hop, homey, or punk groups. Having these different groups separately develop their specific characters brought up the issue of stereotyping. The SCRAYP artists saw the development of these characters as a starting point that could lead to a questioning of those stereotypes. Some of the young people, though, made it clear they did not want to be stereotyped. With direction from the school, the artists facilitated a change to the make-up of groups that then allowed the young people from the different subcultures to connect to each other. The students felt this also made the play work better. One of them commented that:

when you are with your friends it's cool to sit there and not do anything, so after that there was better stuff.

Another commented that:

I really liked the way I got the chance to work with people outside of my friendship group and culture.

There was cross-cultural sharing through songs that were developed in the workshops although they were not in the final show. In the workshops one of the groups shared stories about their different experiences and developed a respect for the diversity within the group. Two African girls told stories of the refugee camp in Africa that became part of one of the raps.

One of the students in the SCRAYP program used the workshop process to explore her culture, which she felt was different from most of the other

kids and put that into the play through the character that she developed. She said that this made the character 'more real and important to her.' There were negative influences that she felt were coming from her family and culture, that placed constraints on her about which she wasn't happy. She felt that daughters were treated like prisoners and that her brother was sent to spy on her. Being involved in SCRAYP allowed her to act out the conflicts with her own culture, but it was also important for the artists to make sure she didn't alienate herself from her own culture and family in the process. As this was to be a public performance that her family might attend, the writers worked with her in order to protect her. Together they rewrote her character to portray her difficulties but also to bring in some of the positive aspects of her culture. Her brother's role was rewritten to be still keeping an eye on her activities, but with a motivation of loving her and wanting to protect her, rather than as a 'spy' for her father.

Managing the group dynamic

The artists had to be careful about how they maintained the group dynamic. They felt they could not suddenly become teachers and discipline the students when situations of conflict occurred. The artists referred the students to the verbal contract that they had to respect themselves and respect others. At all times there had to be a balancing act between setting boundaries and encouraging the students to state opinions and be heard.

An example of the need for such balance was seen in the MC program. As the performance got closer, the students needed an increased level of reassurance. Actually performing and experiencing success was not something that was very familiar to them. The young people had developed a feeling of ownership of the production but were still a long way from being ready or from fully understanding what was needed to perform the play. Opening night was approaching and there was a level of anxiety amongst all participants. This culminated in a heated debate over how to stage the performance. The artists felt the young people did not have enough voice projection for a large hall and so wanted to put the audience on the stage with the actors to make a much a smaller production space. The young people had different ideas. To them, performing was being on stage, while the audience were down below. This was their big moment and they didn't want the audience all squashed up next to them. This was their play and they wanted to be in control. Finally the artists gave way. The artists confirmed that it was the young people's play but now they had to put in the work to make it happen.

It was also important that the artists did not go outside the boundaries. In one situation at the MC, the artist swearing while talking to the students was seen by the students and the teachers as stepping outside these boundaries. The teacher commented

that:

these are vulnerable young people. To them an adult swearing is an adult who is out of control.

The value of a group process

One of the teachers commented that SCRAYP made young people visible in ways that were clearly neither too threatening for them nor too threatening for the audience.

Kids can have their moment and other people not resent it. Other people literally share the excitement of the good time that was had. It is one of the strengths of the cooperative large group. Some kids would be extraordinarily skilled, but they will still only get two or three lines. They can be rich in every one of these moments but not there for having the spotlight. Some surprisingly shy people put up their hand to be part of the performance.

Another teacher commented that everybody was contributing. The process incorporated students' suggestions so that everybody felt that their contributions were noticed and valued. He said, "it's the whole group, not just a few kids."

One student commented:

Having the small groups is good - about 5 to 7 in a group - because everyone can get their ideas across. You can actually do stuff. You can get your ideas heard and they all get put into the story whereas in everyday school it's not as good because you can't always get your opinion heard if there are 25 people yelling and screaming and you are trying to get your voice over the top of them.

Building relationships between the artists and the students

Student survey responses related how important it was to build relationships between the artists and the students. Students in the MC in particular rated the nature of the relationship they had developed with the SCRAYP artists as highly significant. The young people commented:

They are not like teachers. They actually talk about themselves and they're funny. They are still like strict but they are good. If we show them respect they show us respect, unlike teachers will.

It's more intimate and it is closer and you feel you can talk to them. You feel comfortable around them. Some kids don't like their teachers and they don't feel connected to their teachers on a personal level. So it's good this way because you get to know them and they get to know you. You see them and you can say 'Hi' and start talking to them because they know what you're about and you know what they're about. It is not the same as teachers or like anybody for that matter.

The artists used the informal time between structured workshops to develop positive relationships with the young people. In one session at the MC, the artists and the young people jammed together on the musical instruments. The artists

found that, after this, the students were more relaxed and more able to concentrate on the work needed. The young people commented:

Well, just say we are talking, we have a normal chat like they're our age. It's just like new people in Melton and we just explain to them what parts are bad and what are good. We just talk about anything really.

They (SCRAYP artists) are open to your ideas. They sort of relate to you more. Like rather than being police, they work with you.

They listen to you more.

The whole environment and atmosphere they set out makes people want to come.

One teacher commented similarly on the capacity of the artists to be consistently affirming of the kids.

Development of skills

The students identified a wide range of skills that they used. These included contributing ideas, establishing priorities, helping solve problems, practical drama techniques, confidence to perform and taking responsibility. One student commented that he had learnt leadership skills which involved how to talk to people face to face, making eye contact, and how to gain people's respect. The students said that they learnt skills that enabled them to develop and produce a public performance. One teacher commented that he was amazed that the students could get to that stage of performance and have a sense of really having achieved something.

Ownership versus the pressure to create a quality performance

The artists reported that because of the constraints of time and context there is often a tension between the facilitation of an exploratory process and the need to create an effective final performance. One example of this emerged when casting the young people at FCC. Normally casting is done on the basis of young people acting the parts that they have done the most to create during the workshop process. After some discussion with the project management team, the artists decided to cast one part differently because they felt that the girl who had created the part was not strong enough to successfully perform the part in the very limited time that was available. This provoked some tension between the artists and the young people. For the young people the issue was that the major parts always went to the usual people with high status in the school. It was important to the young people that the parts were not based on status in the school and that they could get a chance to play them. There was a conflict between making sure the play happened and the level of control given to the young people. In the end, the young woman took the part she had created and, with support from the artists in learning voice projection and acting skills, the young woman was able to perform the part successfully.

It was not until the actual performance that some of the characters the young people were playing came together. With any program that is putting a high emphasis on the participation and ownership by the young people there is also a risk that it will not happen.

Location of the program

The physical location of the program can influence the attitude of the students to their engagement. For the MC students, the location of the program off the school site on a school day made it very attractive. Several students commented that they hated school and did not want to be there. Because the SCRAYP program was off the school site, it was not regarded as being part of the school and therefore the students were willing to give it a try.

Engagement in the school community

Similarly, it is possible to identify through student survey responses and interviews, some of the factors that lead to increased student engagement with their school communities, through participation in the SCRAYP programs. Such factors include:

- improved relationships with peers;
- improved relationships with teachers.

Building relationships between students: Connection to peers

Socialising with friends has been identified as one of the most important factors connecting at risk young people to school (DETYA, 2001). The majority of students in both these programs indicated that getting to know the other students in the program better had been one of the most positive outcomes. However, the survey responses also indicate that the students did not immediately transfer this feeling to a connection to school and so did not respond as positively to feeling part of the school or feeling better about coming to school.

One term after the MC program had finished, the group of nine students from Melton Secondary College in the MC were still all attending school and were still strongly identifying as a group. The teacher involved with the program was very positive about the response from the students and their enhanced links to school and their peers. The young people commented:

It's good to be able to mix with other people and find out about them and kind of just get to know people who are different to you and are different ages.

It let us come out of our circle of friends and meet other people around the school.

SCRAYP helped everyone understand each other and it brought out a lot from people.

Some students found that SCRAYP helped

them get to know other students in the school who they wouldn't otherwise have had a chance to meet, and this helped them feel more connected to school overall. One student commented:

Before being in SCRAYP I was a bit uncomfortable coming to school because I didn't really know people and it felt strange to walk past everybody because I came in at Year 8. I didn't start in Year 7 and everybody knew each other, but doing this was a really good way to get to know people and made me feel more comfortable in what I was doing.

Connection to teachers

Students at both FCC and the MC commented positively on the relationships that they had developed with the teachers supervising the SCRAYP program. These teachers provided the link back to the school. The relationship that the students developed with that teacher or teachers was vital to the transfer of benefits derived from the program to the school setting. When the SCRAYP artists left, as is shown particularly in the MC, the SCRAYP program facilitated the development of positive relationships between the students and a teacher in the school through the teacher's involvement in the program as the supervising teacher. For some of the MC students, this was the first positive relationship that they had had with a teacher in the school. This was reinforced at one of the schools after the program had finished. A few of the SCRAYP students were in trouble with a teacher, but allowed the SCRAYP contact teacher to mediate for them because they now knew and trusted him after working with him in the SCRAYP program. However, students in both programs reported a much smaller improvement in relationships with other teachers in the school.

Doing stuff like this, you get to know the teachers and you get to know everybody else who is in it. I feel part of the school community because of this stuff.

One way of developing a link with the school community was the sharing of experiences with the teachers who were involved in the program. It was important that the teacher was physically present at the program. One teacher commented that, although they were only there as a backstop and not actively involved in the process, it was still important to be there to show the students that what they did mattered to them. She said:

There are always exciting moments and there are always acting gems and there are always breakthrough things that happen and it's nice not only that they're shared but they're seeing someone that they know and they'll see tomorrow has also shared it or seen it or laughed or seen how someone was so good.

Some of the Melton students still continued to get detentions for behaviour, but even here there were positive aspects. The students' performance in SCRAYP gave the teachers and students something to have a positive interaction about while in detention. The students commented that there

were more friendly teachers now. They still didn't like most of them but it was better than before. For some of the students, it was their first experience of doing something positive that drew praise from the teachers. At both FCC and MC, the teachers who were aware of the student performances used it as an opportunity to develop a better relationship with the students. One student commented that the coordinator had rung him up at home to congratulate him on his performance. A teacher from FCC who was not involved in the program was amazed at what some of the young people were able to do on stage. While shy in class, they had developed enough confidence to perform in front of an audience.

Personal development

Engagement in the classroom

The response from the surveys for the two different programs reflected the differing program clientele with whom the artists were working. The FCC survey drew a more positive response from students on whether SCRAYP had helped them to work better in classes, with over 50% of the students responding that they now worked quite a bit better or a lot better in class. Some replied that there was not a lot of change - because they were working well before and continued to work well after SCRAYP.

The students in the MC did not respond so positively. Over half the students commented that being involved in SCRAP had made little or no difference to the way that they worked in class. This response reflects the depth of disengagement from the classroom that many of these young people felt. This would take far more than a 10 week program to rectify. It also reflects that the processes that worked with the young people in the program were not necessarily continuing in the classroom.

There were specific stories of behavioural changes that were attributed to participation in SCRAYP. One student was coming to school because it allowed her to have time with her friends, but was skipping lots of classes. She was encouraged to join the SCRAYP program, and since being part of it, had noticed that she was going to more classes because she didn't want to fail.

Development in self esteem and confidence

All but two students at FCC indicated that there had been at least some improvement in how they felt about themselves, with 19 of the 31 students responding that they felt quite a bit or a lot better about themselves. All students in the MC reported an improvement in how they felt about themselves with 8 out of the 12 responding that they felt quite a bit or a lot better about themselves. Students from both programs reported a positive change in their ability to communicate with others.

The ability to communicate with others links with the development of skills in the students. Some

of the students reported being able to transfer the skills that they had learnt to other extra curricular activities at their school. One student commented that he hoped to be able to use his improved communication skills at school next year if he was selected for the peer support program and in the army cadets. He had already been able to use them in helping solve a dispute between a teacher and a student. His enhanced self esteem and confidence from involvement in SCRAYP had enabled him to see himself as someone who could take a leadership role and help solve disputes. This capacity had been developed through helping create a script that involved characters with problems. The students were then part of workshops and discussions that enabled them to provide solutions for those problems. Students commented:

It has built up my self confidence to be outspoken among my school friends. I was always afraid to speak in class 'cause I was a bit shy, but now after I went to SCRAYP I can speak freely in class.

Drama things really open people up. People are self conscious, so being in drama and getting to trust more helps people to open up more.

SCRAYP gave me the confidence to do many other things like dancing in front of people, speaking out loud and having the ability to talk to people.

I decided to try doing SCRAYP to bring me out of my shell and its worked pretty well.

relationships and the positive experience that the students had.

I thought SCRAYP was really fun and I think that should be the main priority.

The community performances on the weekend provide a link for students once the program has finished at the schools. However, this option is more accessible for those living in the inner west than for those living in the outer west of Melbourne.

At this stage a number of the FCC students have been and continue to be involved in the community performances while one of the MC students is being driven by his parents every weekend to Footscray to be part of the community

Being part of SCRAYP again

Students were also asked whether they wanted to be part of similar programs again:

	Not at all 1	A little 2	Some 3	Quite a bit 4	Lots 5
Footscray City College					
I want to be part of SCRAYP again	0	1	7	4	19
I want to be part of other SCRAYP performances in the community eg. y3p	2	1	6	7	15
Melton Cluster					
I want to be part of SCRAYP again	0	0	0	0	12
I want to be part of other SCRAYP performances in the community eg. y3p	1	0	1	0	10

These responses confirm students' enjoyment of and positive responses to the two programs. The indication that large numbers would like to be part of SCRAYP community performances that happen on the weekends, confirms the strength of the

Partnerships

Integral to the success of any SCRAYP program in schools is the partnership that must be developed between the school and the SCRAYP personnel. While the programs functioned effectively most of the time and very positive relationships were developed between the students and the SCRAYP personnel and between the majority of the program teachers and SCRAYP personnel, there were also some difficulties. In the vast majority of situations these difficulties were discussed and ways to work through the difficulties were developed. As has been noted in many other partnerships:

School community partnerships rely on good will with both partners being active participants. There needs to be an acknowledgement that they may have different agendas and concerns that may lead to significant difficulties. Therefore both parties need to be willing to spend time sorting out these problems (McLeod and Stokes, 1999: 29).

Different Agendas

Different agendas and concerns were seen when the issue of stereotyping arose at FCC early in the program. The willingness to spend time sorting out the problems was an important aspect of the development of trust in the partnership. The situation is described below.

In the early weeks of the FCC program, the student groups were workshopping ideas. The characters and scenes were based within cultural and subcultural groups in the development of their separate group stories. There was a strong ownership of the material by the different groups. However, this led though to some disquiet amongst some of the young people, which was expressed to the teachers at the school. Teachers reported the concerns - that the images presented were stereotypes - to the SCRAYP artists at a debriefing meeting. Examples given were that all the gangsters were Asian or Islanders, and that this was not the reality of either living in Footscray or being at the school.

The artists then discussed this at the planning session prior to the next workshop. The SCRAYP management team of Dave Kelman and Dave Everist talked about the issue with the artists. The artists felt that they were using drama processes to create spaces that would allow the young people to express views that were important to them and that this would then eventually lead to a questioning and deepening

of views. Although the characters could be seen as stereotypes, they regarded this as the beginning of the process of character creation rather than the end. The artistic team were concerned that the views of the school needed to be taken on board and that a solution needed to be found. They suggested that anti naturalistic devices could be used to move from direct representation of the characters to a symbolic representation. For example, in the original development of the script, there had been a murder of a gangster. This murdered gangster now became a ghost, a symbolic figure who could comment on and question the world that had been created rather than simply represent it. In the performance, the ghost rapped stories of his life with feelings of what had been lost and what had been wasted. These raps were developed in workshops with the young people creating the lines for the rap.

The management team also suggested that there could some deliberate integrating of the groups to make sure that one character or stereotype was not associated with one cultural group. At the next session, this issue was discussed. The young people were asked to move to groups other than those based in their friendships and cultures. The artists reported that they agreed to this because they understood why they were being asked to do it and how it would benefit the project. The young people later reported that they hadn't minded doing this and it had improved the performance

Most of the difficulties experienced highlight the need to develop an understanding the implications of operating in a school setting and the differences between school culture and SCRAYP culture. This is explored in the following comments.

Understanding the Different Cultures

One of the teachers described SCRAYP as allowing the young people to explore issues in ways that would not be possible in a normal school context. They were able to use knowledge from their world – the world they know by far the most about – which gave them unusual feelings of confidence and power in relation to the material. Associated with this exploration of youth culture and subculture were other behaviours and use of language, particularly swearing, that may be acceptable in a theatre setting but were not acceptable in a theatre in school setting.

The SCRAYP artists describe themselves as going to the 'dark places' with the young people. This relation to their own world was what engaged some young people who would not normally be interested in drama. The artists reported that they provided a safe and supportive environment that allowed young people to explore alternatives and positive outcomes. One teacher reported that a school principal attending the performance had expected something much 'blacker'; instead he felt that the students had looked at the characters' problems and then developed optimistic futures for them, including a capacity to provide their own solutions.

Schools, however, had to maintain a balance between ensuring that their own goals in regard to behaviour and appropriate language were met, while still allowing the exploration and engagement of the material to continue. The SCRAYP team reported that in the MC program they had a series of meetings with the schools to discuss the confrontational material and the behavioural issues in the program. These discussions involved the school principals and the teachers involved in the project. The meetings were a starting point in the process for developing a shared understanding between the different partners.

There also needed to be an understanding developed with the other partners in the process: the students. To develop appropriate language by the students, the artists reported that they encouraged the young people to regulate their own language. At both the FCC and MC performances there were examples when young people improvised dialogue that involved swearing. This caused some concern to teachers, students and the artistic team and was discussed by the schools with the artists and SCRAYP management.

Organisational support

One of the most important features of a successful partnership between SCRAYP and the schools was the level of teacher support required and given. In both programs there were teachers fully supporting the program who would encourage and remind students to attend, be there as a support throughout the workshop program, and be available if the young people experienced any difficulties. It was to these teachers that the students turned if they had any problems or issues with the program. When the teachers were not fully involved and supportive of the program, there was a much higher drop out rate among the students and much less satisfaction on the part of the school with the program. This happened with one school in the MC.

An example of a successful partnership that involved support from the school was seen when trying to establish the group at FCC. Throughout the program, establishing and maintaining a stable group at FCC had proved difficult. The SCRAYP artists

and the school teachers supporting the program set out to recruit a group of between 20 and 30 young people from diverse backgrounds. This was eventually achieved but there were hurdles overcome by the teachers and artists working together. These included:

- students being away on work experience;
- pressures of school work;
- after-school jobs; and
- peer pressure not to be involved in after-school activities.

The initial group did not reflect the diversity of the school population: the students were mainly from one cultural group, and there were far more girls than boys. To try to counter this, the SCRAYP artists presented an improvised, high-energy performance around youth issues at the Year 11 and Year 9 assemblies in order to give the students a sense of the program. The presentations involved older students in Years 11 and 12 from a range of cultural backgrounds who had been in SCRAYP the previous year. After this, a broader range of students - including a greater number of boys - began attending SCRAYP. This was also achieved through the support of the AP and the SWC, who encouraged a diverse range of students to attend. Throughout the 10 weeks, a core group of students was involved in addition to other groups and individuals who moved in and out of the program. The core group included older students from Years 11 and 12 who had been in SCRAYP the previous year. These students had a strong existing relationship with the SCRAYP artists and provided a positive example to the younger students.

Teacher involvement and school engagement

A small number of teachers - either one or two - were involved at each of the schools. This limited the impact that the program could have in the broader school context. There was no process by which the methods used to engage the young people in the program could be transferred to the classroom setting. Having a limited number of teachers involved in the program also limited the relationships that the young people could develop with other teachers in the school. While some other teachers were aware of the program and attended the performances (which gave them a very different perspective of the young people involved), other teachers were not as aware of students' involvement and so did not use this as an opportunity to gain a different perception of the young people.

A possible way to work through both these issues would be to make all teachers in the school aware of the program through staff meetings and to plan to have some teachers involved in a professional

development program that aimed to transfer the drama methods across the curriculum. This would enhance the outcomes for the young people and not rely on only one committed teacher in the school for program sustainability. The involvement of a group of people also allows for the partnership to continue if an individual leaves the school.

Joint planning and development time

Both programs had a short planning and development time prior to the start of workshops. Time is always in short supply in schools and community organisations; planning and development time is rarely resourced to the level that would allow for the optimal operation of the program. These programs were no exception. In such circumstances, there is pressure to move to action before working out shared goals and values. While there was some awareness of this, especially with FCC working with SCRAYP for a second year, there was still a tendency to get the program happening and sort out the difficulties as they went.

One teacher commented:

I'm keen that we build on what we have learnt after two years of work together ... so we have already started discussions about how to build the involvement base from our school. I think we're at the stage and possibly the artists are too, that we can get closer in the planning and co-creating, particularly in regard to the content. My biggest disappointment is still in that area. I'm sure there are ways of working that extract and capture the kinds of wisdoms and commentary that I hear every day in my classroom, but that I didn't feel I saw/heard in their play development.

One school in the MC was not fully involved in the negotiations or in developing a shared vision of the program. As a result, there was a lack of understanding about what the program involved. The teacher from this school felt that when their students went to the program there were only SCRAYP values in place and the school values were ignored.

Communication

Effective communication between partners is vital for the success of any program. Communication between the SCRAYP artists and the schools at times was at times difficult, and contact was not always made when necessary. There needed to be at least one reliable way to pass information between the school and SCRAYP through email or fax or phone contacts. These basic lines of communication were not always established, and changes to programs and follow up after sessions did not always happen. One teacher suggested that it would have been useful if the artists had let the teachers know what was required of the students in the week between workshops especially coming up to performance

times. Teachers involved would then be able to remind students, for example, that they needed to learn their script during the week or collect props. It was not enough to only mention it to the students in the workshop. It would have been beneficial for the teachers to have a clear written statement regarding what the students needed to do.

It would also have been helpful to develop an understanding of how each of the partners worked and the pressures and time constraints on each. One teacher found that she was asked to have material photocopied a few minutes before a workshop, when she was expected to also be at two other meetings. If this had been organised for earlier in the day then provision could have been made and the frustration of too many jobs at one time avoided.

The artists worked on several different, non permanent jobs. While this brought an energy and liveliness to their role in the workshops, it also created tensions around continuity in the schools. Prior discussions about when artists were available and how continuity would be maintained, may have alleviated some of the school concerns and developed an understanding on the part of the schools about the insecure work climate of the artists.

The Mix of Students

The program location within the school structure and the nature of students that it was trying to reach were important areas for discussion between SCRAYP and school personnel. There need to be discussions about whether a broad range of students should attend the program or whether the program should focus on one particular client group. The two programs provided some insights into the two different approaches.

The MC program was essentially a withdrawal program for students in Years 9 and 10 who were deemed at risk by the school. The resilience literature raises questions about the effect on overall group behaviour of putting 'at risk' young people together without a modifying influence or someone to model accepted behaviour (Dishion, 1996). Putting at risk students from three schools together posed a number of difficulties for the artists involved in the program. A large amount of their time was spent on behavioural management. Some students dropped out after feeling uncomfortable with the behaviour of the group. While the overall program result was positive for the young people, there was potential for negative behaviour reinforcement that could have seriously undermined the benefits of the program. There had to be a low artist-to-student ratio (1:5) to be able to achieve a performance that could be brought to the public. Even with this low ratio, artists reported a high level of stress from the pressure of getting the performance together.

FCC had a wider range of students involved across several year levels, from different levels of student engagement and from different social

groups. This provided the opportunity for a mixing of school and social groups, as well as for modelling of behaviour between the students. It provided an opportunity to target some young people who could then be encouraged to participate by others who felt comfortable with performance and involvement.

Conclusions, Implications for the Future

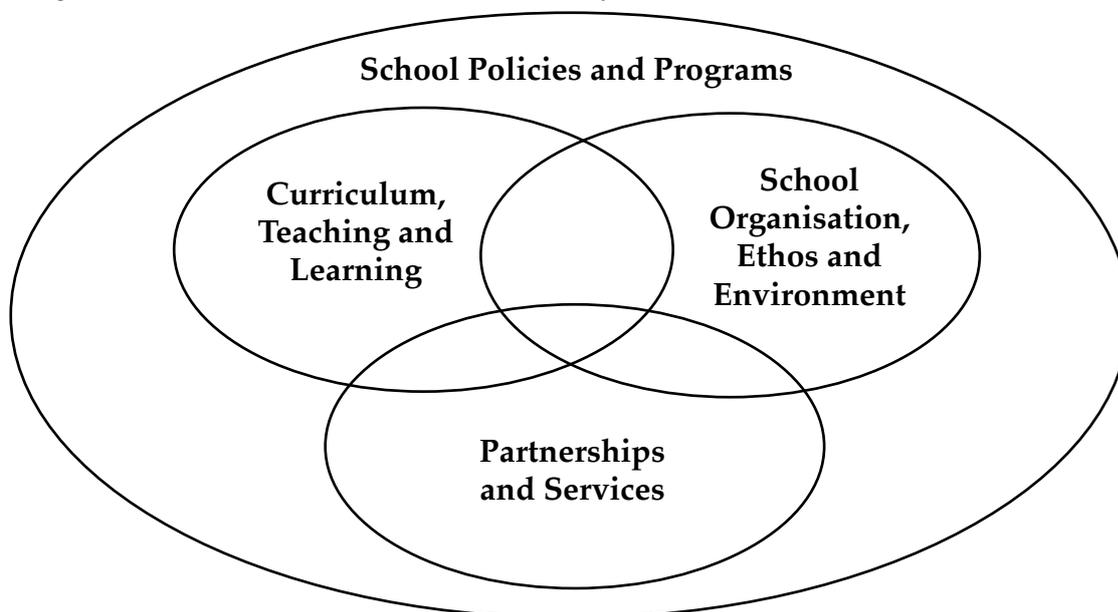
How could SCRAYP be part of a whole school approach to engaging young people through drama?

The existence of a model or framework enables schools (and their partners) to see their practice in a wider context. The framework gives schools (and their partners) a language to describe and understand their work. (McLeod and Stokes, 1999:8).

A whole school approach framework provides links between all parts of the school organisation. It provides a framework to maximise the impact of SCRAYP and its drama method through transferring the learnings about engaging young people to the school setting. It also provides insights into the areas that need to be developed to make this a possibility.

Taking a Whole School Approach

A whole school approach has been visualised as including three interlinked domains, located within



overall school policies and programs:

Health Promoting School Framework (World Health Organization, 1992) in Mind Matters (2000: 19).

Currently SCRAYP is located firmly within the 'partnerships and services' ellipse. While there is no overt involvement of SCRAYP in 'school organisation, ethos and environment' and 'curriculum, teaching and learning', the outcomes for the young people involved in SCRAYP reflect

many of the curriculum and ethos goals for engaging young people in a health promoting school. These include:

- valuing and celebrating diversity of culture,
- developing caring relationships;
- support for students at risk;
- the use of interactive teaching strategies;
- high but achievable expectations;
- frequent formative feedback;
- relevant meaningful tasks; and
- catering for a range of learning styles (Mind Matters, 2000: 19).

Linking With the Curriculum

All schools except one are keen to be involved with SCRAYP again and continue to develop a working and growing partnership. The SCRAYP personnel acknowledge that it has taken a few years of involvement with schools to build trust and

understanding. From this base they are now able to explore other ways of working with the schools that involve stronger links with the curriculum. This can be done in many ways, including working with teachers more closely in the classroom.

Focus of Curriculum Links

One example of teachers working with artists in the classroom is the Chicago Arts Partnership in

Education (CAPE). Over the last decade, the focus of CAPE has been on the development of an integrated program between artists and classroom teachers. Evaluation of such programs indicate that the most common art forms used in integration have been the visual arts and theatre. Teachers were more able to conceptually understand and integrate visual arts and drama than dance or music into their subject areas. This program recommends using the visual arts or drama in professional development as the starting point for the integration of the arts across the curriculum. It was important to start where the teachers felt comfortable (Waldorf, 2002).

As noted before, transferring the drama methods of SCRAYP into the curriculum would enhance outcomes for young people through improved teacher-student relationships and program sustainability.

Resourcing Curriculum Links

The issue then becomes one of resourcing. As is the situation for many prevention or early intervention programs, SCRAYP is a resource intensive model in terms of requirements for artist and teacher support, in order to gain its positive results for the young people, in the area of connection to peers, school and community. To broaden the program would require greater resources; but there would also be enhanced benefits from engaging more fully with the schools across different curriculum areas. Is there funding available to resource SCRAYP as a model that is integrated into the school environment for all students? Or must it be left as a one-off, add-on program for some students.

In terms of the broader focus of this evaluation, SCRAYP has provided an effective way of developing protective factors and is therefore strongly endorsed as a crime prevention program. It has successfully developed and used drama processes to improve the social competence, positive self concept and self esteem, of the young people involved in the programs. This improved social competence increases the protective factors that the

young people have against risk taking and criminal behaviour.

Recommendations

The SCRAYP program could be broadened in several ways that would enhance the outcomes for young people in the school setting and contribute to program sustainability. These include:

Program development

- Joint planning with schools to develop shared goals, vision, values and understandings;
- Professional development of staff at the schools to encourage and support the transfer of appropriate drama methods into a range of curriculum subjects;
- Awareness raising of all staff at the schools through attendance at staff and other briefing meetings by SCRAYP personnel;
- Integrating the arts across the curriculum by having an artist work in the classroom with teachers on an ongoing basis.

Program implementation

- Nominating a staff team at the school to be responsible for working with SCRAYP personnel;
- Lengthening the program from 10 to 20 weeks;
- Ensuring that there are effective lines of communication between school staff and

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Appendix

SCRAYP Youth Arts With An Edge - Methodology and Guiding Principles (previously unpublished) by Dave Kelman (2002)

Introduction

SCRAYP programs focus on a rich and exploratory process to generate an original performance. Young people enter into a partnership with the young and emerging artists to create a piece of art unique to the young people. This work expresses what the young people want to say.

Aims and Objectives of SCRAYP:

Aim

To empower young people to express their thoughts and feelings through art and, by doing so, deepen their understanding of themselves and society.

Objectives

- Increase self-esteem and self-awareness;
- Explore issues relevant to the young people;
- Make coherent artistic statements about society;
- Challenge prejudices, stereotypes and destructive behaviours;
- Give young people a platform for their thoughts and feelings to be heard by their wider community;
- Develop a greater understanding of art – both the forms and skills associated with them;
- Develop emotional intelligence, language use and conceptual thought.

Process versus Product

The development of original performance is at the heart of SCRAYP's work. This is generated from a rich and enjoyable exploratory process. If the process isn't fun it won't be successful and it is unlikely that the performance will work to its full potential. From the outset, SCRAYP programs have an agenda of making

performance; this has the effect of giving the process a public dimension and puts the young people in the role of theatre-makers/artists by saying to them: "what do you want to express about your lives?" The young people enter into a partnership with the artists to create a piece of art which is unique to the young people, which they own and which expresses what they want to say.

Art for Understanding

Art takes aspects of human experience and represents it - as sound, vision, language, movement or a combination thereof. In that act of representation it also interprets; it makes a statement about that experience. This is a powerful thing to do. If we can represent something, we can objectify it and hold it up to scrutiny and thereby deepen our understanding of it. If, in the same moment, we can put our own interpretation on it and bend it to our will, then we can create a model for being able to control our own experience and for influencing other people. If, however, the world we create bears no relation to the real world of lived experience, then it becomes merely fantasy and the model will have no relevance to reality.

Drama is the social art form. It is the form we use to explore human interactions. It is also a collaborative art form, a form created by human interactions. Drama empowers young people to construct a model of the world which interprets the world. This involves making judgments about human behaviour:

- *What would she do in this situation?*
- *Why would she do this?*
- *What does it tell us about her that she does this?*
- *What does it tell us about the world that she is living in?*

The construction through drama of a complex, multi-faceted model of human experience provides a framework for thinking about human behaviour and increasing our understanding of it. It provides a framework for conceptual thought: if a person will behave in this way in these circumstances, how will they behave in other circumstances? Perhaps most importantly of all, it provides perspective, the ability to look at human behaviour from a distance and understand its workings; a process that deepens understanding of ourselves and others.

The Role of the Artist

SCRAYP has a social justice agenda. This influences both the contexts in which we work and the nature of the art that we create. In approaching a group of young people in a school or community context, we aim to set up a process which allows them to voice their concerns and issues. As artists we help the group to select those ideas which the group cares most passionately about and which will yield the most exciting and demanding art. It is important that those selections genuinely represent the will of the group and that this process is exciting and enjoyable.

The Relationship of Artist and Young People

As SCRAYP artists, what type of relationship are we seeking with young people? It is one of mentorship and guidance but also one of fellow traveller - a diver in the same troubled waters in which we all swim. For the young SCRAYP artists, the relationship is closer, more raw and more intense. They are role models and peer educators, and the non-hierarchical nature of that relationship engages young people who could not otherwise be reached and can engage them more deeply.

The Primacy of Content

SCRAYP aims to find the content that is most relevant to the young people. This content engages their passions and sense of justice and encourages an active engagement with the world they inhabit. It is also the role of SCRAYP to create art that allows for the possibility of social and individual change.

In our experience, young people often want to explore problematic, high risk and destructive behaviours in their fiction. They can often express and relate to a very grim world view. The drama we create with young people does not generally deal in positive images or the world as we might wish it to be. It deals with the problems and challenges of the world as young people experience it. As SCRAYP artists we aim for a safe and enjoyable engagement with such material and for an exploration of it with young people in a positive and empowering way. Empowerment in this context involves young people exploring real life choices in a safe environment, analysing the reasons behind destructive behaviours, and making artistic comments on the choices

available to people in particular situations.

As an artist working with young people, there is a huge weight of responsibility:

- A responsibility to challenge dominant paradigms and accepted truths;
- A responsibility to provide hope and possibilities for change when dealing with destructive behaviours or social injustice but not to provide simplistic positive or politically correct solutions to the very real problems facing young people;
- Above all, a responsibility to create art which allows young people to find and explore their own humanity.

Process

At the centre of SCRAYP's process is negotiation: listening and responding to young people's ideas in order to shape an artistic statement which is complex, subtle and challenging and over which they have ownership. As artist facilitators working with young people, the art of questioning is at the centre of the process of negotiating ownership. By listening to the responses of the group and trying to register their level of engagement, we are guided to where the drama should go.

For example, when working with adolescent boys and girls, the attraction of urban gangsters is enormously strong. One could dismiss this as media stereotyping and decide to steer the drama away from it. SCRAYP artists, however, will often decide to steer the work right into the middle of the issue and to explore what is underlying the attraction of this material. Often it is the desire to feel powerful, to feel like they have control over their own lives and over others, instead of the powerlessness they feel in reality. Such underlying meanings are the secondary symbolism of the drama. By exploring this desire, but also its problems and complications, young people can discover that the gangster model of empowerment is no empowerment at all and that the gangsters are as much victims of their circumstance as the people they prey on.

There are moments when the facilitator asks the right question and the level of engagement in the room suddenly and dramatically increases. In finding and developing these moments, the artist facilitator is constantly reading the group: the body language, eye contact, noise level - the 'electricity' in the space. S/he is also analysing: thinking about what is underlying the level of engagement and why that particular character or event is resonating so strongly with the group. By reading these resonances, s/he selects appropriate metaphors for the group to explore.

In trying to establish a female character, the issues of sexuality and relationships emerge. Some adolescent boys are keen to describe the female

Character as Protection and Protection Into Role

As soon as a character is established and named, s/he becomes the property of the group that created him/her and is quite distinct from the actor who may portray him or her in a given moment. Understanding and highlighting this process is an essential protection which stops young people 'acting' themselves and being exposed to comment and judgement. The facilitator must constantly make decisions about how close to a particular young person a character should be allowed to go.

The use of the 'empty chair' **Protection into Role** techniques pioneered by Gavin Bolton, can be extraordinarily powerful, whilst giving the group the safety they may need:

For example, to help establish the character of a young woman who wants to leave home, but no one is willing to act her in front of the group, an empty chair is set in the space and the artist in role as the parent can talk to the chair as if the girl were sitting there and anyone in the group can answer as the girl from where they are sitting - ie just providing her voice, not physically representing her. A different person may provide the girl's voice with each response.

Conventions and Skills

The skilful and appropriate use of drama conventions is an essential part of the practice of an artist/facilitator working with young people. However conventions are only ever a means to an end and are constantly being adapted to the context in which they are being used. Any rigid attempt to utilise particular conventions to particular situations will lead to stale and formulaised work.

There is a huge emphasis on the teaching of skills within drama education circles. In SCRAYP's practice, the content/story always comes first and, if particular skills need to be developed to adequately express part of the story, then the skills are fed in and developed as needed. This approach often leads to the development of skills at a very high level.

Teacher/Artist in Role

Role work, demonstration and improvisation drawing on the suggestions of the young people are at the centre of SCRAYP's practice. An in-role intervention places the facilitator in a wholly different relationship to the young people with whom one is working, compared to intervening outside the fiction of the drama. For example, in a scene exploring issues of violence - a scene in which a group of men are being violent to an isolated victim, a challenge to this conduct could be much stronger from the artist in role as a member of the group of men rather than as a facilitator outside the scene. It is a primary tool for deepening drama,

which is developing a felt engagement with a more sophisticated understanding of a scene.

Metaphor and Symbol

As artists we deal consciously in metaphor and symbol. Symbols - a person or object which represent something beyond themselves - are the key to the development of metaphorical meanings; they are the bridges that enable us to move from the particular to the general or even the universal.

For example, in the story of the murdered young man devised with the young people at Footscray City, it was when the artists introduced the boy's ghost into the play that the play moved from being a television-derived whodunit, to become a universal story of wasted youth.

Appropriate symbols carry meanings far beyond themselves: a photo represents family, a wooden box represents the closing away of part of ourselves. Theatre is at its most eloquent when meanings are carried through the conscious use of metaphor and the appropriate use of selected symbols.

The use of the correct object becomes the prop which allows the drama to move to a deeper and more complex level. In same way as in childhood, the use of props in play enable the child to make developmental advances, so the appropriate use of symbol advances drama. It is possible to tell almost straight away if the prop that one has selected is appropriate from the response of the young people to it. The right symbolic prop has an almost magnetic attraction and becomes the focal point of the scene.

For example, the Melton play *Call of the Devil* is about the desire of four young people to escape the oppression of their daily lives. The introduction of fake dollars - stolen money they have stumbled upon - has a galvanising effect on the scenes into which it is introduced: the money is brandished almost as a sacred artifact. The play concludes with the highly symbolic action of the money being burnt by the disillusioned but genuinely empowered young people.

Humour

Humour is an invaluable part of the drama process and the theatrical product. Although inappropriate 'showing off' behaviour and attempts at humour can be the bane of the youth theatre director's life, to allow even the most serious of content to be explored in an environment that allows for fun and humour is essential and empowering.

In performance humour can be found in unexpected places. Material that will shock an adult audience will delight the more anarchic humour of youth: eg a murdered body being cut up and dumped in the river can generate laughter at the clowning skills of the dead body and the gruesome mime of

the murderer, without reducing the serious content to farce. Satire is a valuable form with young people although its use carries inherent dangers: who is being laughed at and why? Is it being used as a way of ridiculing unfair, vulnerable targets?

Evaluation

Evaluative strategies are structured into SCRAYP's process. Using appropriate conventions to develop reflection - thought-tracks, discussion with alter-egos, dreams etc - participants consider the state of mind of the characters they have created and how the events of the play have impacted upon them. In doing this they deepen their understanding of the play.

The more the participants understand the form and are able to control it, the more effective the process will be. Discussions about the best way to achieve a given effect are built into SCRAYP's practice. SCRAYP projects are democratic, and young people are encouraged to raise issues and make decisions about issues affecting the project - everything from casting and staging issues to the length of breaks - often involving extensive discussion/debate with the artistic team.

SCRAYP projects are also evaluated after they are completed both through discussion and utilisation of the art form - freeze-frames, reconstructing key moments - to analyse what has worked well in a performance and why. These evaluations also allow young people to raise issues and directly criticise the artistic team, something they are encouraged to do and which always makes for interesting listening.

Scripting

Although SCRAYP utilises a variety of performance modes, the spoken word is at the heart of our work and this is the primary form for the creation of meaning. Scripting, therefore, becomes an essential stage in the process.

The aim of the script writer or script writing team is to accurately reflect the voice of the young people and to order their material in such a way as to effectively communicate the meanings discovered in the devising process to an audience.

The process of scripting is one of ordering the material: honing the language used and ensuring consistency in the characterisations and narrative events. Although as writers we are aiming to create the most effective and complete script possible, it is of crucial importance that it is:

- owned by the young people;
- an accurate reflection of their ideas; and
- a suitable vehicle for them to be able to achieve success as performers.

Writing workshops with young people and opportunities for the cast to criticise and edit the

script are also an essential part of good practice.

Performance

Performance is central to SCRAYP's work. It is about the discoveries made in the process of creation, and the possibility that this act of communication may affect the wider community to which it is shown. There is still a tension between process and product, but drama without the wider social meaning given to it by a public performance seems closed and limited.

There is a tension in SCRAYP's work between the need for skills and precision and sophistication in the art form and the primacy of the content. The most important thing about an actor is that s/he knows what s/he is saying, why s/he is saying it and has a deep personal commitment to the work s/he has created as an individual and as part of the group. Some of the performances which have achieved this high level of ownership have been extraordinary because of the passion and honesty of the performance. Often this far exceeds the effect achieved by a professional actor utilising a far greater degree of technique. There can also be two dramas unfolding and interacting at the same time: the drama of the play and the drama of the actor and her or his personal struggle to actually be there performing material that is so relevant to her/his life. The interaction of these two dramas can lead to deeply moving performances. It is important to understand that SCRAYP never sets young people up to fail in performance and young people only reveal what they want to reveal about themselves in a way they are comfortable with. They are always in control of the situation.

The Need for a Moral/Political Framework

If the sort of high-risk, challenging drama that SCRAYP actively seeks to create is to be genuinely empowering, it needs to happen within a moral and political framework which constantly evaluates, questions and analyses the work. There are so many ways that such art can become oppressive: by glamorising destructive behaviours, stereo-typing and 'problematizing' young people, unconscious sexism and racism, and the marginalising of sub-sections of the group. As artists working with young people we are daily walking this tight-rope, with only our values and the strength of our practice as a safety net.
