

Pedagogy of Distance: Touch in Education

by

Maria Ellene Dimas

B.Ed., University of British Columbia, 2002

Thesis Submitted In Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree of
Master of Arts

in the
Arts Education Program
Faculty of Education

© Maria Ellene Dimas 2015
SIMON FRASER UNIVERSITY
Fall 2015

All rights reserved.

However, in accordance with the *Copyright Act of Canada*, this work may be reproduced, without authorization, under the conditions for "Fair Dealing." Therefore, limited reproduction of this work for the purposes of private study, research, criticism, review and news reporting is likely to be in accordance with the law, particularly if cited appropriately.

Approval

Name: Maria Ellene Dimas
Degree: Master of Arts (Education)
Title of Thesis: *Pedagogy of Distance: Touch in Education*
Examining Committee: **Chair:** Michael Ling
Senior Lecturer

Celeste Snowber
Senior Supervisor
Associate Professor

Lynn Fels
Supervisor
Associate Professor

Stephen Smith
Internal/External Examiner
Associate Professor

Date Defended/Approved: December 2, 2015

Ethics Statement



The author, whose name appears on the title page of this work, has obtained, for the research described in this work, either:

- a. human research ethics approval from the Simon Fraser University Office of Research Ethics,

or

- b. advance approval of the animal care protocol from the University Animal Care Committee of Simon Fraser University;

or has conducted the research

- c. as a co-investigator, collaborator or research assistant in a research project approved in advance,

or

- d. as a member of a course approved in advance for minimal risk human research, by the Office of Research Ethics.

A copy of the approval letter has been filed at the Theses Office of the University Library at the time of submission of this thesis or project.

The original application for approval and letter of approval are filed with the relevant offices. Inquiries may be directed to those authorities.

Simon Fraser University Library
Burnaby, British Columbia, Canada

update Spring 2010

Abstract

Pedagogical touch is becoming an endangered species in the learning environments we create with our students. Many school districts are adopting no-touch policies without considering the social and emotional implications for students. Through ethnodramatic, performative and autoethnographic writing, difficult questions are posed. Are interpersonal physical connections between students and educators an important and valuable expression in the pedagogical relationship? What personal, experiential and/or institutional considerations influence the pedagogical choices that teachers make in using touch? Does fear play a role in making these pedagogical decisions? Does gender matter? This body of work is divided into two sections. The first piece consists of an ethnodrama titled "You Were Warned." The play deals with the complexities of touch and teacher's lives in the politicized school environment, drawn from interviews with educators. The second piece contextualizes the ethnodrama and work as a whole. This section also explores the methodological underpinnings that gave me permission to engage with the data through ethnodrama, performative writing, autoethnography and how these methodologies mediated my struggle with finding voice.

Keywords: touch; education; gender; teachers; teacher discipline; ethnodrama; autoethnography; performative writing

Dedication

To my mother: for always having open arms and an open heart, and for always touching babies without their parents' permission. You bring me so much joy and give me so much love.

Acknowledgements

A big heartfelt thank you to all the incredible individuals who helped me through this journey. Celeste Snowber and Lynn Fels, your warmth, vitality, passion, creativity and support amaze me. You have both been so generous. Thank you for giving me the creative space and time throughout this journey and thank you for asking me the hard questions with my inquiry, writing and research. Your incredible kindness and encouragement have been integral to this work being birthed. Also, thank you to Stephen Smith for being a gentle and thoughtful examiner. Your work and ideas have inspired further inquiry into touch, intention and intuition.

To my friends for listening to me babble for countless hours on this subject, thank you for holding space for me. A special thank you to Lee-Anne and John-Henry for sharing your home, your time, your ideas and your hearts. I don't think I would have gotten here without you both. And to Brent, who having spent countless hours with me, surely should get partial credit for this thesis. Thank you for helping me shape and articulate my ideas. And ditto to Monica – thank you for always listening and helping me sort through life, thesis and otherwise. And thank you to those friends who participated in the interviews – you know who you are – without your candidness and honesty, none of this would have been possible. Much gratitude to those who helped make the presentation happen. And thank you to my girls – Amanda, Bonnie and Lorraine. What a beautiful cohort of support. To the rest of you, I love you but I only have one page.

And finally, thank you to my family – Mama, Baba, Pho, Andrew, Nicholas, Chris, Alex, Ryan, Jenna, Rachel and George. Thank you for providing me with this rich cultural tapestry to draw from and thank you for your incredible support in all that I do. Much love.

Table of Contents

Approval	ii
Ethics Statement	iii
Abstract	iv
Dedication	v
Acknowledgements	vi
Table of Contents	vii
List of Acronyms	viii
Preface	ix
You Were Warned	1
Act I	1
Act II	44
A Methodology of the Heart	84
Finding Voice	97
References	109
Appendices	115
Appendix A. Interview Prompt Questions	116

List of Acronyms

BCTF	British Columbia Teachers' Federation
DT	Detention
G&T	Gin and Tonic
IEP	Individual Education Plan
PA	Public Announcement
PE	Physical Education
PSA	Public Service Announcement
RCMP	Royal Canadian Mounted Police
TOC	Teacher on Call
TRB	Teacher Regulation Branch

Preface

I hesitate to touch...But I know. I know how good it is. The surge of support when she placed her hand on my spine. Being held in your arms. The stroking of hair. The release of massage. I come from two schools: Mom – kissing, hugging, rubbing, running fingers...Dad- cold and awkward. And yet I find myself following him at times. And then I live in two schools: Theatre – hours spent moving, touching, releasing...Education – devoid of touch. Do NOT touch warnings at every hour of every minute of everyday that I work with humans. Humans that hurt. Humans that don't know what healthy touch is. Humans that aren't touched. And I know how good it is. And yet I hesitate. I hesitate to touch.

There is a crisis in education, yet not many people seem to be talking about it. Perhaps this is because it is a touchy subject. Perhaps it is because not enough people are touched by it. Perhaps it is because for many of us, we are out of touch, and have not seemed to notice. More and more, school districts are enacting no-touch policies that are leaving our children untouched. Teachers and districts, unable to negotiate the fall out from accusations, are simply forgoing physical contact. But what do we lose?

Through ethnodramatic, performative and autoethnographic writing I hope to seat the reader in difficult questions. Are interpersonal physical connections an important and valuable expression in human interaction? Is acceptance of touch necessarily tied to gender? How do the political structures and institutions that shape education affect the pedagogical choices that teachers make in using touch? Should they shape them? Does fear play a role in making these pedagogical decisions? Why is there fear?

An investigation of the issue of pedagogical touch, where a teacher and a student are in physical contact, is an important and timely discussion. What is deemed as professional is no longer related to the education of the whole child – their

academic, social and emotional needs, but to what will cause the district and teachers less difficulty in the unfortunate event of an accusation.¹

This body of work is divided into two sections. The first piece consists of an ethnodrama titled "You Were Warned," drawn from interviews with educators. The play deals with the complexities of touch and teachers' lives in the politicized school environment. Ethnodrama was specifically chosen to represent the research as it invites the reader to engage with the data in an emotional and provocative way. Some readers may find the language offensive and question its place. However, I would argue that ethnodrama and autoethnography seek verisimilitude,² and as an autoethnographer, witnessing the use of this type of language has certainly been my reality.

The second piece contextualizes the ethnodrama and my work as a whole. Borrowing the phrase from Ronald Pelias, 'A Methodology of the Heart' discusses my personal struggles with non-touching as a pedagogical practice, and how those struggles led to this inquiry. This section also explores the methodological underpinnings that gave me permission to engage with the data through ethnodrama, performative writing, autoethnography and how these methodologies mediated my struggle with finding voice.

As will soon become clearly conspicuous, I am imploring us to have a conversation about touch; perhaps because it is a touchy subject; perhaps it was because it did touch me; perhaps because I am in touch

¹ Alison Jones, "Touching Children: Policy, Social Anxiety and the 'Safe' Teacher," *Journal of Curriculum Theorizing* vol.19, no.2 (2003): 106.
<http://web.a.ebscohost.com.proxy.lib.sfu.ca/ehost/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?vid=5&sid=1f2f8b9d-5379-49f6-9a41-d0661c384037%40sessionmgr4004&hid=4114> In her discussion of New Zealand no touch policies, Jones notes that these policies exist " because all touch is potentially dangerous or risky, the avoidance of physical contact - and not being alone with a child - will 'lessen' or eliminate the risk, and increase teacher (and child) 'safety.'"

² Carolyn Ellis, Tony E. Adams and Arthur P. Bochner, "Autoethnography: An Overview," *Historical Social Research* vol.36, no.4 (2011): 282.
http://www.jstor.org.proxy.lib.sfu.ca/stable/23032294?seq=1#page_scan_tab_contents

You Were Warned

Act I

Act 1 Scene 1

(Lights up on a nondescript school library. A group of teachers and one administrator are gathered, watching a video on the screen. A woman, almost like Effie Trinket from the Hunger Games addresses the audience. The film has a 1950's PSA feel to it.)

Voice: Maintaining professional boundaries with you and your students is paramount to protecting your own and the district's reputation. Whenever possible, never, ever touch a child.

(Groans and mutterings are heard from the group.)

Voice: If a child does ask for a hug, offer up a high five instead.

Erin: Hey! Way to deal with the grief of your dad dying, high five!

(Giggles are heard from the staff. The admin remain serious.)

Voice: If you must hug a child, opt for a side hug. Put your arm around the child's back and shoulder, standing hip-to-hip, careful not to grip too firmly. But remember, this is only recommended in special circumstances. The district maintains its position that touching should be avoided at all costs whenever possible. Thank you for listening and the district would like to wish you best of luck with your new teaching year!

Erin: That is the biggest crock of shit I have ever heard! It's utterly ridiculous.

Doug: The district is very serious about this. It's designed to protect you and your career Erin. And all of your colleagues.

Bob: But you have to admit it's not very realistic Doug. As a teacher, there are times you need to come in contact with your students. Do you think I could teach P.E. and never touch a kid? How do I demonstrate a block out?

Sarah: What's a block out?

Bob: The other team shoots, you're on defense, you got to turn around and sit on that other guy's knee to get him out of the way, and it's a legal play that you have to teach in basketball.³ So how do I demonstrate that without touching a kid?

Sarah: Oh....wow. And I thought band was bad.

Doug: I realise there are times you have to come into physical contact with children. We are recommending that you protect yourself at all costs. Can you not get another student to demonstrate?

Bob: Ya, it's really simple to get someone to physically demonstrate something they've never done before.

Sarah: How about in band? I have to reach behind kids to help them hold their instruments correctly. It's looks creepy and could be completely taken the wrong way.

Doug: Look, I'm trusting that you will use your professional judgement. Sometimes you might need to touch children, but if there isn't a need I suggest you avoid it at all costs.

Erin: This is ridiculous! The pendulum has swung way too far! Touching is a natural and healthy thing. Shouldn't we be modelling what healthy touch is? But no, we

³ Holly Smithe (Teacher/Counselor), in discussion with the author, April 2014.

are going to sit back and let fear of an accusation rule our relationships! It's bullshit! And accusations or not, you aren't going to get me to change how I relate to kids because there is nothing wrong with what I do!

(She stops, almost surprised at how passionate she has gotten. Some of the staff and admin are staring at her wide eyed... awkward silence ensues.)

Bob: *(Begins to clap his hands.)* Well said Erin. I think we need more of your passion because you are right. You can't let fear dictate your actions, because let's be honest. If you're accused it's game over, guilty or not. Your career is over.

Doug: That is not true. If there is no evidence you will be exonerated.

Hugh: Doug, don't lie to your staff. It's a mark of poor leadership.

Doug: Hugh, this is not the time for clever comments. *(To staff.)* The message is this, maintain professional boundaries with your students and there will never be a need to be exonerated. Now before this goes any further and we waste any more time, I'd like to move on to the next item on the agenda, staffing. As some of you might know, Tammy Hill has been struggling with her health and will be on medical leave effective immediately, for at least three months.

Cam: Again?

Sarah: Wow, this is a new record, even for her. We're not even back a day!

Jen: Before we make any more snide comments, I'd like to remind you all as your union rep, that we do have a code of ethics and I strongly recommend that you adhere to those ethics. Keep your comments to yourself.

Doug: We all wish Tammy a speedy recovery. Sarah, could the sunshine fund please send her a card and some flowers?

Sarah: Super, she doesn't even have to contribute into it, but gets all of the perks, every year.

Jen: Sarah!

Sarah: Yes sir! I'll get right on that!

Doug: The posting has gone out and will close by next week. Hopefully we can have someone in her position by the following week. In the mean time I'd like to introduce her temporary replacement, John Lamb.

(Everybody claps, a chorus of welcomes and such are heard.)

Erin: Hey, are you related to Greg Lamb at all? The district principal?

John: Yes, he's my uncle.

Erin: Figures.

John: What do you mean?

Erin: Nothing. When did you finish your teaching degree?

John: This summer.

Erin: Must be nice being hired as a TOC so quickly, what with the hiring freeze and lay offs.

Doug: Erin, behave. I have one more announcement to make. Many of you might not welcome this news, but I'd like you to have an open mind. It's been two years since this student has been to our school and the hope is that she's matured and will be a valued member of our school. I had a long talk with her at intake and I think she has turned a new leaf.

Hugh: This ought to be good. Which little sociopath did you welcome back?

Doug: Please don't call her a sociopath. It's not professional.

Bob: Out with it Doug. Who's the little criminal?

Doug: Amanda Jones.

(Groans and objections are heard from the staff.)

Cam: Oh my god! I can't believe you've done this! What the hell are you thinking? I've said it before and I'll say it again. She is going to get one of our staff fired! She's a lying, manipulative bitch. She's done it before and she'll do it again.

Doug: Cam, she's a child for Pete's sake. Have some compassion and forgiveness. I know this isn't great news to all of you, but I hope you will support me in supporting Amanda. She comes from a terrible background and what she needs is kindness and a fresh start.

Hugh: Our numbers are that low eh?

Dough: Hugh! Not now!

Black out.

Act 1 Scene 2

(Erin's classroom. She stands throwing out art work from the year previous.)

Cam: Are you as pissed off as I am? I can't believe we're letting her back in! What the hell! Give her to the other high school. It's time they had to deal with shit rats on the West side.

Erin: Maybe she has changed, Cam.

Cam: Come on Erin, look at her family. You taught all the brothers. They're white trash. Through and through. I think both of them are drug dealers already. Heck, I wouldn't be surprised if one of them was in jail already.

Erin: I'm not saying she has changed, but there is a chance.

Cam: Have you seen her file? There's a red card in it. Why? Because her drunk, crack head mother has probably let all her boyfriends have a go at her. I feel for the kid, I really do, but she is bad news...

(Hugh enters.)

Hugh: What? Someone talking about bad news without me? Poor form.

Cam: I was just telling Erin that Amanda Jones is bad news for this school.

(Sarah walks in.)

Sarah: Who's bad news?

Erin and Cam: Amanda Jones.

Sarah: Ohhhhhh. Ya.

Cam: And I for one am not willing to risk my career on a charity case. Come on, she already ruined that student teacher's career. He had to move schools because of her allegations.

(Bob walks in the door.)

Bob: Shit Cam! Are you going off about Amanda Jones again? She didn't ruin that kid's career. Admin knew it was just a "misinterpretation." They moved him so he could have a fresh start. If he had actually done something wrong, there would've been charges.

Hugh: Trying to get her cell phone from inside her top was probably a bad idea.

Cam: That's the thing though! He was a rookie. She was being a defiant bitch and he got caught up in her shit, didn't think, and then she ran around the school telling

everyone he molested her. It was fucking bullshit! She should've been kicked out then!

Erin: He did fuck up though. It was a hard lesson to learn, but he'll probably never make it again. We've all fucked up. One time this kid refused to clean up his mess in art - him and his friend both thought the other should clean it. Well he started to walk away, and I guess I stopped thinking properly. I thought, "Why should I clean up your fucking mess, you little shit?" So I grabbed the back of his hoodie to keep him there. He kept trying to walk - I was essentially choking him. Luckily I snapped to and let go.

Sarah: Holy shit! What happened?

Erin: I wanted to apologize right away, but the kid just ran. Ran straight out the doors and home, I guess. I ran to Doug. Laid it out for him right away.

Hugh: What did our fearless leader do?

Erin: You know Doug. He's old school. He handled it right away. Called the parents and let them know what a little shit their kid was being and how, despite his terrible behaviour, I care so much that our relationship isn't harmed, and what a great teacher I am for that. You definitely want him in your corner when shit goes down.

(Jen is sitting at the door listening.)

Jen: You can't always count on Doug these days. The climate is changing. Doug doesn't get to decipher which allegations are true and false anymore. Anyone can make a complaint. It's the district and the TRB that decide.

Act 1 Scene 3

(Film is played. It is a short documentary and shows clips of the subject matter being discussed.)

The Teacher Regulation Branch: A Contentious issue. In 2011 Bill 12 of the Teacher Act dissolved the College of Teachers and created the Teacher Regulation Branch. It was in response to the government believing that the union - the BCTF, had too much power over the college. In his report, Deputy minister Avison found, "There was not a proper balance between the "public interest" and the more dominant "interest of members;"⁴ What he was saying essentially, was that teachers were protecting teachers - at any cost, citing members who had inappropriately touched kids, and even had been charged with drug trafficking, receiving their teaching licenses back.⁵ The government wanted to instil "confidence" back into the public. So rather than a parent making a complaint to a teacher or principal, they could now jump over their heads and complain to the District and the TRB. They in turn, would begin their own lengthy investigation without knowing any of the stakeholders involved - the kid, the teacher or the sometimes mentally imbalanced parents. But that's not even where it ends. Before, you were being reviewed by, more or less, a jury of your peers. The TRB made it so the discipline committee only had 4 BC Teachers Federation endorsed members - the other 5 were government appointed. And if you had the misfortune to make it to a hearing panel, only one of three people could be a BCTF member - the others could be your average Joe's, or "lay people" as they like to call them.⁶ All this meaning, if you happen to have to go to a hearing panel you better hope as fuck

⁴ Allastair Glegg, "The British Columbia College of Teachers: An Obituary." *Historical Studies in Education* 25, 2, Fall 2013: 56. http://historicalstudiesineducation.ca/index.php/edu_hse-rhe/article/viewFile/4310/4455

⁵ Donald J. Avison, "A College Divided: A Report of the Fact Finder on the BC College of Teachers." 2010. http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/pubs/2010_factfinder_report_bcct.pdf

⁶ BCTF, "Summary of changes from the Teachers Act and new regulations." <http://www.bctf.ca/uploadedFiles/Public/ProfessionalResponsibility/CollegeOfTeachers/SummaryOfChanges.pdf>

that John and Jane Public have any clue what a little shit all of your children can be.

Act 1 Scene 4

Cam: See! That's exactly why she needs to go! Mark my words. That little girl is going to end someone's career.

Jen: She doesn't need to go Cam. Everyone has a right to an education, and I truly believe that. Amanda has had a difficult life up till now. Our refusing her entry would just jade the kid even more. She needs healthy relationships with adults.

Hugh: You are volunteering to mentor her I assume? You'll show her the way?

Jen: That said, I highly recommend, especially for the males on our staff, that you maintain a professional distance with her. Follow what the video said. It may save your career.

(Jen exits.)

Erin: Cam, you don't even need to worry. You teach grade 7, your contact with her will be minimal.

Bob: Ya you douche, I'm the one that's going to get fucked over. I teach all the socials 9 and PE.

Erin: I got one block, you might be alright.

Sarah: I teach all the science and math! And what if she takes band?

Hugh: You're a female my dear. You don't need to worry.

(Doug enters.)

Doug: What is this? A staff meeting without me?

Hugh: Look at the time, I better get back to my classroom. (*He exits.*)

Bob: Oh you know Doug, just catching up on our summers.

Doug: I'm sure. I'd like to speak with Erin privately.

Cam: Of course Doug.

Sarah: Okay, see ya later!

Bob: (*Gives Erin a knowing look.*) No problem.

(*They exit.*)

Erin: What's up Doug? I can't have a parent complaint already. The kids haven't even shown up yet.

Doug: I'm here to ask you a favour.

Erin: Oh no. What now?

Doug: I'd like to put Amanda in your homeroom.

Erin: Uh huh.

Doug: I think she needs a strong female presence, a role model. And you are the first person that comes to mind.

Erin: It has nothing to do with the fact the men would all post out if you put them with her?

Doug: Erin, she's changed. She's much more mature. She wants a fresh start. You can give that to her.

Erin: Don't you think a different school would have been a better choice for that? We all know her here, and her family. This isn't a fresh start.

Doug: She asked to have you specifically as her homeroom and humanities teacher.

Erin: What?! We fought all the time! How many times did I have to send her to your office? How many times did she tell me to fuck off?

Doug: But you were always fair with her, always gave her a clean slate each class. She recognizes that.

Erin: Shit Doug....

Doug: Please Erin. She needs you.

(Long pause....)

Erin: Fine. I mean you can put her wherever you want. I don't really have a say.

Doug: I do want you to have a say. That's why I came to speak with you. I think you could have a dramatic impact on this student's life, for the better. Will you do it?

Erin: With tremendous reservation. I hope I never have to tell you, "I told you so."

Doug: Thanks a million! You won't regret this!

(He leaves and Bob immediately enters.)

Bob: Erin, what did Doug want with you?

Erin: You're free Bob, Amanda is in my homeroom.

Bob: Yes! Thanks kiddo! Way to take one for the team!

Blackout.

Act 1 Scene 5

(A P.S.A. style film is played.)

The classroom; is a unique environment. In the 1950s and 60s, students sat quietly like caged zoo animals, attentively listening to the lessons that their teachers bestowed. But those halcyon days would soon wane. The 1980s and 90s gave way to the “me” generation. Teachers lost their right to strap children. Even parents opted to forgo much needed beatings for their young. This gave rise to an indolent and insolent generation whose parents questioned, not their own lack of parenting, but the professionalism of the ones that taught their darling babies. No longer was Johnny at fault for his lack of achievement and failure at life, but it was Mrs. Stevenson's or Mr. Grant's fault. Watch closely now, as we bear witness to this phenomenon:

(Film shoots to a film within the film.)

Mrs. S: Johnny, your homework doesn't seem to be done.

Johnny: That's cause I didn't do it.

Mrs. S: Well I guess you'll be staying in afterschool to complete that work.

Johnny: I'm not fucking staying in to do anything you fat bitch!

Mrs. S: With language like that I'm going to have to send you to the office.

Johnny: I'm not going anywhere you stunned cunt.

Mrs. S: *(Grabs the phone and calls.)* Principal Grant, little Johnny here has refused to stay afterschool and has used abusive, foul language towards me and is refusing to go to the office.

Principal Grant: *(His voice is heard over the phone.)* Has he been violent?

Mrs. S: No, not physically.

Principal Grant: Let him be, he will cool down. He has oppositional defiance disorder. It's in his IEP. I thought you would have read it.

Mrs. S: (*Whispers into the phone.*) I have, but he can't be allowed to speak to me like that in front of the class.

Principal Grant: Carol, he has an adaptation for this. There is nothing I can do. Also, his mother has stated that he is not to stay afterschool. It interferes with his schoolwork. Look, I have the superintendent here. I have to go. Have a good day.

(*Dial tone.*)

The 1990s and onwards saw a growing number of individualized education plans for students, from learning disabilities to autism spectrum to other exceptionalities. And in this post "Liberal" (*actor uses hand quotations*) education environment, nothing brought more fear and tears to a teacher than the behaviour student, and even worse, two or more of them.

Act 1 Scene 6

(Erin's classroom the next day. Erin speaks to the audience as if they are her students. Student voices are pre-recorded and heard through the sound system except for Amanda Jones. She sits at a lone desk to the far side of Erin.)

Erin: So this is just the beginning of the story. Henry the 8th has started his own church just so he could get a divorce from his wife so that he could get together with her best friend, or lady in waiting. And it gets even better.

Jimmy: Is he going to get together with both of them?

(Class bursts into laughter.)

Erin: Jimmy, that's inappropriate.

Jimmy: Sorry Miss. Hillenger.

Erin: So now, as I was saying, everything was going fine until Anne didn't produce him a male heir. Well she did, but he died in childbirth and Henry thought it was a sign of God's displeasure with the marriage, on account of the divorce. So he and his aids hatched a plan to have her tried for treason....

Andrea: What's treason?

Erin: Raise your hand Andrea.

Andrea: Sorry Miss. Hillenger. *(Raises her hand.)*

Erin: Yes Andrea, thank you for raising your hand.

Andrea: What's treason?

Erin: When you plot to kill a king or queen.

(Andrea's hand goes up.)

Erin: Yes Andrea.

Andrea: Why would she plot to kill him if she was his wife?

Erin: Well that's the point Andrea, the charges weren't true. It's just that Henry had started courting another woman and planned to marry her.

Jimmy: He's gonna bone another one?

Erin: Jimmy, language. That's two. Next one you're out.

Jimmy: Whatever! I actually pay attention and you get mad at me.

Erin: I'm not mad because you paid attention, I'm not mad at all. Please stop using inappropriate language. That's it. That's all I want.

(As she has spoken to Jimmy, Amanda gets out of her seat and mouths "Fucking stupid bitch" to an audience member.)

Jimmy: Whatever.

Andrea: Miss. Hillenger?

Erin: Yes Andrea?

Andrea: Amanda just called me a fucking stupid bitch.

Erin: Amanda!

Amanda: *(Without looking up.)* I didn't say anything.

Erin: Amanda, can I see you outside?

Amanda: I said I didn't say anything!

Erin: Fine. I asked if I could see you outside. *(Shrugs shoulders.)* Can you do that for me?

Amanda: Fine.

(They walk to the other side of the stage.)

Erin: Why are you talking to her like that?

Amanda: Arrrghh! I said I didn't say anything!

Erin: Andrea may be a tattletale, but she's not a liar. And I'm not stupid. If you didn't say it as you protest so much, then you probably mouthed it. - Look, do you remember last week, when we started classes?

Amanda: Ya, but....

Erin: Remember I talked about treating others as you would like to be treated?

Amanda: Ya, but....

Erin: No buts. Would you like to be called a f-ing stupid bitch? Really. Would you?

Amanda: No. I'd kick that person's...

Erin: Then don't go around saying it to Andrea.

Amanda: But she is stupid! She asks all kinds of stupid questions! She always....

Erin: So what? So what. What if you had a question that someone else already understood? Don't you have a right to learn the answer to that? I mean, this is a school.

Amanda: But she wastes the class' time all the time, she just blurts out.

Erin: There are a lot of people who distract the class Amanda. Present company included. Look, I want to have this be a warm place for people, where they feel safe to learn, to be themselves. And I want that for everybody. Including Andrea and including you.

Amanda: She just makes me so angry.

Erin: Ya kid, we all need a little patience. It's a good life skill to learn. And do you know what another one is?

Amanda: What?

Erin: Apologizing.

Amanda: What?! *(At the top of her voice so everyone can hear in the classroom.)*
I am not apologizing to that fucking stupid bitch!

Erin: That was a bad choice. Now you have to go to the office. Please head straight there. I'll let them know you're coming.

(She goes in, calls "Amanda Jones is heading over to you," and then turns to her class, puts on a fake smile.) Henry the 8th's third wife was Jane Seymour. She was his favourite wife as she finally produced that male heir he always wanted.....

Blackout.

Act 1 Scene 7

(Lights up on staff room. We hear a school bell go off. Erin enters. There is a group already seated.)

Erin: It's only lunchtime isn't it?

Bob: That kind of day?

Cam: Was that you that sent Amanda to the office?

Erin: Yup.

Bob: What did the little angel do this time?

Erin: Oh you know, the regular. Called someone a fucking bitch in front of the class.

Cam: What did she get?

Erin: I don't know. I haven't seen Doug yet.

(Doug enters.)

Doug: Erin! Just the person I wanted to see. Amanda came clean. Admitted she was wrong to do what she did. I gave her a week's worth of lunchtime community service.

Erin: Wow, thanks Doug. That's swell. I'll sleep better now.

Doug: You're doing a great job with her. She's really connecting with you.

Erin: Uh huh.

Doug: Anyways, I have to go do supervision. Have a good lunch all. *(He leaves.)*

Hugh: You're doing a great job with her. She's really connecting!

Erin: Fuck off Hugh.

John: I heard she's tough. It's got to be rough. I'm having a hard time. I've got a couple of crazy kids in my humanities block. They just feed off each other. The class gets completely out of control. It's like I never actually get to teach anything. I'm just putting out fires.

Hugh: Classic rookie teacher - no classroom management.

Bob: Kick em out! Don't put up with those little shit rats. Send one to my room, another to Cam's. You need to take control.

John: They just start up, one after the other. I don't have time to deal with one thing before someone else has started.

Hugh: Well Erin here is our on-site school mentor. She'd be more than happy to meet with you, wouldn't you Erin?

(Erin shoots Hugh a look.)

Erin: Of course I would be. And if you, for some reason don't feel comfortable with me, we can connect you with someone else, like Hugh for instance.

(Hugh flashes her a discreet middle finger.)

John: If you could meet with me, that would be great. I really value your perspective. You are so great with that Amanda girl...so patient. When can we meet?

Blackout.

Act 1 Scene 8

(Film is played. PSA on beginning teachers.)

Man: What is meant by classroom management? At its most simple, it refers to how one manages the classroom. One can use fear:

(Jump to shot of teacher and classroom. Students sit with backs to teacher.)

Teacher: I see every move you make. Try to even lean over to talk to someone and you will feel my wrath. I keep tennis balls in my desk for such occasions. And I am a dead shot.

Man: Others use punishment:

(Jump to shot of teacher addressing a student.)

Jimmy: But I swear I didn't do it! It's unfair!

Teacher: You already have one detention. Would you like another?

Jimmy: But, I....

Teacher: That's two. Care to keep on talking?

Jimmy: What?!?

Teacher: That's three. Anymore?

Man: Others use humiliation:

(Jump to shot of teacher in front of class.)

Teacher: Stop right there missy! Hand over that note.

Jenny: No. Please Mrs. Webster!

Teacher: You know my rules. Hand over the note.

Jenny: *(Reluctantly hands over note pleading.)* Please Mrs. Webster.

Teacher: *(Reads using different voices for each girl.)* Do you like Phil? I don't know, I guess he's okay. Well he said he likes you. Ya, I like him. Do you think he'll ask me out? He wants to make sure you like him before he asks you out.... *(In her regular voice.)* Well Phil, it appears you and the entire class can be sure that Jenny likes you. Now, if you both don't mind, this is a place of learning, not a tawdry pick up bar!

Man: Some teachers come into the profession with a finely honed sense of classroom management. They are natural leaders, the alpha dogs of the pack. And then there are the others. The B type personalities that just want everyone to get along, and be a descent person. Isn't that sweet? It fills me up with sentiment and other ridiculous nonsense. Good teachers know that humans are animals and if you don't rule the pack, the pack will rule you!

Blackout.

Act1 Scene 9

(Lights up in Erin's classroom.)

Erin: Everyone has a different style of controlling a classroom. I use relationship.

John: Relationship?

Erin: Ya, I make sure that the kid knows I care about them. I spend time getting to know them, talking with them about their life, what they've been through and then I use that information against them when they act out.

John: What do you mean, use it against them?

Erin: Not particular details per se, but I remind them of circumstances in their own lives and implore them to do the right thing. That and guilt. When those kids are going off, how do you handle it?

John: I start by asking them to stop. That obviously hasn't worked and they just escalate.

Erin: Do you call them out in front of the class?

John: No...well....kinda. Hmmm, I guess I do. I know I shouldn't do that, but what do you do when they just start taking over the class?

Erin: Get them out of the room. You got to spot it the millisecond it starts and put that fire out. Ask to see them outside - way before it spreads to other kids. Use that time to talk to them, to get to know them. That's your opportunity. If kids think you care about them, ninety percent of management issues will disappear. I promise. Build those relationships.

John: Okay. I'll try.

Erin: But don't let them think you're their buddy. They'll try and walk all over you.

John: Okay, care yes, buddy no.

Erin: Yes!

John: Thanks for meeting with me Erin. You're really kind. (*Puts his hand on her shoulder.*) Beautiful inside and out.

Erin: Thanks John, that's very sweet of you. But you barely know me, I could be a right bitch.

John: I don't think so. I'm pretty good at reading people. I'll have to have you over for dinner sometime...

Erin: Oh, John, I don't think that would be app.....

John: My wife makes a fantastic lasagne.

Erin: Oh, okay sure. That would be lovely!

(*He turns to leave.*)

Erin: Hey John! One more thing. Have you decided what area you might help out with?

John: Help out with?

Erin: You know, extra curricular stuff.

John: Oh, I haven't thought about it. I'm not sure how long I'll be here.

Erin: I suppose that's true. But in the mean time, I'm having auditions for my theatre class next week if you'd like to help out. It's a great way to build relationships with kids and I could really use an extra seat on the panel - that way they don't think I hate them when they don't get the part they want. You'll add that uncertainty.

John: Sure Erin. I could do that. You've already been so helpful.

Black out.

Act 1 Scene 10

(Lights up in drama room.)

Erin: Hello Ben. This is Mr. Lamb. He'll be sitting in on the auditions and helping me make my decisions in casting. Have you prepared a monologue like I asked?

Ben: *(Again, no students appear on stage, only their voices are heard.)* Yes, Miss Hillenger.

Erin: Oh good! What have you prepared?

Ben: I am going to do Hamlet's soliloquy, "To be or not to be."

Erin: Wow, that's a very challenging piece. Well done, I can't wait to see it. Please start whenever you're ready.

Ben: I'm going to rock this! *(Takes a dramatic pause and in an uber Shakespearean voice begins.)* To be or not to be, that is the question! Whether 'tis nobler in the mind to suffer the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune or to take arms against a sea of troubles and by opposing end them. To....To....

Erin: To die?

Ben: Yes! Yes! To die! To... to....to.....

John: To sleep?

Ben: Yes! To sleep! To sleep..... Ah..... Ahhhh.....I'm sorry, I'm really nervous.

Erin: No problem Ben, would you like to start again?

Ben: No, I think that's good. I didn't really memorize the rest. I was really busy last night. I had tons of homework. But I promise I'll memorize my lines in the play!

Erin: Thanks Ben. That will be all. Please call in the next person.

Ben: Thanks Miss Hillenger!

Kate: Hi Miss Hillenger! Who's that?

Erin: This is Mr. Lamb, Kate. He's helping me with auditions.

Kate: Oh.

Erin: Don't worry Kate, he is very nice.

Kate: I thought it would just be us though.

Erin: It's important I see that you can perform in front of strangers Kate, as that's what you will be doing with the show, right?

Kate: Ya, I guess so. Okay.

John: What monologue have you prepared for us Kate?

Kate: A piece from the movie Precious.

Erin: The one about the black girl that gets abused?

Kate: Yes! I'm going to play the mom when she's at the social worker's.

Erin: Kate, do you remember me asking you to prepare something that is appropriate to your age and culture?

Kate: Yes Miss, Hillenger. It was just so hard to find anything for my age that was gritty. I wanted to show you my range.

Erin: Ahaaaaa. Okay. Let's see what you got.

Kate: Precious was a little girl... She was three, and I had been givin' her the bottle. And I was givin' Carl the tittie *(Erin and John begin to exchange looks and become*

uncomfortable.) because my milk hadn't dried up in my breasts. But not from her, but because Carl was - because Carl was suckin' on that, and that's what kept my milk in my breasts. And I thought that was for hygiene. I did what my momma told me that I was supposed to do with my child, so that's what I did. And you're sittin' up there, and you're tryin' to judge me... But Ms. Weiss, I don't like you lookin' at me like that. You got this bitch lookin' at me like I'm some kind of a f--kin' monster⁷

...

Erin: Okay, Kate, that's enough. Thank you very much. Please send in the next person.

Kate: Did I do a good job? Wasn't that an awesome piece?

Erin: It was...pretty special. Thank you. Next person.

John: That was completely inappropriate, wasn't it?

Erin: Yup.

John: Aren't you going to say something?

Erin: I will. Just not right after she made herself vulnerable in an audition. That lesson can wait.

John: Hmmm.

Erin: Hello Nancy, come on in. Don't be shy. It's your time to show us what you've got!

Nancy: (*Barely audible*.) Hello Miss Hillenger, I've prepared a monologue from Mommy Dearest.

Erin: What was that? You need to speak louder.

⁷ *Precious*. Screenplay by Geoffrey Fletcher, 2009 <http://www.filmsite.org/bestspeeches75.html>

Nancy: *(Loudly at first and then slowly trails off getting quieter and quieter. Both John and Erin begin to lean in and strain to hear by the end.)* Mommy Dearest! No wire hangers! What's wire hangers doing in this closet when I told you no wire hangers?! EVER!!!! I work till I'm half dead and I hear people say she's getting old! What do I get? A daughter who cares as much about the beautiful dresses I give her as she cares about me. What's wire hangers doing in this closet?! Answer me! I buy you beautiful dresses and you treat 'em like they were some dishrag! You do! You threw a 300 dollar dress on a wire hanger! We'll see how many you got hidden over here, we'll see! Get out of that bed! All of this is coming out! Out! Out! Out! Out!⁸

Erin: Thank you Nancy. We'll need to work on your projection. Please send the next person in.

(Doug enters the room with Amanda Jones.)

Erin: Hey guys, how can I help you?

Doug: Amanda is here to audition for the theatre company.

Erin: But she's not in the class.

Doug: Well Amanda and I were having one of our "fire side chats" and she expressed a great interest in performing. I'm going to change her schedule around to accommodate this.

Amanda: Who the hell is this ass clown?!?

Doug: That is Mr. Lamb. He will be helping Miss Hillenger with auditions.

Erin: Mr. Newton, can I talk to you for a moment?

⁸ *Mommie Dearest*. Screenplay by Robert Getchell, Tracy Hotchner, Frank Perry, & Frank Yablans, 1981. <http://www.whysanity.net/monos/mommie.html>

Doug: I'm really busy right now Erin, why don't you come by my office after your auditions?

Erin: (*Seething.*) That would be great.

Blackout.

Act 1 Scene 11

(*Erin bursts into Doug's office.*)

Erin: What the hell was that all about?!

Doug: What do you mean Erin?

Erin: Don't you pretend that you don't know! You ambushed me, blind-sided me, set me up where I couldn't say no. That's despicable. I thought you had more couth than that!

Doug: Erin, I see that you're upset. Please sit down.

Erin: I don't want to sit down! (*She paces.*) I am so angry right now. What the hell are you trying to do to me? To my program?

Doug: I am not trying to ruin your program. I am trying to help out a young lady who desperately needs guidance.

Erin: Fuck that Doug! Fuck that! What the hell do you think you do to a program when you let in a toxic bitch like that?

Doug: Erin, please calm down.

Erin: I build a family in that class, a fucking family. And she comes in, and immediately makes everyone uncomfortable. Makes everyone feel judged. You know why Doug? Do you know why? Because she is a little fucking bitch! She does judge them! So what the fuck do I do Doug? What the fuck do I do? She's

walked in there and she's already a complete fucking cunt!

Doug: Mentor her!

Erin: I don't have time to fucking mentor her Doug! It's bad enough she takes up all my time in Socials and Homeroom, now you want me to pander to her afterschool also? I have a fucking play to put on. I'm not a fucking counsellor!

Doug: I know you can do this Erin. You're just upset right now.

Erin: Put her in art club Doug, mathletes, basketball, anything else...but please, please don't let her fuck up theatre company.

Doug: I didn't realise you'd feel so passionately about this Erin. I'm sorry, I'm truly sorry, but there is nothing I can do at this point. To take her out now would only hurt her. I'm sorry Erin, next time I will make sure I talk to you prior to any big changes. Please accept my apologies.

Erin: Doug?

Doug: Yes Erin?

Erin: Go fuck yourself!

(She storms out of office.)

Blackout.

Act 1 Scene 12

(Lights up on PSA film.)

Students' and teachers' favourite character alike, the school principal. These nefarious creatures may appear helpful or benign, but do not be fooled, all school principals are cut from the same cloth. Remember the old adage, "Those who can, teach. Those who can't, go into administration." These glorified middle managers

present themselves as student loving, education centered individuals, but beware. (*Sirens go off.*) This is a façade. Underneath lurks a contemptuous, soul-sucking troll whose bottom line is the bottom dollar. Too many category kids? Stuff them in! It won't impact student learning! Not enough textbooks? Ask why the teacher isn't in line with the district's technology goals and using more online sources of learning! Not enough computers for the districts' technological goals? Blame the higher ups and the government for not properly funding the school! Teachers go on strike because there is no money for said education? Become the government's minions by staying silent, all the while collecting your paycheck while the rest of us struggle and starve.

Blackout.

Act 1 Scene 13

(Lights up on drama room.)

Erin: Okay, let's run scene 5. From the top.

(Voices of students are heard.)

Ben: Great. So how'd it turn out?⁹

Kate: Badly, actually. Bodies Everywhere. Okay so this wasn't a great example. But it was true love.

Ben: How badly?

Kate: Well, Juliet took the medicine and the Elder sent a letter - snail-mail - to Romeo. But Romeo never got the Elder's message –

Ben: He shoulda' FAX'd her.

Kate: No machine. Instead, he ran into a friend at the post office who had just come from Verona, who said that Juliet was dead, had pulled a Kurt Cobain, so

⁹ Yvette Nolan and Philip Adams, "Shakedown Shakespeare," (1997)
http://www.canadianshakespeares.ca/spotlight/s_p_shakedown.cfm

he got himself his own drug - poison - and hurried back to Verona to see for himself.

Ryan: Oh Juliet, how can you be dead? You are still so rad.

Erin: Wait a minute! Where is my Juliet?! Amandaaaaaaa!!!!!!!

Amanda: I'm not going out there. This is bullshit! Fuck this! I quit!

Erin: *(Under her breath.)* Fuck off. *(Out loud.)* Amanda, what's the problem?

Amanda: I can't work with these fucking assholes. You bunch of stupid stuck up ass fucks! *(We hear a door slam.)*

Erin: *(To John.)* Can you run the Macer's scene? I should probably go deal with this.

John: Ya sure, absolutely. Good luck.

(Erin walks over to where Amanda is pacing.)

Erin: What's going on love?

Amanda: I just can't take it anymore! They are a bunch of fucking dicks! I hear them, I hear them talking behind my fucking back! Saying all kinds of shit, like "she's a bitch," or "she's gonna ruin this show," or "she can't act her way out of a paper bag," and "a paper bag? Why that's all her crack whore mom can afford to get her." Fuck them! Fuck them! Fuck them! *(She hits a locker and begins to sob uncontrollably.)* I just don't understand why everything has to be so hard? Why can't even one thing go good? Why does it all get fucked up? Huh? Why does it all get fucked up?

(Erin sits down beside her on the ground. She puts her arm around her and strokes her back.)

Erin: Amanda, it's not fair, it isn't. You've been dealt a really crappy hand. And it's

not your fault.

Amanda: (*In between sobs.*) Nothing goes easy for me. I'm not smart. I'm not pretty. And I everyone I know either hates me or takes advantage of me.

Erin: It's not your fault. Okay? It's not your fault.

Amanda: I just wish, I just wish I had a normal life. With a regular mom, one who did really simple things like make our lunches, you know. And would bitch me out when I fucked up. I don't think she knows I'm there half the time....

Erin: Honey, you can't control what life gives you, you can only control how you react to it. You know?

Amanda: I know, fuck....you say this shit every time. I'm just tired, Ms. H, I'm just tired. And it pisses me off, these privileged little fucks make fun of me. They don't even know how good they got it.

Erin: They're not all privileged little f-ers, Amanda, some of them have crappy home lives too. I can't give you examples, but please trust me, it's true. Here's the difference though, because of what they've been through, they realize that it's really shitty to be shitty to people. And we're all hoping that you can figure that out one day too.

Amanda: Then why do they talk about me behind my back and say shitty things to my face?!?

Erin: Because they are human Amanda. And you, not them, you, have been treating them like shit since you walked through that door. You didn't give them a chance to like you! Which is bullshit, because you have a heart of gold. And I mean that. You are a beautiful human being, you just hide that from everyone because you're afraid they might hurt you, so you hurt them first. Am I right?

Amanda: Fuck...I don't know....

Erin: Think about it Amanda. Remember, you can only control how you react. Could you have reacted better to the group? Been more supportive and loving?

Amanda: Probably.

Erin: Yes, the answer is yes.... So how can we fix this? This is your challenge. How can you begin to repair those relationships?

Amanda: I don't know.

Erin: Come on, think just a little.

Amanda: I could....I could...apologize?

Erin: See, your picking this up really fast!

Amanda: Oh my god Ms. H! How can I go back in there and apologize? Fuck that! They owe me an apology!

Erin: Amanda, what will repair those relationships?

Amanda: Fuck, fine! I'll apologize. Happy?

Erin: Yes. I'll call a family meeting. Do you want a few minutes to think about what you'll say?

Amanda: Yes please.

Erin: Amanda?

Amanda: Ya?

Erin: I'm proud of you.

Blackout.

Act 1 Scene 14

(Lights up in at John's house. They are around a table. John's wife sits with them.)

John: You wouldn't believe it honey! What the hell did you do to her Erin? Say to her? I've never seen her react that way before. She was apologetic. And sincerely so. You really worked some magic Erin!

Erin: I know, did you see her? She was actually real and vulnerable! I am so amazed! She took a big step today!

John: So what's your secret? How did you get to her?

Erin: I don't know, I guess I just talked to her, ya know? I got her to empathize with the other students. I got her to put herself in their shoes and realize how she'd been treating them....It's been a few years coming. I have put a lot of time into that girl.

John: Walk us through it. What happened out there?

Erin: Well...she was flipping a gasket because everyone was talking about her and she got really emotional and started to sob....

John: Ya, and then?

Erin: And then I put my arm around her and told her it wasn't fair, her life, and just consoled her, rubbing her back.

John: Uh huh.

Erin: I think that's the thing. You create that space where a child feels comfortable and loved. You make them feel like they're being listened to, that they are safe. And I think in that space, you can bring them to many realizations.

John: I think it's beautiful, the way you have with students, how they trust you and

talk to you. I hope I can have that relationship with them one day.

Jane: I'm sure your kids would appreciate that relationship with you too.

Erin: You will! You'll find your way, it just takes a while to build a relationship with some of them.

John: Thank you for saying that. It means a lot.

Jane: It would mean a lot to your family if you could find more time to spend with us.

John: Jane, you know I have every intention. Work just takes up a lot of time. It won't always be like this.

Jane: Erin, do you have kids?

Erin: No I don't. I'm not even married.

Jane: Jumping through all the hoops is difficult for everyone when you're a new teacher with a family. Sometimes it feels like I'm with them twenty-four seven. It's like they don't even have a father.

John: Jane, please don't.

Jane: Don't what John? Don't care? Don't think? Don't feel? I hardly ever see you anymore. Let alone the kids.

Erin: Maybe I should leave you two to have some time together....

Jane: No, I'm sorry. I really don't mean to make you feel uncomfortable.

John: Well you're doing a horrible job of that.

Jane: I just, I'm just frustrated that he's never here. Between your play and basketball, we never see him. I mean is this for real? Does he really have to do all

this just so he can get a job?

Erin: I know it's hard. The first couple years always are.

Jane: Couple years? I can't handle that. The kids can't take that. If he's not at school, he's up late planning or marking. It's like living with a stranger.

John: Jane, you know I feel horrible enough already. But we knew this would happen. We knew this was part of the deal. Remember though, great pension, summers off with the family? We agreed to this. Now please don't upset our guest anymore.

Jane: I'm not trying to upset *your* guest. I'm trying to share my feelings and maybe ask some questions. Is that all right with you?

John: Please baby.

Erin: Feel free to ask away!

John: Erin, you don't have to –

Erin: No, no, it's my pleasure. What questions do you have?

Jane: I thought they couldn't hire based on volunteering, so why does he have to do so much?

Erin: Great question! Yes technically they can't hire or not hire based on how much one does extra curricular activity. However, in reality, you can bet your ass that principals talk about that off the record in the reference call. Definitely. It is huge.

Jane: Can't he borrow someone else's lesson plan and save a bunch of time?

Erin: Yes and no. I mean it's really helpful to see someone else's unit breakdown and lesson plans, but they aren't always what you would do. And you kind of need to do it yourself to fully understand your subject matter and plan for your class and

create something that works to your style. Some teachers like group stuff, others hate it, others lecture. So yes, but no. But really yes.

Jane: Do you have a boyfriend?

Erin: Pardon me?

John: Jane!

Jane: You heard me.

Erin: No, I don't.

Jane: Thank you Erin, I appreciate your honesty. My husband said that you were dating someone.

Blackout.

Act 1 Scene 15

(Lights up on PSA "The Young Teacher.")

The young teacher. A special combination smelling of sweat, panic and fear. Gone is the cute little student teacher jumping through hoops. We now find this newbie let out into the wilderness of terror without any supports. They must juggle classroom management (*scene of students throwing paper at a teacher's back*), lesson planning (*clip of teacher reading feverishly*), assessment (*clip of teacher marking huge piles of papers*), but this is not where it ends. Young teachers are often saddled with "a dog's breakfast" of 7 out of 8 different preps – Math, Science, Socials, English, Art, Sewing, and Psychology just for good measure. Competence in your subject area? Overrated. A good teacher can teach anything, right? And that's not all, these newbie's often carry the yoke of coaching many sports teams or other extra-curricular activities. Older teachers quietly waiting for their chance to dump their load on these "do-gooders" trying to get a job. (*Flash to*

scene of older teacher eyeing up young teacher in staff room.) Everyday becomes a living hell of just trying to survive. Twelve hour days turn into 20 hour days when marking and planning are needed to be done after teaching, drama practice and coaching. They begin to lose weight, hair and even sanity. Living on cups of coffee from the cafeteria, because cocaine is too expensive on a new teacher's salary, they slip deeper and deeper into a black hole of work-a-holism, growing more distant from their friends and family, becoming more and more open to slipping up in their state of delirium.

Blackout.

Act 1 Scene 16

(Lights up on staffroom. Hugh is already seated at lunch, Jen is reading at the mailboxes, John comes in.)

Hugh: John, you look like you're burning the candle at both ends.

John: Is it that obvious?

Hugh: Classic first year teacher syndrome. You should take a day off.

Jen: You have fifteen of them John. Take one or two. Get some rest. You are looking a little rough.

John: I can't, there is too much going on.

Hugh: Nothing is more important than your sanity, kid.

Jen: I know at the time it feels like only you can do whatever it is your planning, but sometimes you need to let that go and forego the great lesson and just let the kids do some textbook work with a TOC. It will also remind them how much they like you. You know, absence makes the heart grow fonder and all that.

John: I can't tomorrow. Erin needs me to cover rehearsal. She has an appointment.

It's just before the show goes up. We can't miss this rehearsal.

Hugh: Well then take the next day.

John: That's the thing. It doesn't matter what day I take, because I won't get any rest. I have two young kids at home and a wife. She's already on me about how little time I spend with them and if I took a day, it wouldn't be restful, it would be making up for lost time. You see what I'm saying?

Hugh: Burn out is too common in new teachers. You have to find ways to relax. Or you need to start saying no and develop some boundaries. You are taking this job way too seriously.

(Erin enters.)

Erin: Jesus John, you look wrecked. Did you get any sleep last night?

John: No, the kids are both sick. It's been rough.

Erin: You should take a day or two.

Jen: We were just telling him that.

John: And I was just telling them that I wouldn't get any rest anyway. I would need to get a hotel and take a mini vacation.

Erin: We don't want to see you burn out. Take it easy on yourself.

John: All of your concern is sweet. Thank you, but I'm fine. Don't worry about me.

(Bob enters with Cam.)

Cam: What did the little angel say to that?

Bob: Erin! You got to hear this. It's about your wonderful turn around story. Your little comeback kid.

Erin: I do not take responsibility for any of her actions. She is on her own.

Cam: This one is good. Classic.

Erin: Are you going to tell me what she did?

Bob: What did you say in the last staff meeting? And I quote, "Amanda is showing tremendous progress both inter and intra personally, developing strong bonds with myself, Mr. Lamb, and the cast and crew."

Erin: Don't be a dick Bob. What did she do?

Bob: Hugh, did you here Erin say those wonderful things about Amanda?

Hugh: I sure did, Bob. Didn't she also say, and I quote, "Her outbursts are becoming more and more infrequent."?

Cam: I think she did Hugh, she did indeed.

Erin: Gentlemen, I have a life and work to do, so either tell me or go fuck yourselves.

Bob: Oh, Erin, we are just teasing. Take it easy.

Erin: So what did the angel do today? Enlighten me.

Bob: Okay. So here was the situation. We started the dance unit and every kid had to find a partner, follow me so far?

Erin: Yes, Bob, I'm not a retard.

Bob: Everything is going fine, she picks Ben from the play, but after one round, they have to shift to the next person.

Erin: Uh huh...

Bob: Well it's Jimmy Garcia. And when she sees that he's her new partner she

says, "No way! No fucking way am I being that asshole's fucking partner!" To which Jimmy says, "Why not? You've let me stick my fingers other places, why not your hands?" And then she really fucking loses it. She decks him, pushes him down and just begins to try and wail on him. He just holds her hands back, laughing.

Cam: It took both Bob and I to take her off. She was that enraged.

Bob: We had to drag her off, kicking and screaming, and then she started in on us. "Fuck you! You don't even give a shit. You're all the same. Get your fucking hands off me!"

(Erin sits in silence.)

Jen: Do you think that story is funny gentlemen? Do you? Because I can tell you it's not. That's one hurt and embarrassed girl out there. Did you do anything to comfort her?

Cam: We didn't say anything harsh. We just let her know that she couldn't talk that way and that she'd have to go to Doug's office.

Jen: What about Jimmy. What did you do with him?

Bob: She's the one that provoked the situation.

Jen: I call bullshit Bob. Maybe that little shit has been going around, telling stories about her. Maybe he's the one that provoked that situation. But you didn't even ask did you? You both just assumed that she was the instigator. Erin, com'on, let's go talk to her and let her know that she has a voice. You two, *(points to Bob and Cam)* make yourselves useful and have Jimmy the angel paged to the office.

(Awkward silence after they leave.)

Blackout.

Act 1 Scene 17

(Lights up on Drama room.)

John: Erin, how did it go with Amanda? She didn't get suspended did she?

Erin: No. Jen set her up good with Doug. Let him know that she'd be filing a grievance against Bob and Cam for harassment if Doug punished her and not Jimmy in any way. She'll be in DT for the next week, but other than that, she is fine. As much as you could be, considering.

John: I'm glad. I'm really worried about her, she was doing so well and then she just seemed to come off the rails.

Erin: Ya, I'm thinking about cancelling my appointment tomorrow and just coming in. You're exhausted, she's wiggy, maybe it's for the best.

John: No Erin, it's just one day. I can do it. And it's a specialist appointment. You can't reschedule those too easily. Besides, I've come a long way with Amanda. I'm sure I can handle her for one rehearsal. What's the worst that can happen? She tells me to fuck off again?

Erin: If that was the worst she could do.....nah, she's changing. She's doing well, today was just a little hiccup.

John: Why don't you let me run rehearsal so I can show you how you have no reason to worry.

Erin: Ya? You up for the challenge?

John: Yes, definitely.

Erin: Okay, as you wish.

Blackout.

Act 1 Scene 18

(Lights up on staffroom.)

Erin: This week is too long, even with taking that day off. The week before the show goes up is hell.

Bob: How did your appointment go? Is everything okay?

Erin: Ya, it's fine. They're just keeping an eye on things. Everything checked out.

(A voice is heard over the PA system.)

Voice: There will be an emergency staff meeting in the staffroom immediately. All teachers please report to the staffroom now.

Erin: What's going on Bob?

Bob: I'm not sure. The RCMP were here earlier though. Drugs maybe?

(Staff begin to fill the room. Doug enters and nervously shifts about.)

Doug: Are we all here? Julie, can you please take attendance, it's important that I talk with all of you today.

Hugh: Does this have something to do with the police cruiser that was here today? What is it? A runaway or a drug issue?

Doug: Julie? Are we all here?

Julie: Yes Mr. Newton.

Doug: I'm afraid I have bad news. It's much worse than that....

Bob: Well what is it Doug, spit it out! Did someone pass?

Doug: No...I need to ask you all for your cooperation. The media will be coming

here shortly. It is paramount that you say nothing. Do not speak with them. Your statement should be, "No comment." Do I make myself clear?

Jen: Yes Doug, but what are you referring to? What has happened?

Doug: It's bad. It's very bad.

Cam: Jesus Christ Doug, just come out with it!

Doug: It is with deep regret that I inform you that John Lamb has been arrested and charged with sexual interference of a minor....

Erin: What?

Doug: Yes, Amanda Jones.

(Long awkward silence. Erin's face begins to go red.)

Erin: Fucking BULL SHITTTTTTT!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

(She storms out tears falling down her face.)

Blackout. End Act I.

Act II

Act 2 Scene 1

(Lights up on a woman's bathroom stall. Erin is inside. Jen and Sarah are outside of it. Jen is knocking on the door.)

Jen: Erin honey, please say something. I know you're upset. *(She knocks some more.)*

Sarah: Ya, come on Erin, please come out and talk to us.

Erin: Please fuck off and leave me alone.

Jen: Erin, I know this must be so difficult for you. It's difficult for all of us.

Erin: Please fuck off. Just go away, PLEASE.

Jen: I know you're hurting. But this isn't your fault.

Erin: FUCK OFF! FOR FUCK'S SAKE!

(Bob enters.)

Sarah: You can't be in here. This is a woman's toilet.

Bob: It's fine, don't worry about it. Erin!

(Silence....)

Bob: Erin! Talk to me! What is going on in your head?

(Silence...)

Bob: Erin....you need to talk to me kid, I'm worried about you....You know this isn't your fault, right?

Erin: Fuck off! Fuck all of you! Just please, go away!

Bob: It's not your fault –

Doug: Is she okay? Erin?

Jen and Bob: Doug, fuck off!

Doug: Gotcha. Let me know if you need anything. Anything at all. This is horri—

Jen: Doug, get the hell out of here, NOW!

Bob: Erin, talk to me...please.

Erin: I've fucked up his life....It's fucking ruined....

Bob: A: You didn't fuck up his life, Doug did that. And B: We don't know what's going to happen. All of this could be thrown out. We all know that she has a history. He could be back at work next week.

Erin: Don't fucking lie to me.

Jen: It won't be next week Bob. This is going to be a full criminal investigation. This could be months. But honey, he's right. This isn't your fault.

Erin: Of course it's my fault. I brought him into the play. I left him alone with her so that I could go to the doctor. I left him vulnerable.

Jen: No honey, this is definitely Doug's fault. He didn't protect his staff. He let her back in here. He manipulated you into letting her into your class. If there is any blame, it's on him, not you.

Erin: But I left him alone with her. This wouldn't have happened if I was there.

Sarah: There was a class of kids there. There'll be witnesses. I'm sure this won't go far. Don't worry Erin.

(Doug enters.)

Doug: The district counsellors are here. I think one of them should speak with Erin.

Erin: I don't want to speak with some fucking counsellor! Please, all of you, leave me alone.

Bob: You heard her Doug, get out of the bathroom. She'll talk to one when she's ready.

Erin: Bob, why don't you and the rest get the hell out of here too? I really just want to be alone right now. Please.

Jen: Let's go guys, give her her space.

(They walk out. After a moment the counsellor walks in. She goes to the sink and begins to wash her hands.)

D.C: Crazy day hey?

Erin: I don't recognize the voice, so you must be the district councillor. I'm not going to talk to you.

D.C: I wouldn't dream of it. Just asking how the day has gone so far.

(Silence.)

D.C: I'm normally an elementary school counsellor, but I got yanked this morning to deal with this. What a nightmare eh?

(Silence.)

D.C: Did you know him well?.....John, John is his name, right? It must be quite the shock. It's always hard when a co-worker is charged with something like this.

(Silence.)

D.C: At first it's hard to accept, but there is usually a reason this happened. I mean

usually they cross some bound –

Erin: What the fuck do you know?

D.C: She speaks! Speak again bright angel!

Erin: What the fuck is wrong with you? This isn't some Shakespearean play where we all walk away and go home after the tragedy. This is real fucking life and John's just got ruined!

D.C: I'm sorry, I didn't mean any harm or to make light of the situation, I just wanted to get you talking. It worked I think.

Erin: Fuck you! I feel like I'm in this fucking nightmare and here you are talking to me like some witty dumbass pseudo pop-psychologist. Fuck you. Don't talk to me. You're probably not even a real fucking counsellor. You probably only have one of those piece of shit Masters in Ed counselling degrees. You probably didn't even take it at a real university! Let me guess, online? Poly U?!?

D.C: You are really upset. What can I do to help?

Erin: Help? Maybe you can stop insinuating that an innocent man might have done something! That's the thing! You don't even know any of the players and then you come in here and start spewing your Poly U crackerjack shit. Do you even need an IQ of 80 to get in?

D.C: I'm sorry. I shouldn't have said that. I don't have much experience with adults. I've been working in elementary most of my career.

Erin: Please go away.

D.C: How can I help you?

Erin: Go away.....Go away.....GO AWAY!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

Hugh: For God's sake, can you get the hell out of here so the rest of us can have some peace? The lady asked you to go. Now be polite, and leave. *(They leave.)*
You okay kiddo?

Erin: I just want to be left alone.

Hugh: I know you do kid. That's why I'm going to wait outside this door and make sure no one comes in. Yell if you need something.

(He waits outside the door.)

Erin: HUGH?

Hugh: Yes Erin.

Erin: Thank you.

Blackout.

Act 2 Scene 2

(Lights up on a staff meeting.)

Doug: Thank you all for coming. This will be a hard time for our school - where is Erin?

Hugh: I sent her home.

Doug: You what? She needs to hear this.

Hugh: Hear what Doug? That your spectacular leadership skills have brought us where we are today?

Doug: I did want to apologize. It's not my fault, but I see how it could be perceived that way. This is an unfortunate event.

Jen: An unfortunate event? A man's career might be over before it's even started!

You put your staff in a compromising position.

Doug: Look, emotions are high right now. We have few details of what has happened. Rather than placing blame, let's work together right now to support each other during this difficult time.

Sarah: Jen, will the union help him?

Jen: They will appoint a lawyer for him, but that is about all they can do right now.

Sarah: That's it?

Jen: It's not a pretty picture. The best-case scenario is that the police complete their investigation, find no evidence of criminal activity and withdraw the charges. But even then, it won't be over. The Teacher Regulation Branch will do its investigation, because they can't start before the police finish theirs.¹⁰ And then when they are done, the school district will conclude theirs. His life will be turned upside down for quite sometime.

Cam: How long are we talking?

Jen: I'd say at least a year.

Cam: A fucking year? That's ridiculous!

Jen: And that is if he's lucky. If there is any question, this process could take several years.

Cam: Years? Is this a paid or unpaid suspension?

Doug: Because charges have been laid, he will be suspended without pay.

Cam: Without pay? He has a family! What the hell are they supposed to do? This is bullshit! We all know he's innocent. His family is going to starve because of that

¹⁰ Beth Jones (Teacher and Union Representative), in discussion with the author, July 2012.

fucking little cunt.

Doug: Cam, we know few details. We can't be placing blame anywhere at this time.

Cam: That is BS Doug. It is fucking BS. You brought that little bitch in here. We all warned you, but you said, "Give her a chance, she might have changed." Is this the change you were talking about? Ruining peoples' lives only bigger and better than before?

Doug: I understand you're upset Cam. No one wanted to see this happen, believe me. But as I said, we need to support each other right now. There is information I need to share with you. As I said earlier today, please do not talk to reporters on your way out. This is a very sensitive issue and we need to let the police do their investigation. As you know, all students received a letter to take home at the end of the day. This explained that charges were laid, and that the school district is cooperating with the police department and insuring no students are at further risk.

Bob: What do we know about the case?

Doug: Nothing. This is the police's jurisdiction. The district will not be conducting any investigation until they are finished, as Jen said. All we know is that there was an allegation, the police took it seriously and arrested him today.

Sarah: Will he stay in jail until his trial?

Jen: No honey. He will likely post bail if he agrees to stay away from schools, parks and minors. Because he has children under the age, he won't be able to stay with his family.

(Long silence.....)

Sarah: This is a nightmare.

Bob: As this unfolds, things are going to get harder. We need to be there for each

other. We need to check in and be supportive no matter how this goes. We are a family and we need each other more than ever. Sarah, let's get a collection together to help out with groceries and other things for John's family. This is just the beginning.

Blackout.

Act 2 Scene 3

(Lights up on filmed PSA.)

(1960's French music plays as couple sits in a coffee shop. Man enters into frame.)

Man: Florida, 1960's Sidney Jourard is about to enter another dimension, a dimension not only of sight and sound, but of touch. A journey into a wondrous land whose bizarre boundaries are that of culture. That's the signpost up ahead - your next stop, the Touch Zone!

(Theme music plays.)

Man: The proposition was simple. Let's count how many times a couple touches each other at a coffee shop in a one-hour period. Researchers went to Paris (*snap to photo of a Parisian couple, and the same for all cities*), London, San Juan and Florida. What were their findings? Anything but ordinary. Paris? The couples touched each other one hundred and ten times. In San Juan? Couples couldn't keep their hands off each other – a whopping average of one hundred and eighty times an hour. Where would our heroes find common human decency? A sterile place devoid of wanton lust you ask? Why Florida and good old England. It was only in these English bastions of human decency – Florida where couples only touched two times, and London with couples never touching at all, that respectful human behaviour was re-found.¹¹ And what does this say about North American

¹¹ Sidney Jourard, "An Exploratory Study of Body-Accessibility" *British Journal Social Clinical Psychology* 5, (1966): 222.

and English culture? Some would say that we have none. Hanning found that four hugs per day acted as an antidote for depression; eight hugs put one well on the way to achieving mental stability; and twelve promoted real psychological growth.¹² So why then, don't North Americans touch? Mariana Caplan believes that, "A set of values has been locked into place that give precedence to thought over feeling, independence over connectedness and service, and quantity over quality."¹³ In other words, we are cut off from our bodies. Tiffany Field believes that North Americans on a whole believe that touching, even their own children, would be construed as sexual.¹⁴ The best way to sum it up is this: *(An old British man is shown speaking the following.)* Oh my Goodness! I have a body! Thank goodness I'm too busy thinking to live in it or else I might want to connect with you! If I try and connect with you and find myself in my body I might *feel* and then have uncontrollable sexual urges! Better not touch then. I'll just sit here, go back in my head and read Descartes.

(Twilight Zone music plays.)

Black out.

¹² John Pratt and Allen Mason, *The Caring Touch* (London: HM + M Publishers, 1981), 1.

¹³ Mariana Caplan, *Untouched: The Need for Genuine Affection in an Impersonal World* (Prescott: Hohm Press, 1998), 4.

¹⁴ Tiffany Field, *Touch* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2001), 7.

Act 2 Scene 4

(Lights up on Erin's classroom. She sits alone at her desk, staring into space.)

Hugh: Hey kiddo, how are you hanging in there?

Erin: I've been better Hugh.

Hugh: I know kid....I heard you postponed the play. Are you sure that's the right thing to do? Sometimes diving into to work is the best way to deal with things.

Erin: I don't really have a choice. Amanda hasn't been coming to school since the incident. If I give her part away, do the show without her, I look like a big dick. Like I don't support her.

Hugh: How are you going to feel when she comes back?

Erin:....Shitty. How the fuck am I going to face her? How am I going to have compassion for her, when I know...when I know that she –

Hugh: Erin, you don't know. Not for sure.

Erin: Yes we do.

Hugh: This is our job Erin, to see other people's perspectives and empathize with them. Do you think she is outright lying?

Erin: *(Takes a deep breath in.)* No, no I don't. She's just misconstrued something.

Hugh: That young woman desperately needs you to not judge her right now. When she comes back here, she will need you to be there for her, like you've always been. And no matter how wrong you think it is, or how uncomfortable it feels, you need to support her.

Erin: *(A beat)* Why Hugh?

Hugh: I can't really answer that. All I know is as I say it, it sits right. She needs love. If she had had that before, we probably wouldn't even be in this position.

(Silence.....)

Erin: What if I can't manage it?

Hugh: Sweetheart, you are one of the toughest I know. If anyone can do this, it's you.

Erin: *(Beginning to choke up)* But what, if, I can't? What, if, it's too, much?

(Hugh grabs her in an embrace as she begins to sob.)

Hugh: We will all be here for you. I will be here for you. Anytime you need these arms, they will be waiting open for you.

Blackout.

Act 2 Scene 5

(Lights up on drama room.)

Erin: Can I get everyone in a circle please? We need to have a family meeting. Kennedy, please, this is serious, can you please focus? *(The sounds of chairs dragging and students' slight murmurings are heard.)* Alright....I'm here today....I....I...don't know how to start. I don't know what to say. I need to be honest with you. I am so sorry this is happening. So sorry.

Kate: But this isn't your fault Ms. Hillenger.

Erin: Thank you Kate. That is very kind of ---

Kate: It's that bitch Amanda's fault. She ruins everything.

Erin: Kate! Please don't talk that way.

Kate: What? It's true! You can't stand her either. I've seen you roll your eyes when she goes off.

Erin: Kate, stop this! Stop talking now! Yes, okay, yes, I have gotten frustrated with Amanda, but this is not about her being difficult. These are serious allegations. We have to – we have to let the police do their investigation. We could speculate, but it would be pointless. It doesn't matter what we think. What matters is what actually happened and that is the police's job to find out.

Ben: She is a total cow Ms. Hillenger. When I was in grade 6 she totally accused a student teacher of touching her boobies. She thinks everyone wants her.

Erin: Ben, those are just rumours, we don't know what actually happened.

Ben: She told everyone at the school and then he went away. It's totally true Ms. Hillenger. I wouldn't tell you a lie.

Erin: Ben. We don't know that's true for sure – despite what Amanda might have said.

Nancy: *(In a whisper that everyone hears...)* Well if she is a liar, than how can we ever be sure that Mr. Lamb did what she said he did?

Erin: Nancy, we ---

Students erupt in a cacophony of voices that start overlapping....

Kate: She's ruined our show --

Ben: She's always been a lying bitch--

Stacey: Why was she in our class anyway—

Jimmy: She thinks everyone is into her –

Hannah: She's total trailer trash scumb –

Kate: I've worked really hard on this show and now we probably won't even get to perform it--

Stacey: Couldn't you have kept her out of the class ---

Ben: I knew her in elementary school – nothing has changed –

Hannah: I mean her life will never amount to anything—

Jimmy: Everybody I know has finger banged or fucked her.....

Erin: ENOUGH! Stop it! Stop it all of you. Stop talking this horrible way. She is a human being. A real life, living, breathing person with thoughts and feelings and emotions. How dare you.

(There is a long silence.)

Look, when you came into this class, on the first day, I told you about my one rule. The Golden rule. Treat others as you'd have them treat you. I explained that I wanted you to put yourself in someone else's shoes. To consider their life experience and empathize with their choices. Why? Because, number one, that's what every great actor does – understand and empathize without judgement. And because number two, that's what a decent human being does. I never said that it would be easy. Look, that young woman has had one hell of a life. She has experienced things that I wouldn't wish on anyone. Does that excuse her behaviour? No, not really. But we can understand it. She needs compassion.

Hannah: Ms. Hillenger, I haven't had an easy life either, but I don't go slutting around and accusing every man of touching me.

Erin: It's not that simple Hannah. There is so much at play. Yes, you are right, but you were supported more. Everything she does is a fight. Everything she does is alone. You were told that you would go to university and make something of yourself despite what happened to you. She gets told she's a worthless piece of

shit everyday. Either with words or actions. Can you see what I mean? She hasn't had a chance.

(A long silence.)

Hannah: I get it Ms. H. But I still think she's a liar.

Erin: She's been at home, probably because she knows what people are saying to her, how they are reacting to what happened. And she is probably terrified to come back. She's wondering how she can face anyone, what rumours are going around, and will anyone believe her? Put yourself in her shoes. How do we help her? How do we get her back so that we can put on this show?

Ben: Should we make her a card?

Erin: That's a start.

Kate: And we can all write kind notes to her.

Erin: That would be great.

Nancy: Will you take it to her? I'm scared to go into her trailer park.

Erin: You betcha I will! And what can we do if we get her back here?

Stacey: Be nice to her.

Erin: Yes Stacey, be nice, but how?

Stacey: Say nice things?

Erin: Okay, like what?

Jimmy: Tell her that her hair is pretty? That's what my dad always says to say to women.

Erin: You could...but what is something you could say that might make her feel

more welcome, more supported?

Kate: That we missed her. Even though we don't.

Erin: Er...Yes, and....

Ben: That we appreciate her?

Erin: Yes, and...

Nancy: That we care about her?

Erin: Yes, and?

Hannah: That we believe and support her.

Erin: Yes. If you could do that, it would be great. (*Rumblings are heard.*) If you can't, just please keep your thoughts to yourself. (*To the group*) We are a family. And you need to support your sister. She desperately needs you right now..... Thank you all, for being such amazing and understanding human beings. I feel really honoured right now. Humbled. You are a lovely group of people....Now let's get this show together! Tina, I'd like you to learn her parts, just in case, but hopefully she will come back to us. I've brought in the lighting and sound techs. We will be programming the show as you go. It's not a technical queue to queue, you'll be acting, but at times I might stop the action to work some detail out....

Black out.

Act 2 Scene 6

(Lights up on PSA: The White Male.)

Man: The white male. Long thought near extinct in the 1990s, this once fledgling oppressor is now making a comeback. Relegated to the sidelines amid allegations of unfair wage disparity and career prospects, oppression of people of colour, of differing gender and sexuality; the white, middle class, heterosexual male suffered unduly at the hands of his minority. What was life like before those terrible days? Why let's take a look:

(Film is shown of man in classic robe and slippers in a chair, drinking a martini and smoking a cigar.)

Man: Life was good for the white middle class male. He worked hard at his job, but managed to enjoy some leisure. Here he is, enjoying a relaxing drink and cigar. What's that you say? Drink running low? No need to worry. Mabel has been waiting for the opportunity to serve her man.

(He lifts his glass. Nothing happens. He looks shocked. He shouts out for Mabel. When she finally arrives she is wearing classic 1950's dress with June Cleaveresque pearls and heels.)

Man: Mabel!...Mabel! Get your butt in here! Mable!!!!!!

(Mabel slowly walks in unimpressed.)

Mabel: What do you want now?

Man: Another drinky-poo. Mine has run out. Really Mabel, I thought you'd be on top of this, I mean this is your only job, taking care of me.

Mable: Is that so? So I guess you'll be doing all the cleaning and cooking and taking care of the children then, since getting you drinks is my only job?

Man: Now look sugar tits, women are natural caregivers, they are. Yes, you might not be as organized or competent as I would be doing the same thing¹⁵, but nevertheless, that's why you're at home and I'm at work.

(Mabel puts on a scary fake smile.)

Mabel: I'll be right back with that drink, teensy dick.

(She comes back in, walking slowly towards him, still with the scary smile.)

Mabel: Here you go, my capable, qualified, proficient ass!

(She dumps the drink over his head.)

Blackout.

Act 2 Scene 7

(Lights up on Erin's classroom. She is putting up art work. Cam walks in.)

Cam: How ya doing Erin?

Erin: I'm doing alright Cam, how are you?

Cam: Ya? Ya sure? I've been worrying about ya kid.

Erin: Worrying never did anybody a bunch of good.

Cam: You've been through a lot. We all have, going through this. But you were particularly close to John. Have you talked to him at all?

Erin: I've tried. Left messages. But he hasn't returned any calls. He might not be in a good place to chat right now.

¹⁵ Julie A. Willett, "A Father's Touch:" Negotiating Masculinity and Sexual Subjectivity in Child Care, *Sexuality and Culture* vol.12, no.4 (September 2008): 277.
<http://link.springer.com.proxy.lib.sfu.ca/article/10.1007/s12119-008-9033-y>

Cam: Well shit, would you be?

Erin: No...I can't even fucking imagine.

Cam: You heard some assholes went and threw bricks through the front window of his house? He's not even there. Only his wife and kids.

Erin: I saw that in the paper. My heart goes out to his wife. I tried calling her too, but same thing...

Cam: It's fucking bullshit! Nobody knows the background. They fucking print his name in the paper and on the news and everybody assumes the worst. They don't know what we know. There should be some law about that, to protect us. 'Cause evidently nobody understands innocent until proven guilty.

Erin: There are all kinds of idiots out there Cam, you know this. You teach some of them.

Cam: I know Erin. Believe me, I know. I just think this thing has been handled so poorly. Like why not investigate before you arrest him? Why do it at school? Why let this out of control media frenzy happen? It scares the shit out of me. The living shit. That could happen to any of us!

Erin: I know Cam, I know.

Cam: I mean we've all seen those idiot teachers on the wall of shame, you know, those discipline files. But the worry is those teachers who didn't do it. They lose everything, their reputation, their career and their lives....¹⁶

Erin: I know Cam. It's really shitty.

Cam: Jesus, I tell ya, being a male teacher is dangerous. You never know when something you do will be misconstrued. It's like everyone out there thinks we are

¹⁶ Samuel Brown (Teacher), in discussion with the author, January 2013.

all predators.

Erin: I don't think everyone out there thinks you're all predators.

Cam: Erin, you don't even have to think about this. You're a woman. You're supposed to be a natural caregiver. I've seen the way you touch kids – you hug them. I could never get away with that! No man could! Why do you think there are barely any men in primary?¹⁷

Erin: I'm sure you're going to tell me.

Cam: It's because they don't want to go to jail, Erin. You know as well as I do that a male teacher opens himself way up to allegations if he deals with little kids. They want to hold your hand, sit on your lap, need help in the goddamn bathroom.

Erin: But that's bullshit Cam, men shouldn't not do a job because they're scared.

Cam: But it's not even that you put yourself in precarious positions Erin. It's that everyone out there thinks there's something wrong with you if you want to work with little kids. You automatically become suspect. Even if you are passionate about working with wee ones, it means there is something wrong with you.¹⁸

Erin: Now that's even bigger bullshit. People do not think that way.

Cam: They fucking do! They fucking do!

Erin: They don't! And even if they fucking did, that isn't a reason to stop modeling what is normal and human. We touch each other. It's one of our five fucking senses. There is nothing inherently sexual or dirty about it. It's adults who make it

¹⁷ Jon Bradley, "False Accusations: A Growing Fear in the Classroom." *Canada Education Magazine* <http://www.cea-ace.ca/education-canada/article/false-accusations-growing-fear-classroom> In his article, Bradley reports the national average for men to women teaching ratios in elementary is 20:80, throughout primary and intermediate, and that number is likely to decline given the current climate of perceptions and accusations towards male teachers.

¹⁸ Julie A. Willet, "A Father's Touch: Negotiating Masculinity and Sexual Subjectivity in Child Care," 285.

that way. And if anything, we should be showing kids it's okay when it's healthy... That has been my whole fucking point, all these years, I thought it was ridiculous to stop touching kids and tow the party line. But this shit Cam? It's rocked me. I mean, I counselled him to develop closer relationships with kids. He talked about how touchy I was and how he saw it fostering strong relationships. I mean, I feel like I set him up. Maybe you're right. Maybe men can't get away with what women can. That everybody does see you guys as predators....If that's true, I just ended a new teacher's career. And his life.

Blackout.

Act 2 Scene 8

(Lights up on Hugh's classroom. He is marking.)

Erin: Hey Hugh, how's it going?

Hugh: Oh you know, delighting in the never-ending ridiculous responses to math problems. This one here is quite remarkable. The question reads, "Dylan works for bananas. He receives 70 bananas an hour for his work. If he reads the newspaper on his break, he gets an extra 20% bonus. Dylan works for 30 hours and reads the newspaper during each break. How many bananas is Dylan owed?" To which this brainchild answers, "Dylan needs to stop working for bananas and get a job that pays cash."

Erin: One point for humour?

Hugh: Erin, please. How are you doing? What can I do for you kid?

Erin: *(She pauses a moment.)* Hugh, do you think that there is a different set of rules with touching students between male and female teachers?

Hugh: Pfft! Need you ask? Yes! Touching is bad – especially with men. Women, you get to fulfil the mother role, which we can't get away with. We end up looking like creeps.¹⁹

Erin: Do you really think that Hugh?

Hugh: Yes, yes I do.

Erin: Well, why are men seen as so creepy?

Hugh: Because too many men have been creepy. You have to look at the history Erin. When I started teaching in the early 80's these things were happening and they were hidden. Take Robert Noyes. That pedophile was caught in the sleeping bag of one of his students. What do you think happened to him?

Erin: Didn't they charge him?

Hugh: No. They let him resign. The board didn't want the publicity of having hired a child molester. That man went from district to district, molesting kids, without a single letter on his file because no one wanted to deal with the fall out.²⁰ It was after years of offending that some victims came forward and an R.C.M.P. investigation started across all the towns he worked in. And that's not the only case. The teachers of the Quest program at Prince of Wales in Vancouver, they found it fit to get "together" with their female students for years.²¹ You can't tell me that the staff didn't know something was going on. They kept their heads down. The whole system was guilty really.²²

¹⁹ Samuel Brown (Teacher), in discussion with the author, January 2013.

²⁰ Daphne Bramham, "Little's Changed Since Child Molester Noyes Taught," Vancouver Sun, September 15, 2006.
<http://www.canada.com/vancouversun/news/business/story.html?id=5cb5927f-2d2e-496c-85c3-ebd1f337911>

²¹ Jeff Richards (Teacher), in discussion with the author, February 2013.

²² Jeff Richards (Teacher), in discussion with the author, February 2013.

Erin: Do you think it's worse now? There seems to be so many cases and accusations.

Hugh: No. I think it's better now because it's been brought out to the forefront. It's not hidden anymore. But touch has now become a loaded word. And the pendulum has swung the other way.²³ People don't trust male teachers touching their kids.

Erin: You don't seem to have much physical contact with kids. Is it because of fear? Because of losing your job possibly?

Hugh: I think it's sad actually. I think you lose something when you can't touch kids – a hand on the shoulder saying good job, a pat on the back when they get it. Those moments are important and a hand can communicate so much – there is no replacement for it.²⁴

Erin: Then why don't you do it?

Hugh: Because we are all scared Erin. Nobody wants to be falsely accused. And moreover, nobody wants to be that icky teacher, the one that creeps kids out. Do you know how I get kids' trust? By not touching them.²⁵ And that's what any sensible male teacher would do.

Erin: I wish you had mentored John. He might not have been in this place right now.

Hugh: Erin, don't be so hard on your self. The man had free will. He didn't have to do everything you do. And if he had any sense, he would have protected himself better. I mean every man knows this logically. You do not let yourself be vulnerable. Why do you think Bob gets you to talk to girls about the dress code? Because if he brings it up, the perception is it means he was looking. And that's why I'm not sure

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Ibid.

about this situation. Either he wanted to leave himself open or he is the stupidest man on earth.

Erin: You think he's guilty?!? But you know Amanda.

Hugh: I'm not saying I think he's guilty Erin. I'm just saying I'm his teaching partner. He does Humanities and I do the Scimatics for the same groups of kids. All I can tell you is that the kids don't get a good read off of him. They find him creepy. Now is that because they're spreading rumours or because they have an intuition? I don't know.

(Long silence.)

Erin: Is that why you counselled me to be open and be there for Amanda?

Hugh: *(Stands up, walks to her and puts his hand on her shoulder.)* We don't know anything Erin, we just don't know.

Blackout.

Act 2 Scene 9

(Lights up at Erin's house. She is sitting on the couch. The doorbell rings.)

Erin: Oh my god! John! *She hugs him.* I've been really worried about you.... Please, come in.

John: Sorry to drop by with no notice. I just...I just needed some company.

Erin: Of course! I'm so glad you came over. Can I get you anything? A coffee? A drink?

John: A drink would be lovely. What have you got?

Erin: Red wine or G&T?

John: Wine please.

Erin: Grab a seat while I get it.

(She goes out to the kitchen. John sits there visibly nervous and tense.)

Erin: Here you go. So what the hell has been going on? How are you?

John: Ahhhh.....

Erin: We don't have to talk about it if you'd rather not. We can just chill out.

John: No, I want to talk with you. I need to talk with someone. I'm just feeling kind of alone right now. *(Tears well up in his eyes and he chokes up.)* Jane has left me....

Erin: Cause of this? You're fucking kidding me.

John: No, but yes. I think it was just another reason. You were at the house. She has had nothing but contempt for me recently, and this just sealed it. How do you stand behind your partner through something like this when everyday life is too much for you to handle?

Erin: I am so sorry John.

John: Huh, everyone says, "I'm sorry John." It's bullshit. Sorry for what? You didn't do this to me. They didn't. That girl did this to me. I did this to me. I shouldn't have been alone with her under any circumstances. I had been warned.

Erin: I am sorry. I feel like this is my fault. I, I feel *(Tears well up in her as she begins to choke up...)* that if I hadn't mentored you, if I hadn't have been so touchy feely with kids, you wouldn't have tried to connect with them so much. If I hadn't have let her in the show –

John: *(Grabs her and hugs her tight.)* You did not do this. *(He holds her arms and*

looks into her eyes.) You did not do this. Do not be sorry. You have taught me so much about love and compassion....and you didn't let her in the show. You told Doug to fuck himself if I remember correctly. *(He chuckles softly.)* Please, don't be sad. *(He wipes her tears away)* This will work itself out. I know it will. I didn't do anything.

Erin: I know you didn't. But I don't get it. Why did they arrest you? I mean, don't they have to have evidence?

John: They've charged me with attempted sexual assault. They say she had bruising around her wrists...I didn't touch her...not like that.

Erin: What do you mean? What happened?

John: She had had an outburst towards the end of rehearsal – someone called her white trash back stage. She was angry and crying so I let everyone go home and went to talk to her. I sat beside her, put my hand on her back and tried to console her. We started talking and she began to calm down and then...and then she turned to me, grabbed my face and tried to kiss me. I grabbed her wrists to push her away, but not hard enough to bruise them. I didn't try and force myself on her...I just wanted her to stop. She ran away upset, I'm guessing because I rejected her. And then a few hours later she made a report at the police station....And then my life got turned up-side-down.

Erin: Oh my god. She tried to kiss you?!?

John: Ya...I didn't see it coming. Normally you can tell when someone has a crush on you. I didn't see this one at all. I should have protected myself more. Talked to her with the kids there. I was fucking stupid.

Erin: You weren't stupid John. You were just trying to be a decent human being. Fuck. I can't believe this is happening to you.

John: I have to believe that this will sort itself out. I have to. Otherwise I'll go insane.

I just keep telling myself that thinking about it will do nothing to help it. There is nothing I can do. I just have to wait. But you, how are you doing? *(He reaches over and strokes her face.)* This has had to be difficult on you. How are you holding up?

Erin: I've been more worried about you. I'll be okay.

John: How is everyone at work?

Erin: You know, shocked but super supportive – Hugh has been a lifesaver for me.

John: I could see that, his humour is probably much needed.

Erin: And Cam, Cam is Cam. He tries to be supportive but just ends up riling me up with his tirades on everything that's wrong with society.

John: And Doug? Has he said anything? Anything about the case?

Erin: Not since the initial arrest.

John: What did he tell you?

Erin: Just that you had been arrested and not to talk to the media.

John: Good.

Erin: Why?

John: Just that he did the right thing. Talking to the media would only make things worse in this shit storm....Erin, can I have a hug?

Erin: Of course you can! *(They get up and embrace.)*

John: *(Still holding her...)* Thank you so much. It's been so long since I've touched someone. Jane hadn't touch me in months before this all happened. I just miss having another body near me. *(He grabs her face and pulls it to his lips.)*

Erin: John, I don't think – *(She tries to pull away.)*

John: *(He grabs her wrists.)* Please Erin. I always thought if I hadn't have been married, you and I could have developed something...

Erin: John, let me go. *(She struggles to free her wrists and backs away.)* You are married. And just because things aren't going great right now, doesn't mean it will be like this forever. She might come around. I mean you guys have a family. I can't do this.

John: She's not going to come around Erin. She went to see a divorce lawyer even before this happened. My marriage is over. *(He moves towards her, arms open.)*

Erin: I'm sorry John. I can't. My head's not wrapped around this. It's kind of out of left field.

John: I'm sorry. I shouldn't have done that. I should've known better. Everything has just been so crazy and I just needed someone to connect with. I wanted to share some space with someone. To hold them. To have them hold me.

Erin: I understand, but please understand me. This is all a little sudden.

John: You're right. Look, I should go. Leave you alone with your thoughts. Please call me though. I need you Erin. You're the only one I have to really talk to right now.

Erin: I think that's a good idea....I will give you a call soon.

John: Goodnight Erin.

Erin: Goodnight. *(Closes the door after him. Leans on it with her back and slumps down.)*

Blackout.

Act 2 Scene 10

(Video screen is up.)

Man: Women. They have been called the downfall of man. There are several names for them: *(A pin up style, tough looking woman is shown smoking with attitude. She gets more annoyed as the list goes on.)* Tramp, whore, floozy, harlot, hussy, tart, vamp, minx, jezebel, slut, strumpet, trollop, slapper, scrubber, hornbag, coquette, escort, call girl, hustler, slattern, slovenly woman, adulteress, fornicatress, hooker, fallen woman, street walker, woman of the street, lady of the evening, lady of leisure, scarlet, jade, femme fatal, wench, concubine, nymphomaniac, painted woman and slag, just to name a few. She can destroy the family, corrupt young men and even worse, destroy the very fabric of society's morals. Women from a working class background are particularly problematic and in need of regulation, because as everyone knows, they are more prone to corruption.²⁶ The middle class and the rich are shielded from this inclination to demoralization. A good upbringing including loving parents and regular church attendance keeps these young ladies' virtues pure. Hence they become pillars of virginity. But working class children, whose parents are absent due to work or their own vices, inevitably raise whores. Isn't that right Betty?

Betty: Are you saying I'm a whore?

Man: That's right Betty, yes I am.

Betty: Go fuck yourself! Because you'll never be getting a piece of this. *(She grabs her vagina and gives him the finger. Storms out of shot.)*

Man: Thank you for illustrating my point Betty. And that is why working class girls are in need of regulation.

²⁶ R. Danielle Egan and Gail Hawkes, "Girls, Sexuality and the Strange Carnalities of Advertisements: Deconstructing the Discourse of Corporate Pedophilia" *Australian Feminist Studies* vol.23, no.57 (2008): 311.
<http://web.b.ebscohost.com.proxy.lib.sfu.ca/ehost/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?vid=5&sid=7806a887-399f-47ff-b726-15d79969d687%40sessionmgr110&hid=109>

Blackout.

Act 2 Scene 11

(Lights up in Erin's classroom. Erin is at her desk marking. Amanda stands at the door. Erin looks up.)

Erin: Amanda! Where have you been?!? *(She gets up and with arms crossed, almost hugging herself.)* We've been worried sick about you.

Amanda: You're not mad at me?

Erin: Why would I be mad at you?

Amanda: Because I've wrecked the show...

Erin: You didn't wreck the show, I postponed it. I wanted to talk to you first. I wanted to see if you still want to be in it.

Amanda: Everyone thinks I ruined the show. Everyone thinks that I..that I...

Erin: Look, I had a long talk with the entire cast. We want you to be in it. You are part of our family. We'd love for you to come back!

Amanda: I don't know if I can do that. I don't know if I can come back to this school. I'm thinking of going to distance ed. Nobody will know me there. I won't have to talk to no one.

Erin: Wait, Amanda, I don't know if that's the best idea. A lot of people aren't successful in distance ed. Why don't you want to come back here?

Amanda: Because....Everyone thinks I'm a liar. It's all over Facebook. People have been posting shit on my wall, saying I wished he did what I said, that I'm a lying bitch that is ruining that guy's life. That he would never touch a ditch pig like me. *(She begins to cry.)*

Erin: People can be quite cruel...

Amanda: He tried to rape me, Ms. Hillenger, he tried to fucking get me. Please believe me. I know. I fucking know when someone wants that.

Erin: I know you do... Do you want to talk about it? I mean, you don't have to if you don't want to.

Amanda: *(After a long pause.)* I lost my shit at rehearsal. That bitch Hannah called me white trash. So he tells me to wait and then he lets everyone go home. He waits till they've picked up all their things and gone out and then he sits beside me. He starts talking to me and then I feel his hand on my back. He's just not patting it, it's like he's starting to give me a massage. I ask him what he's doing and he tells me to just relax. That I'm tense and I just need to calm down. I tell him I don't need his hands on me and then he grabs my face and pulls me into his lips and says, "I thought you liked this kind of thing." And he sticks his tongue in my throat and I push him away. That's when he grabs my wrists and pulls me hard into him and pushes me onto the ground, him on top of me. I start to freak out, cause I know where this is going. I've been through this before. And I remember that my knees are free. My fucking knees. I pull one up and fucking sacked that mother fucker! As he's rolling around on the ground I get up and I ran. I fucking ran as fast as I could. I could hear him call after me, but he couldn't get up so quick. I went to my brother's apartment and he was gonna come back here with baseball bats, but his old lady talked him out of it. Said that would just put him in jail. That the thing was is to go to the police. That on account of him being a teacher they might actually fucking listen and do something for once....But you know what the funny thing is? Ya, they did. They actually believed me on account of the bruising on my wrists. But no body else does. No one here believes me. All I get are nasty posts. And I can't take it Ms. H. I can't do this again.

Erin: I'm so sorry Amanda. I'm so sorry.

Blackout.

Act 2 Scene 12

(Light up at Lisa's house. She is a counsellor.)

Lisa: Hey Erin, *(Gives her a big hug.)* long time no see. Come on in. Can I get you the usual?

Erin: I'd love a glass of red wine, thank you.

Lisa: I was ready for you. *(Comes with a glass ready.)* How have you been? Things must be pretty crazy at your site.

Erin: It's been really crazy Lisa. *(She takes a gulp of wine.)* Oh sweet, sweet elixir. How I love what you do to my body....

Lisa: Are you doing okay?

Erin: ...No. I think I'm mixed up in the middle and I'm feeling cut up inside. I think I'm going to lose my shit. I don't know how to deal with this.

Lisa: What's going on?

Erin: Both of them have come to me, each with their stories and I don't know who to believe. At first I was sure. I was sure she was lying somehow or misconstruing the truth, but I don't know anymore. He came by my place and tried to get with me, and when I pushed him away, he did almost the same thing she says he did to her. Just not as forceful. And it's fucking up my head, Lisa. It's fucking up my head.

Lisa: What did he do Erin?

Erin: He took my face in his hands and tried to kiss me. When I pushed him away, he grabbed my wrists and tried to keep me there, pleading with me to show him affection.

Lisa: Pretty lame moves, okay.

Erin: And then the girl comes to see me after class one day, to let me know that she won't be coming back 'cause no one believes her and she's being harassed on social media...and then she tells me what happened. (*Long silence.*)

Lisa: What did she tell you?

Erin: That he dismissed the cast to talk to her alone and then took her face to kiss her, and when she pushed him away he grabbed her wrists and tried to force himself on her. She ended up kneeling him in the balls and ran...it's just too eerie. It's too similar for it to be out of left field and a complete fabrication.

Lisa: Can I put on my counsellor hat and say something that won't make you feel any better, but you might need to hear?

Erin: Yes.

Lisa: I know about the case, the girl. We've all been talking about it off the record. She was the one that had accused that student teacher, right?

Erin: Ya...

Lisa: She comes from an at risk background and has told false tales. You'd be inclined to say not trustworthy, right?

Erin: Ya.

Lisa: She is the perfect victim. It's a crime of opportunity. He has access, she's not a credible source – the whole cry wolf situation. To me that is the perfect choice for a predator.²⁷

Erin: I don't want to believe that. That he is like that.

²⁷ Holly Smithe (Teacher/Counselor), in discussion with the author, April 2014.

Lisa: I'm not saying he's necessarily guilty, I'm just saying if he is one, that whole situation is a perfect vehicle.²⁸

Erin: And what if he's not guilty?

Lisa: The way I see it, if you're male and there is an allegation – your career is done. It doesn't matter if it's true – you're done.²⁹ No one will let you work with kids again.

Erin: But that's bullshit also.

Lisa: Look, it's just reality. People don't trust men as much. It's not because they are all sexual predators, it's because the majority of sexual predators have been men. Sure, there have been a few females, but they are the exception. The stereotype is that men are more pervy and sexual than women.³⁰

Erin: I know, I get it, but it doesn't make it right. That's the other thing I'm dealing with. I mentored John. I feel like I set him up, if he didn't do it.

Lisa: Did you see that fucking video they produced?!? What a bunch of fucking horseshit! "If you must hug a child, give them a side hug." (*She demonstrates.*) Oh my GODDDDDDD! Come on Erin, we all touch kids, every teacher does it at some point. You do it all the time and so do I.

Erin: But look what can happen!

Lisa: But look what can happen when you do! I don't think I'd be nearly as effective as a counsellor if I didn't touch my students. It's that little hand on the arm, hand on the knee or the back. It just says, "I'm really listening to you, I feel what you're saying." It's how we really connect with people.³¹ Would I have them sit on my lap?

²⁸ Slang term for pedophile.

²⁹ Holly Smithe (Teacher/Counselor), in discussion with the author, April 2014.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Ibid.

Never.

Erin: I think we get away with more, or kids are more receptive to us because we're women.

Lisa: Fuck yes. Men have a long history of abusing power – some of them are still doing it. Is it wrong for a man to hug a student? No. But it looks wrong. When you mix being of older age and having power the potential is for things to be unbalanced. So the person has to ask themselves – am I doing this for the benefit of the child – to console them? Or am I doing this for me? Because I like it and it makes me feel good.³²

Erin: We sexualize touch with men.

Lisa: We definitely do. You see an older man hugging a minor and we assume that it's creepy. That there is some kind of sexual intention behind it. But you know, I could be a lesbian. No one knows my sexual orientation. I don't have to disclose that. But I betcha if I said that, openly, I couldn't touch girls all of a sudden because it would be a sexual thing.³³ We sexualize everything that is perceived as not normal. I teach P.E. I can go in the change room and yell at them to hurry up because I'm a married woman with two kids. But really, sexual preference should have no bearing on your job and how you relate to people. They are different things. But you need to protect yourself. It's ignorant of a man to not acknowledge that he has more power and the ability to take advantage of young girls. He has to treat his touch as potentially more dangerous.³⁴

Erin: I always thought that we should be modelling healthy touch interactions to kids... I'm really not sure anymore.

Lisa: Do you have to touch kids? No. You can do a good job of teaching without

³² Ibid.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Ibid.

that. But we are human. And most humans respond to appropriately being touched. We're social animals.

Erin: It's funny hey, I had read this article on complying and touching. The basic gist of it was that if you touched someone on the arm and asked them to do something, they were way more likely to than if they hadn't been touched. The percentage went up even higher if you did it twice.³⁵ We're in a system that depends on compliance, but are told not to use one of our biggest tools.

Lisa: It's fucked. I know. Erin, I don't think you need to change what you're doing. You build really strong, healthy connections with kids. But if you're ever mentoring someone again take them through this checkpoint process. Number one: Have I asked permission? It can be as simple as, "You look like you could use a hug right now. Do you need one?" The kid can answer either way. Number two: The kid has to feel that they have agency in saying yes or no and that there won't be any negative repercussions. You can't treat them differently on the basis of what they choose. This helps lessen the power gap. They are in charge of their own bodies. And number three: Is it transparent? Is it in public and am I okay with anyone seeing this? If they can do those three things, they should be okay.³⁶

Erin: That's good advice.

Lisa: Now, your other problem. Who to believe. I can't fix that one. You're likely never going to know. And you're going to have to find a way to be okay with that.

Erin: I don't know how I'm going to do that.

Lisa: You don't really have a choice. It's that or eat yourself alive.

Erin: I don't know if I trust him anymore. I have so much doubt. And he feels I'm

³⁵ Severne G. M. Halimi-Falkowicz and David C.F. Vaidis, "Increasing Compliance with a Request: Two Touches are More Effective Than One," *Psychological Reports* 103, (March 2008): 88.

³⁶ Holly Smithe (Teacher/Counselor), in discussion with the author, April 2014.

his only friend right now.

Lisa: Be upfront. Call him. Tell him you need to distance yourself from this for your own health. You'd be telling the truth.

Erin: Can't I just do nothing and hope it will all go away? It seems like an easier option.

Lisa: You know better than this. There is the easy option – be passive and still let it eat at you. Or be forward and make a clean break. The choice is yours. It's your sanity in the balance.

Blackout.

Act 2 Scene 13

(Lights up on school library. Staff is waiting. Sarah runs in.)

Sarah: Sorry! Sorry. I had a kid who couldn't find their instrument.

Jen: It looks like everyone's here now so we'll get started. Some of you may not know this, if you've been teaching all day, but the crown has stayed the charges for John Lamb.

Sarah: What does stayed the charges mean? They dropped all charges?

Jen: Not quite. It means the crown has withdrawn them for now, but could bring them back to life within one year of them being stayed. This is typically unlikely.

Cam: Why did they stay them and not drop them?

Jen: I can't really answer that – I don't know. I think what this essentially means is that they did not have enough evidence to pursue the charges and get a likely conviction.

Bob: So this is good news! Jail looks like it's out of the question.

Jen: At this point jail time is highly unlikely.

Cam: That's great to hear – I just wish it happened sooner. I mean, everybody knows she wasn't a credible witness. I can't believe it took this long.

Sarah: When will he be coming back to work?

Jen: Like I've said before, this is only just beginning for John. Now the TRB and the school board will conduct their investigation. Look, I've been involved with the union for a long time and I've seen how these things can go. It can take years. Until then his license is suspended and he'll go without pay.³⁷ He's going to have to find another job. We are in a small community. That might be hard to do given our propensity to find people guilty until proven innocent.

Sarah: I thought the charges being stayed would be good news.

Jen: I'd like to go into committee. Who seconds that.

Bob: I'll second that.

Jen: Bob Barber seconds that. We are now in committee. I want to share with you what can actually happen with the TRB. As you know, the provincial government high-jacked our regulatory body. They didn't do it to doctors or lawyers, but us. They didn't like the union having the majority of control. When they did this, they radically changed the structure of how things are investigated, and the procedure for accusations. Before, if your case went to a hearing, you were judged by a committee made up mainly of your peers. Which made sense, I think. They know the in's and out's of the job, what is appropriate and what is not. That isn't the case anymore. Of the nine appointees, only 4 are BCTF members, the rest come from the private system, which you know, can have strong religious foundations. They can also have a public panel, which includes people not involved in education to,

³⁷ Beth Jones (Teacher and Union Representative), in discussion with the author, July 2012.

and I quote, “strengthen public confidence in the hearing process.”³⁸ They are going to investigate John. If he goes to a hearing and they find him guilty of anything – and I mean anything, not just the charges he is up against, they will find him liable for all costs of the proceedings.³⁹

Cam: That sounds like a bunch of B.S.

Jen: Well listen to this, the public hearing members have all their travel expenses paid and are given \$600 a day for their time.⁴⁰ Six hundred dollars. I don’t even think drug dealers make that much a day. So you see, if you’ve been unemployed for months, the financial prospect of a hearing is daunting. Most cases have pled out to whatever the TRB wants to maintain its image as protecting the public interest, free and independently. (*Says this last bit sarcastically.*)

Hugh: And coercion is alive and thriving in our democracy.

Jen: As your union rep, I have to recommend that you don’t touch kids whenever possible. This has been a front seat reminder of how terrible an accusation can be. But at the same time I refuse to live in fear. We could get accused regardless of whether we’ve done something or not. I’m a parent and a teacher, and if a kid needs a pat on the shoulder, I’m going to do it. If they need a hug, I’ll give that also. Whatever support they need. I’m going to do what I know in my heart to be right.⁴¹

Blackout.

Act 2 Scene 14

(Lights up on Erin’s house. It is late at night. There is a banging at the door.)

³⁸ Teacher Regulation Branch Website
<http://www.bcteacherregulation.ca/AboutUs/ProfessionConductandDisciplineBoard.aspx>

³⁹ Beth Jones (Teacher and Union Representative), in discussion with the author, July 2012.

⁴⁰ Teacher Regulation Branch Website
<http://www.bcteacherregulation.ca/AboutUs/PanelAppointments.aspx>

⁴¹ Beth Jones (Teacher and Union Representative), in discussion with the author, July 2012.

John: Erin! Erin! *(He bangs again.)*

Erin: *(She enters in her robe. She does not open the door and speaks to him through it.)* John, it's three in the morning. What are you doing here?

John: I, I just wanted to talk to you.

Erin: You sound drunk.

John: I'm celebrading! All by myself. Dud you hear? The charges were stayed.

Erin: Yes John, I heard.

John: I jus wanted to celebrate wit someone.

Erin: And I told you that I needed some space from all this.

John: I know, I know. But now you know I din't do it. You can trus me. Erin...Erin, please.

Erin: They didn't have enough evidence to proceed on criminal charges.

John: Fuuuuuuuc! Yer jus as bad as my wife! Can you jus open the door? Please? I jus wanna talk with you.

Erin: John, I don't think that's a good idea. We can talk when you sober up.

John: Erin! Let me in! *(Pounds on the door again.)*

Erin: John, you need to go home.

John: *(Slumps down on the door.)* Why doesn't anywun believe me? They arrestid her mom's boyfren. He's the one.

Erin: What are you talking about?

John: That piece of shit raped that poor girl. She's pregnen with his child. That's

how they know. That's how they know I didn't do anything to her. Well they didn't know for sure, cause she won back down, but they think she's lyin... Tryin to protect that piece of shit for her mudder....Can you believe that? That's one crazy fucked up family...

Erin: How do you know this?

John: 'Cause my lawyer told me so. At court, the judge says they can't proceed for serious moral and ethical reasons. Cause they knew the guy was being charged with raping her...Erin...let me in please....

Erin: I think you should sleep this off and we can talk tomorrow John.

John: Erin....please....I just wanna see yer face...just have one hug....please?

(She looks at the lock on her door, looks down with head in hand and then reaches to open the lock.)

Blackout.

The End.

A Methodology of the Heart...

"A methodology of the heart brings the mind, body and soul not just into the experience, but into the writing about that experience. It is a methodology that embraces the reality of our performing bodies as we conduct our research and as we express what we have learned."⁴²

- Heather Carver

There was always that one auntie. The one with hair growing on her wrinkling face and what were probably skin tags, but were surely warts, in my young, vivid imagination. The one with bad breath, that cornered you and forced the obligatory Greek double kiss and hug. Every muscle in my body would seize as she grabbed me, the smell of her breath arresting my nostrils as she pulled me into her horrific body space. Resistance was futile. My mother's form was near, watching, making sure I acquiesced to my auntie's loving embrace without protest, the threat of punishment hanging over my head with just a quick knowing glance.

As a child, I resented being Greek, for many reasons; but in this instance it was because I longed to have a "normal" upbringing. One in which people simply shook hands, or better yet, just said a polite hello. One where personal bubbles were never trespassed on. One without stinky kisses, breath deflating hugs or piercing pinches to your face or bottom. I wanted to be Canadian, like my other friends.

This body of work originated from an initial yearning; a want or need that was elusive to me. You see, I have had a good life. I cannot deny that. I have been blessed to have been born in the Northern Hemisphere, in a first world country, to loving parents who provided me with every opportunity to learn and better myself. They provided me with D.N.A. that afforded me a clever mind and beautiful body. I was smart, socially consummate and I was pretty. The world was my proverbial oyster. Yet despite all of these coveted attributes, I was lacking in one area. Some

⁴² M. Heather Carver, "Methodology of the Heart: A Performative Writing Response," *Liminalities: A Journal of Performance Studies* Vol. 3, No. 1, (March 2007): 5. <http://liminalities.net/3-1/heart.pdf>

might call it being a spinster, an old maid, a cougar, a crazy cat lady or even, and this was my favourite, socially infertile. I was in my late thirties and had no partner or children.

This was not a problem in and of itself for me. I considered myself to have been lucky, being raised in a post second wave feminist environment. Despite what my parents may have wanted, I did not see the necessity in getting married and having children. If I partnered with someone, it would be because we loved each other and knew we had some sort of beautiful mind and body connection. I never have had a strong desire to have children. I loved teaching other people's children, but I could never connect with other women when they said they always knew that they wanted to have a baby. So the timing of my birth was fortuitous.

Yet despite the social discourses that permeated our society and supported the choices I had made in life, I had not anticipated one thing. I was touch starved. Yes, I had wonderfully rich social exchanges in which I would hug my friends hello and goodbye, but that was it. Once or twice a week. That was the only tactile contact I would make with another human being. I lived alone. I worked at a school where we were instructed not to touch children unless absolutely necessary. There was little, if any, physical interactions with colleagues – maybe a hug at the end of the year just before summer break. After all, one had to maintain a professional demeanour. I rarely saw my parents and when I did, it was again, a short hug. As an adult, I no longer found solace, curled up in my mother's lap and experiencing the touch of her hand through my hair or on the small of my back. The only time I had the pleasure of being stroked, held or cradled were through my romantic trysts.

Stop moment.

The realisation that myself, and many others without children, without partners, travelled through life with little or no physical interpersonal contact would begin my initial path of inquiry. The concept of a "stop moment" is derived from David Applebaum's book, *The Stop*. Lynn Fels describes a stop moment as so:

A stop is a moment that tugs on our sleeve, a moment that arrests our habits of engagement, a moment within which horizons shift, and we experience our situation anew. A stop occurs when we come to see or experience things, events, or relationships from a different perspective or understanding...⁴³

A stop moment is rather like an epiphany. In this sense, I mean the notion of an insight, deriving from the ancient Greek word *epiphaino*,⁴⁴ which means to reveal. In a stop moment, connections are made that had once been imperceptible or illusive, and at once are brought to light and crystalized into consciousness.

The lens through which I interpreted my surroundings, society and relationships, was refocused, and what came into view was a culture bereft of interpersonal physical contact, unless it was between parents and children or intimate sexual partners.⁴⁵ I imagined countless of other lonely souls around the world – the widowers, the childless, the excruciatingly introverted, traversing months and even years without a hand to hold, a shoulder to lean on, or a caring soul to hug.

As a student at UBC's post degree professional program in education, I was implored not to touch students. 'Just don't do it' was the message. The president of the teachers union even took time to preach it to us. And I obliged. Willingly. I wanted to be the perfect teacher, and part of being perfect meant not touching. And hence began years of practice – practice watching kids cry from at least a two foot distance. Offering a hand for a high five instead of the desired hug, shushing rather than placing a gentle hand on the arm. Each time I failed to meet the emotional/physical needs of my students I crept further into a pedagogy of distance.

⁴³ Lynn Fels, "Coming into Presence: The Unfolding of a Moment," *Journal of Educational Controversy* 5, no.1 (2010): 4.
http://cedar.www.utoronto.ca/jeec/vol5/iss1/8/?utm_source=cedar.www.utoronto.ca%2Fjeec%2Fvol5%2Fiss1%2F8&utm_medium=PDF&utm_campaign=PDFCoverPages

⁴⁴ Katherine Barber, ed. *The Canadian Oxford Dictionary*, (Don Mills: Oxford University Press, 2001) 469.

⁴⁵ This idea is echoed by Tiffany Field, *Touch*, 9.

I use the term 'pedagogy of distance' because of its ability to capture two equally important ideas. Not only was I physically distant from my students when they were emotionally vulnerable, but through that distance came the other type of distance – the remoteness or a seemed avoidance of familiarity. In any personal relationship, whether it was friend, family or lover, I would have hugged that person, put my arm around them or even just placed a hand on their back. But because of my desire to do it right professionally, I felt I was failing to do it right interpersonally.

I am friendly with my students. Not in the sense that I would ever call them up and talk about my personal issues – they are children, and just like a child, they do not need to be privy to adult conversation. However, I am here to listen to them, to give them space to be heard – just as a parent would. And like a parent I believe it ought to be permissible to comfort and encourage through gentle physical gestures.

Touch plays an important part in our lives; it can calm, it can reassure, and it can affirm a strong affinity for someone. In this sense, touch becomes a language, a discourse of the body. It conveys emotion and empathy on a visceral level. Stephen J. Smith describes this beautifully:

What makes for the intimacy of the moment and the moment's eternity is gesture, fleeting though it may be. No idle movement, the timely embrace transcends simple motion to express an emotional simplicity. It arrests the chatter of words and lays out a truth to enduring relationships.⁴⁶

A simple gesture, a hand placed softly on the back, a gentle lean and touch of heads, a warm embrace, all convey a moment and a message. It is as if one body is speaking to the other, connecting, and conveying an abundance of feeling

⁴⁶ Stephen J. Smith, "Gesture, Landscape and Embrace: A Phenomenological Analysis of Elemental Emotions." *Indo-Pacific Journal of Phenomenology* vol.6, no.1 (2006): 3.
<http://www.ajol.info/index.php/ipjp/article/view/65596>

without ever uttering a word.

The receiver of this gesture inherently understands the essence of this conversation. These loving, gentle gestures speak volumes to the person who reaps this affection.⁴⁷ It is a language that is developed from the time we are in our mother's womb. There, cradled in amniotic fluid, we begin our relationship with the comfort of being held. Outside the womb, this continues. "Embracing another, and that which is the other, is the founding gesture, the originary state, the comforting, the supporting, sustaining, nurturing union of the flesh."⁴⁸ Touch can continue to comfort, continue to convey warmth and acceptance throughout our lives. So why then did I not touch?

My lack of interpersonal physical contact stemmed from more than just a desire to be that perfect professional educator. I also felt awkward in my own skin. I felt weird and insecure. I did not want to be that person who forced unwanted physical attention, like those old aunties with bad breath that always hugged so hard they squeezed the life breath out of you. And I worried that my touch would somehow come off as insincere because I was awkward with it. I recall having to watch a colleague's four-year-old daughter one evening during parent-teacher interviews. I had no more meetings scheduled, so, at her mother's request, I took her to the library and we watched a cartoon. I did not know her well. We sat on opposite sides of the couch. After sometime, she started to shift, each time inching closer to my own body, until she had made a nook for herself. I put my arm around her and then she melted into me. It was precious.

At the same time that I was uncomfortable with touch, I was also uncomfortable with not touching. As years passed, my dissatisfaction with a pedagogy of distance

⁴⁷ I mean this in two senses of the word. To move or touch the feelings of, and to show a liking to someone. Katherine Barber ed. *The Canadian Oxford Dictionary* (Don Mills: Oxford University Press, 2001), 20.

⁴⁸ Smith, "Gesture, Landscape and the Embrace: A Phenomenological Analysis of Elemental Motions," 1.

grew. It began to physically cause me pain to stand back and watch children cry. I wanted to reach out, to console, and I began to resent and question the efficacy of no touch policies. I began to resent my own practice.

One day I was handing out interm reports for missing work. I gave the teacher spiel about how I questioned why handing out these interms was even necessary – they had had plenty of time to get work in, and I would be calling their parents. One girl began to sob. SOB. I quietly asked her if she wanted to go to the bathroom. She shook her head. Would you like to chat outside? Head shake. Would you like to see the counselor? The head shook no. She sat there at her desk for the next ninety minutes quietly weeping. The lunch bell rang and as the students filed out she continued to sit there. The cacophony of noise that was lunchtime spilled through the open door. I looked at her. I looked at the door. I looked at her. I made the choice to close the door, turning my back on everything my mentors, the union and administration had warned about, and I sat down beside her. I put my hand on her back and I asked her what was wrong. And in those gentle caresses out came everything that was weighing so heavy on her young frame.

That day, I was called to what philosopher Maxine Greene describes as 'wide-awakeness.'⁴⁹ There was a human being in front of me in that classroom, a vulnerable and distraught young lady. I could have called the counselor, I could have just left her alone and eaten my lunch, but I chose to be present. I chose to be *attentive* to her needs. Greene warned that a lack of wide-awakeness would cause one to "drift, to act on impulses of expediency."⁵⁰ I, and other educators, had been acting on practical rather than on moral grounds. My choices regarding touch had not been centered in my own moral ethics, but rather, in a type of complacency.

I considered myself to have a strong moral character. The principles I lived my life

⁴⁹ Maxine Greene, *Landscapes of Learning* (New York: Teacher College Press, 1978): 42.

⁵⁰ Maxine Greene, *Landscapes of Learning*, 43.

in were not centered in traditional religious concepts of morality – of righteousness and wickedness – but rather, these convictions came from a strong desire to be a person of integrity. I wanted be a person that could empathize with other humans: whose word and actions had meaning, a person who had principles and upheld those beliefs. However, as Greene notes, it is impossible to be moral if one does not “think critically about what is taken for granted.”⁵¹ I had not been reflective about my practice with interpersonal physical contact. I had not been authentic to who I thought I was, and I was not present. The young lady startlingly brought me to a place of wide-awakeness with my pedagogical choices surrounding touch.

This one act of rebellion was my first tentative professional foray into touch. Over the years I would come to be more comfortable with its use. When I found out that people were more likely to comply if touched on the arm, I brought this into my professional practice.⁵² I began to soften and became open to hugs.

In May of 2010, the small school district in which I worked was rocked by charges against a colleague. He was a primary elementary school teacher and was accused of sexually assaulting two students. Everyone was shocked and many of my own colleagues, who had a personal relationship with him, were in disbelief. The assaults were supposedly perpetrated in class. Everyone in the community took sides. Some publicly uttering threats towards him and his family and others maintaining his innocence. In that instant and onwards, we saw his reputation destroyed, his family collapse and his life fall apart. The issue was exacerbated when, as happens in small towns, the rumour mill revealed that one of the young girls had previously accused another member of the community for doing the same thing. People became entrenched in their positions, the small

⁵¹ Maxine Greene, *Landscapes of Learning*, 49.

⁵² Severne G. M. Halimi-Falkowicz and David C.F. Vaidis, “Increasing Compliance with a Request: Two Touches are More Effective Than One,” 88.

school's staff was torn apart and every teacher in the district put a little more distance between themselves and their students.

This event, and others like it, would center my inquiry into the politics of touch within education because it scared me. I knew it scared everyone I worked with, especially the men. They became more vigilant at not addressing dress code violations themselves. They would always ask a female colleague to speak with the young lady in questionable dress. We had glass windows put in all our classroom doors. The district produced videos about appropriate boundaries with students and staff, which directed us to never touch unless absolutely necessary. In all the fallout I did not revert to being that "perfect teacher" – the one who did not touch. I embraced my rebellious teacher persona and questioned the virtue of these procedures.

I became curious as to what my colleagues' attitudes and beliefs were in regards to using touch in the classroom. Did they touch students? How did they feel about touch in general – did they consider it a natural human social behaviour? What were their concerns, if any, surrounding the use of touch in the classroom? What I found was fear.

I found fear from my interview participants and in the majority of the few research articles I found on touch in educational environments. Pamela M. Owen and Jonathan Gillentine,⁵³ Piper, Powell and Smith,⁵⁴ and Jon Bradley⁵⁵ all lament that our schools have become overgrown with a culture of fear. Due to no-touch policies and fear of accusations, many teachers are afraid to engage in any kind of interpersonal physical contact. "It [the fear] is powerful enough to lead many

⁵³ Pamela M. Owen and Jonathan Gillentine, "Please Touch Children: Appropriate Touch in the Primary Classroom." *Early Child Development and Care* Vol. 181, No. 6, (July 2011): 857. <http://www.tandfonline.com.proxy.lib.sfu.ca/doi/pdf/10.1080/03004430.2010.497207>

⁵⁴ Heather Piper, John Powell and Hannah Smith, "Parents, Professionals and Paranoia: The Touching of Children in a Culture of Fear." *Journal of Social Work* Vol.6 No.2 (2006): 152

⁵⁵ Jon Bradley, "False Accusations: A Growing Fear in the Classroom."

concerned professionals to adopt working practices they know to be contrary to their professional knowledge base, and to the interests of the children in their care.”⁵⁶ This was a central issue of my inquiry – did my colleagues also feel that touch was important and if so, what do we, both teacher and student lose when we live in this culture of fear?

What I found was not the decisive vote for touch I had hoped for. Two educators thought touch was very significant in teacher-student relationships and that connections were just not as strong without it.⁵⁷ One thought expressed was that touch was not essential to teacher-student relationships, but that “most people crave some level of touch because we are humans.”⁵⁸ And the other, a self-described non-toucher, said that touch in pedagogical situations wasn’t necessary at all.⁵⁹ These insights into teaching and touching brought me to a place of uncertainty.

What was I really arguing for? Touch? So what? As some of my interview subjects expressed, touch wasn’t necessarily essential to our relationships at school. It was possible to build connections without touch. Nobody would die if there were no interpersonal physical contact. I struggled with the notion of advocating for something that can be tragically misinterpreted, but then I remembered something one of my interviewees remarked on:

I touch kids all the time, most teachers do. I think it’s false to be a caring adult and say that I care for you but I can’t touch you. What does this tell kids about real relationships? That this is only a partial relationship? So I [the student] can only trust you part way?”⁶⁰

⁵⁶ Heather Piper, John Powell and Hannah Smith, “Parents, Professionals and Paranoia: The Touching of Children in a Culture of Fear.” 163.
<http://jsw.sagepub.com.proxy.lib.sfu.ca/content/6/2/151.full.pdf+html>

⁵⁷ Beth Jones and Samuel Brown in discussion with the author.

⁵⁸ Holly Smithe, (Teacher/Counselor), in discussion with the author.

⁵⁹ Jeff Richards, (Teacher), in discussion with the author.

⁶⁰ Holly Smithe, (Teacher/Counselor), in discussion with the author.

I was brought back to touch as a natural part of our social discourse. Just as we laugh together, dance together and learn together, we also touch. Through pats on the back, a hand on the shoulder and sometimes even a hug, we articulate a body language and knowledge of acceptance and affection. The importance of these gestures does not wane with age. Stephen J. Smith speaks to this:

The older child, the teenager, may have less need of this comfort and support, or so it seems. A hug, a pat on the back, a foot rub, walking side by side, an arm resting lightly on the shoulder – these are the remnants of the full-bodied gestures of earlier years.⁶¹

To engage in interpersonal physical contact then, is to engage with the whole range of ways that we communicate as human beings, it is a full relationship rather than a partial one.

My interview subjects recognized that touch was important to healthy relationships. “You can physically see someone relax,”⁶² or “There’s a different connection...touching and hugging brings comfort.”⁶³ They echoed what we all intuitively know as human beings – we are social animals and healthy touching is tremendously calming and connecting. Jacqueline Hanson explains that, “appropriate touching behaviours evoke comfort, reassurance, and pleasure, and dispel negative feelings. Touching therefore, contributes to the development of children's sense of security and well-being.”⁶⁴ In their research, Owen and Gillentine found that:

A high percentage of teachers surveyed believed that touching enhances emotional development (98%), shows teachers care (95.5%), improves mood (94%), reduces stress (92%), promotes on-task behaviour (83%),

⁶¹ Stephen J. Smith, “Gesture, Landscape and Embrace: A phenomenological Analysis of Elemental Motions,” 1.

⁶² Beth Jones, (Teacher and Union Representative), in discussion with the author.

⁶³ Samuel Brown, (Teacher), in discussion with the author.

⁶⁴ Jacqueline Hansen, “The Truth about Teaching and Touching.” *Childhood Education* vol. 83, no. 3 (Spring 2007): 159.

improves general behaviour (80%) and promotes cognitive development (76%).⁶⁵

Yet despite believing in the potential of touch to support children, most teachers refrain from touching, particularly males.

Growing up in a Greek family gave me a heightened sense of gender inequality. I raged at being born a woman. Not in the sense of feeling awkward or wrong in one's own body, but in the way that life had undoubtedly given you a shit hand. Being a woman was completely unfair - in every imaginable way. Dinner parties were completely organized and executed by the women, for the men. My mother and aunties would prepare, cook, serve and clean. All the while the men sat comfortably sipping on whiskey or beer, sharing jokes and playing card games like Prefa or Thiloti.

Around the house my mother was responsible for all the cleaning and cooking while working full time, whereas my father enjoyed his relaxation after a hard day's work. Dinners made from scratch were served to him piping hot each night and his lunch was lovingly prepared for him each day. When I was eight years old my mother taught me how to make my own lunches, as I watched her still prepare my father's and brother's meals. At eleven years old I was taught how to use the laundry machine so that I could do this task on my own. My father still, to this day, does not know how to operate the dryer.

My perceived unfairness in a being a woman did not end with household chores. There was also a great inequity with freedom. My sister and I did not have unlimited access to the outside as my brother did. I could play as a young child, to my hearts content, as long as I was home by dark. Dark apparently had some magical quality

⁶⁵ Pamela M. Owen and Jonathan Gillentine, "Please Touch Children: Appropriate Touch in the Primary Classroom." 860.

that put young girls at risk, for it did not seem to affect my brother. As I found out later, it was the male sex that was the threat.

Boys and men represented a danger to our virginity, I later found out, and our virginity was our key to a happy, successful life. When I was eight years old my father informed me that I could no longer play with the boy next door. When I asked why he replied it was because I would get pregnant. As I got a little older, any young man that called would receive the wrath of my father. My brother came and went as he pleased, young women called, and my father was pleased as punch with his growing young man.

As I aged, I noticed that the inequality wasn't just a cultural one, but also a physiological one. Women had periods. Men did not. How did they get to escape bleeding and cramping month after month? Also, when women became pregnant, their bodies were no longer their own. It belonged to the growing little alien in their womb, expanding their bodies (in all the wrong ways), fluctuating their hormones, and stripping them of any sense of freedom for the next two years. Yes, being a woman was surely some kind of sick joke or the short end of the stick in the nature lottery and I wanted nothing to do with it.

Stop moment. Sometimes it sucks being a male also.

What would it be like walking through the world, knowing your behaviour was always suspected? Surely it would weigh on you. That uncomfortable feeling would rise in you as you walked home, knowing the anxiety of the woman in front of you was growing also with each step. Never feeling completely relaxed to help a small child in a park, lest your help be taken the wrong way. Never freely being able to work with children without your motivations being questioned. A burden no woman has had to bear.

Each of the teachers I interviewed believed there was a gender gap in what was permissible for the sexes. One said, "Touching is bad, especially with men - other teachers can play the mother role, which male teachers can't get away with – they're looked at like they're a creep."⁶⁶ Another shared that, "Some [male] teachers touch too much – it's not sexual – but they get labelled as that icky teacher."⁶⁷ Touch from male teachers has had the propensity to be regarded as sexual. All interview subjects alluded to men being perceived as predators.

The phenomenon of men being feared as predators has implications on the educational environment. Fewer and fewer men are entering into the profession. As Jon Bradley states:

While general statistics are open to flux and are often several years behind reality, it is clear that male teachers in elementary and middle schools will soon be a thing of the past.... generally speaking, the male-to-female ratio in elementary schools is 20-to-80; in secondary schools, 35-to-65. Whatever data one teases out, there is no question: our classrooms are increasingly dominated by female teachers.⁶⁸

In an increasingly politicized and fear based culture, many men are opting to stay out of education.

The hesitancy of men to become teachers is completely understandable when one considers there are often no procedures or safe guards in place to protect teachers from false accusations. Bradley explains, "In far too many cases, there is no "right to privacy" or "right to innocence before judgment"; rather, there appears to be a rush to judgment with little regard for the impact on the falsely accused individual or the collateral impact upon the school and other

⁶⁶ Samuel Brown, (Teacher), in discussion with the author.

⁶⁷ Jeff Richards, (Teacher), in discussion with the author.

⁶⁸ Jon Bradley, "False Accusations: A Growing Fear in the Classroom."

professionals within that environment.⁶⁹ As explored in the play, a teacher's life is completely professionally and publicly transformed into a nightmare. Once a sexual accusation is made, one's reputation is destroyed.⁷⁰

There were many complex issues and themes that came out of my dialogue with teachers. There were pressures from the institutions whether they originated from the district, Teacher Regulation Branch, or the government. I found gender and power issues, teacher autonomy and practice concerns, historical practice considerations, and the sentiment that touch had become sexualized. I faced a daunting task. How do I give voice to the data?

Finding Voice

When we go into the tender places within ourselves, we break open to the page, where blood is transformed to ink. Here the sinews, tendons, flesh of our flesh are formed in language, which is resonant with bone reality. It is not the text which is distant, or the body that is distant, but the embodied self which has the capacity to heave, breathe, sigh, contract and release into all the magnificent and painful ways of being human in this world. We break open our humanness into each other. And in the breaking we invite in the space for transformation.⁷¹ – Celeste Snowber

Finding my voice was and is one of the biggest struggles in writing this thesis. I often found myself paralyzed, in front of the computer, anxiety welling up inside of me. I would procrastinate unlike I ever had before. As I alluded to earlier, I wanted

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ Interestingly, one teacher is suing his former employer, and the investigator they hired, for unimaginable hardship due to negligence in the investigation. Glenda Luymes, "B.C. Teacher Suing Over 'Unimaginable Hardship' After False Accusations of Rape, Torture," in *National Post*, April 10, 2015 <http://news.nationalpost.com/news/canada/b-c-teacher-suing-after-discovery-that-students-claims-of-torture-rape-were-ripped-off-from-law-and-order>

⁷¹ Celeste Snowber, "In Praise of the Vulnerable: A poetic Autobiographical Response to Salvio's Abundant Sexton," *Journal of the American Association for the Advancement of Curriculum Studies* vol. 5 (February 2009): 15. http://www2.uwstout.edu/content/jaaacs/Vol5/Snowber_Wiebe.pdf

to be perfect – the good student, the good teacher, the good person. I had always met my deadlines, with plenty of time to spare. And yet I found myself letting years go by, doing nothing. Occasionally trying to write only to end in tears. I had tapped into that young child that was never listened to or scolded for saying something inflammatory.

I was in my head. My body ached. I had embraced the Cartesian dualism – a split between mind and body.⁷² The irony was that I was completing a thesis within an arts-based research program, meaning there was meant to be a ‘reunion’ of mind and body, that I could write from the heart – about my process, my questions, my life. And yet I struggled. I tried to compartmentalize my work into a five-chapter format with no success as I read passages such as this by Celeste Snowber:

The body doesn't really like formulas. Yes, it likes forms, forms where there can be containers for freedom to reside. But formulas or formulaic writing diminish what the body knew in the beginning. And this is that all language comes out of the breath and tongue, the rhythms of language are visceral. And this is being caught on, in a few circles, but there is a long way to go to recognize and remember the body back to language.⁷³

I'm sure one day I will be able to laugh at the irony.

As I sank deeper into anxiety, guilt and procrastination, I started to question the point of this inquiry. So I talked to some teachers. They said what I basically already knew. Where were your important findings? Rather than, as Kathleen Gallagher encourages, “positioning the research story as a place to begin inquiry,

⁷² Cancienne, Mary Beth and Celeste Snowber. “Writing Rhythm: Movement as Method.” *Qualitative Inquiry* vol.9, no.2 (2003): 237-253.
<http://qix.sagepub.com.proxy.lib.sfu.ca/content/9/2/237.full.pdf+html>

⁷³ Celeste Snowber, “Let the Body Out: A Love Letter to the Academy from the Body,” in *Epistemologies of Ignorance in Education* edited by E. Malewski & N. Jaramillo, (Charlotte: Information Age Publishing, 2011), 190.

not a place on which to settle meanings,”⁷⁴ I was stuck, trying to place myself in the tradition of what I thought the academy would want.

One day, sitting in front of the computer panicking, as had become my custom, I decided to do something different. I reached out. I called a colleague of the program. As she patiently listened to me vocalize my fears and self-inflicted torture in writing about teachers and touch, she asked me a simple question. “Why don’t you write a play?” I sat stunned for a moment. “You love to write plays and I can’t think of a better way to describe the complexities and nuances of your subject – think about it. It would be a brilliant way to discuss it.” Stop moment. In my despair I could not see this beautiful option. It took her words to pull my head up and see the light again.

Hamlet once said, “The play’s the thing, wherein I’ll catch the conscience of the King.”⁷⁵ His goal was to elicit an emotional response from his uncle, and thereby know that Claudius was indeed the killer of his father. The irony being that the play did evoke the reaction Hamlet was looking for. However, Hamlet was too indecisive to do anything about the situation. Plays have a wonderful ability to stir emotion, to build bridges of empathy for the characters and their lives in the drama. But might reading, writing or attending a play cause us to act? To change?

Touch in education is a touchy subject. There are many fears for both teachers and parents. A play can allow the reader or viewer the ability to empathise with the characters in a way that traditional academic texts cannot. It allows the audience to experience the reality created, on a visceral level. Norman Denzin notes, “A

⁷⁴ Kathleen Marie Gallagher, “In Search of a Theoretical Basis for Storytelling in Education Research: Story as Method” *International Journal of Research & Method in Education* vol. 34, no. 1 (2011): 59.
<http://www.tandfonline.com.proxy.lib.sfu.ca/doi/abs/10.1080/1743727X.2011.552308#aHR0cDovL3d3dy50YW5kZm9ubGluZS5jb20ucHJveHkubGliLnNmdS5jYS9kb2kvcGRmLzEwLjEwODAvMTc0MzcyN1guMjAxMS41NTIzMDhAQEAw>

⁷⁵ William Shakespeare, *The Tragedy of Hamlet Prince of Denmark*, Edward Hubler ed. (New York: Signet Classic, 1963): Act II, Scene II, Line 216-217, 90.

performance authorizes itself, not through the citation of scholarly texts, but through its ability to evoke and invoke shared emotional experience and understanding between performer and audience.”⁷⁶ This was the hope, that a world could be created in which observers would understand the concerns and fears of teachers with touch in a highly politicized profession.

I no longer sat motionless, crying at the computer. As I wrote, I was engaged. The characters' voices spoke to me and I willingly put their words onto paper. I saw their facial features, how their bodies moved, and felt the warm tones of their voices reverberate through my body. Through the characters and the writing of the play I was able to honour the complexity of the issues. I had fallen back in love with my thesis because I had been given permission, permission to write with my voice.

Ethnodramatic styles vary from researcher to researcher. One style is documentary or verbatim theatre, which uses interviews and primary sources.⁷⁷ I did not employ this type of drama for several reasons. I did not believe that the text from my research participants would make for engaging theatre. Could I have chosen to try and interview the colleague accused of inappropriate touching? Surely that would have potentially been intriguing documentary theatre. I could not ethically have asked him to do so, to recount such difficult memories. Also, the teacher involved was not allowed to speak on the matter until all regulatory bodies had finished their investigations. This disciplinary process took over three years. Creating a fictional event based on the opinions and experiences expressed by those I interviewed, and my own experiences and imagination, could serve simultaneously as inquiry and representation of the complexities of my research around the issues and pedagogy of touch.

⁷⁶ Norman Denzin, “A Call to Performance,” *Symbolic Interaction* vol. 26, no.1 (February 2003): 192. <http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com.proxy.lib.sfu.ca/doi/10.1525/si.2003.26.1.187/full>

⁷⁷ Kathleen Gallagher, “Theatre Pedagogy and Performed Research: Respectful Forgeries and Faithfull Betrayals,” *Theatre Research in Canada* vol.28, no.2 (2007):115.

My ethnodrama would fall into the category of 'unreality.' Like Natalie Kestecher, I "blended fact and fiction to create...an overtly theatrical text."⁷⁸ Through the vehicle of a fictional accusation at an educational institution, research participants' ideas and concerns regarding touch were explored. To borrow Kathleen Gallagher's phrase, the play used respectful forgeries and faithful betrayals.⁷⁹ Dialogue was not created verbatim from the interview material, but was paraphrased in order to facilitate dialogue, and because the individual characters were often a different personality from the interviewees.

The play granted its readers an opportunity, for a moment or two, to live inside the world of a teacher. That crazy and chaotic world filled with characters, politics, and sometimes even beauty. The hope was that outsiders (and insiders) to the profession could connect to the pressure of beginning teachers, the influence of outside institutions, the overall politics of the job, and most importantly, teachers' struggle with touch.

Other ethnodramatists differ in their approach to collecting and creating dialogue. For instance, in his play *Street Rats*, Johnny Saldana drew from poetry of field notes, reader's theatre scripts from field notes, and a short story, in order to splice together data in which to create dialogue.⁸⁰ Diane Conrad has used a completely different approach in which she collects her data and dialogue through applied theatre sessions with her subjects.⁸¹ Whereas Kathleen Gallagher has played with

⁷⁸ Johnny Saldana, *Ethnotheatre: Research from Page to Stage* (Walnut Creek: Left Coast Press, 2011): 100.

⁷⁹ Kathleen Gallagher, "Theatre Pedagogy and Performed Research: Respectful Forgeries and Faithfull Betrayals," 116.

⁸⁰ Johnny Saldana, *Ethnotheatre: Research from Page to Stage*, 100.

⁸¹ Diane Conrad, *Athabasca's Going Unmanned: An Ethnodrama About Incarcerated Youth* (Rotterdam: Sense Publishing, 2012): xii.

the gamut of ethnodramatic writing, from using verbatim theatre⁸² to incorporating field, researcher reflections, and interview notes.⁸³

My own work relies on interview data, and autoethnographic researcher reflections. I think what is of most importance in deciding which methods to incorporate when writing ethnodramatic works, is what works best to tell the story your data is aching to say. Can documentary theatre serve the material? Or is something more needed? For as Johnny Saldana brilliantly says:

This may be difficult for some to accept, but theatre's primary goal is neither to "educate" nor to "enlighten." Theatre's primary goal is to entertain—to entertain ideas and to entertain for pleasure. With ethnographic performance, then, comes the responsibility to create an entertainingly informative experience for an audience, one that is aesthetically sound, intellectually rich, and emotionally evocative.⁸⁴

I also engaged with performative writing. It "takes as its goal to dwell within multiple perspectives, to celebrate an interplay of voices, to privilege dialogue over monologue."⁸⁵ A school is a breathing organism filled with many parts and many perspectives. I wanted those perspectives to have voice in this work. Every voice in the play represents a colleague I have worked with, a multidimensional, dynamic person with warmth and shadows, beauty and disharmony. It is their stories I wanted to tell, their experiences, their truth.

⁸² Kathleen Gallagher, "Verbatim Theatre and Social Research: Turning Towards the Stories of Others," *Theatre Research in Canada* vol.33, no.1 (2012): 25.

⁸³ Kathleen Gallagher, "Sexual Fundamentalism and Performances of Masculinity: An Ethnographic Scene Study," *Journal of Gay and Lesbian Issues in Education* vol.4, no.1 (2006): 48
http://www.tandfonline.com.proxy.lib.sfu.ca/doi/abs/10.1300/J367v04n01_05#aHR0cDovL3d3dy50YW5kZm9ubGluZS5jb20ucHJveHkubGliLnNmdS5jYS9kb2kvcGRmLzEwLjEzMDAvSjM2N3YwNG4wMV8wNUBAQDA=

⁸⁴ Johnny Saldana, "Dramatizing Data: A Primer," *Qualitative Inquiry* vol.9, no.2 (2003): 220.

⁸⁵ Ronald J. Pelias, "Performative Writing as Scholarship: An Apology, an Argument, an Anecdote." *Cultural Studies: Critical Methodologies*. Vol.5 no.4 (November 2005): 419.
<http://csc.sagepub.com.proxy.lib.sfu.ca/content/5/4/415.full.pdf+html>

Performative writing also plays with writing where one wishes “the reader to pause, to interrupt linear reading, and to evoke a poetic response, within which the reader...may be moved to reflection and inquiry and recognition.”⁸⁶ It is in the hopes of having the audience connect with the data in a meaningful and emotional way. I wanted the piece to stop, to alarm, to explore the complexities of teachers and teaching, and more importantly, to evoke a dialogue. What questions and concerns come out of this work for you, the audience, having ‘lived’ through this experience? The play brings up difficult questions surrounding touch, gender, pedagogy, relational ethics and professionalism.

After writing the play I again sank into old habits of procrastination. I knew I had to contextualize the piece, discuss its place with other similar bodies of work and ask what questions I was now left with. I could not begin to put words to the page. I was tired. I was scared. I liken it to what Celeste Snowber wrote about desire. “In the middle of the book, in the middle of labor, in the middle of the relationship, or in the middle of teaching, desire dwindles, loosens, and one continues, often depleted of the passion, which once ignited the task.”⁸⁷ The loss of passion came in a large part from my insecurities. I have a confession to make; I struggle with believing I am smart enough, that I am capable.

So in that struggle I again reverted back to what I thought my discussion ‘should’ look like. With the zeal of a first year college student I patched together several quotes and worked backwards to piece together the chapter. And of course, it read as such. I was not in the writing. My words, thoughts, feelings and ideas did not make it onto to the page. It was not an embodied work.

⁸⁶ Lynn Fels, “Catching my Breath: In Full Flight Over the Prairies,” *Emotion, Space and Society* vol. 11 (May 2014): 59.

⁸⁷ Celeste Snowber, “A Curriculum of Longing,” *Journal of Curriculum Theorizing* Vol.22, no.1 (Spring 2006): 80.
<http://web.b.ebscohost.com.proxy.lib.sfu.ca/ehost/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?vid=10&sid=7806a887-399f-47ff-b726-15d79969d687%40sessionmgr110&hid=109>

I grappled with how to bring the autoethnographic elements of the play into this discussion. Simply put, autoethnography uses personal experience to understand cultural experiences.⁸⁸ Theoretically I should have excelled in this, but could not at the time. Unless the text was dialogue or one of the italicized personal writings, I could not make the leap to put myself to print. I clung to the notion that my voice did not matter. This piece by Helene Cixous resonated within me:

By writing herself, woman will return to the body which has been more than confiscated from her, which has been turned into the uncanny stranger on display – the ailing or dead figure, which so often turns out to be the nasty companion, the cause and location of inhibitions. Censor the body and you censor breath and speech at the same time.⁸⁹

I needed to give myself permission to write myself, to find voice. I needed to give myself permission to be vulnerable, raw and real. I needed to accept and embrace my limitations, my abilities, and myself.

My mother was the nurturer. As if taken out the pages of a 1960's manual on parenting, she was the one whose body was open. She would cuddle, caress and offer comfort in all that transpired. My father's body was not as accessible. He was distant, at times cold, and the bearer of hard lessons that arose out of punishment. Their acquiescence of these clearly defined gender roles was to be expected. Generations had passed that solidified these clearly defined roles. Yet despite having unlimited access to my mother, it was my father's affection that I sought. I yearned to find the crease in his lap in which I could snuggle. But his body was not open. In his arms there was no immense comfort. I found a stiff, awkward embrace that usually ended quite quickly.

All of my male role models in Greek culture shared the same characteristics. They were the breadwinners. Every auntie here in Canada was a stay at home mom,

⁸⁸ Carolyn Ellis, Tony E. Adams and Arthur P. Bochner, "Autoethnography: An Overview," 273.

⁸⁹ Hélène Cixous, Keith Cohen and Paula Cohen, "The Laugh of Medusa," *Signs* vol.1, no.4 (1976): 880.
http://www.jstor.org.proxy.lib.sfu.ca/stable/3173239?seq=1#page_scan_tab_contents

except for my own mother. My aunts in Greece were farmers and as agrotis, worked together with their spouses to till the land. All my uncles were the disciplinarians. All of them. I have heard the expression of "Just you wait until your father gets home" spoken in English, Spanish and Greek over the years, getting into trouble with my siblings and cousins. All the men took this role seriously. They truly believed that a healthy fear of one's father was needed to bring children up right.

Through these two mechanisms of providing and fearing, our fathers took on the stereotypical gender role. They were absent for most of the day, away at work, and when they came home, their energies were used for righting the perceived wrongs we had been guilty of in the day. There was little time for hugging and caressing. That role typically fell on my mother after my father had dealt out his punishment. It was women who were the caregivers in my family.

There was one area though in which my father showed a little bit of gentleness and caring. You see, my mother, who ironically had wanted to be a nurse, was terrified of blood. Whenever she saw it, she would panic - in the worst way. Smashed your face? How about we wash your mouth out with soap for using a bad word? Spill hot soup on yourself? How about we spank you for eating in the living room rather than put you into a cold shower? It was my father who was the calm and rational one. He would bring you to the bathroom with your latest bleeding knee wound, lift you onto the counter, and begin his first aid. Of course every cut needed rubbing alcohol to sterilize it. But in that certain pain, he would gently blow cool air on your wound, coaching you through. "See, it isn't that bad. You are so strong! That's my girl." It was in those moments I saw my father at his most tender.

I have interweaved personal accounts of growing up in a Greek family throughout this discussion. It gave me a unique perspective. Like other southern countries,⁹⁰

⁹⁰ Helen M. Sterk and Annelies Knoppers, *Gender, Culture and Physicality: Paradoxes and Taboos* (Plymouth: Lexington Books, 2009), 39.

touch was always a given. From hugs and kisses, cradling and caressing, to pinches and slaps across the bottom, we were touched. My extended family epitomized the saying, 'it takes a village to raise a child.' As a young child I hated this, I did. But as I aged I began to see the beauty in it. The humanness.

Nothing we hold as a culture is in and of itself, a truth. As Lynn Fels states:

We must continually remind ourselves that the so-called reality in which we dwell is a socially, politically, environmentally, culturally constructed reality. To understand that we come to our relationships within a system already enacting on how we engage is to begin to give language to that which is inarticulate.⁹¹

Our traditions and ways of interacting with touch are merely a tacitly socially agreed upon construction. There is nothing inherently right or true in how we engage in this social phenomenon. Given that touch has a place throughout our lives,⁹² it is important that we question the substance of no-touch policies in our schools, with our children. Do we let fear guide us? Or do we begin to create a different culture?

The difficulty for teachers is that due to no-touch policies, our hands are often tied. If an accusation is made, districts and the Teacher Regulation Branch tend to find people 'guilty' if they have been directed to stop touching in any way. The teacher in my school district, his criminal guilt never proven, had his teaching license revoked for a number of years because he had been directed to stop holding hands and sitting with children in his lap. We will never know the extent of his culpability.

Yet this example and others like it, have become harbingers of the death of touch within education. Do we want our pedagogical practices dictated by fear? Or would we rather begin a dialogue in which we ask difficult questions? Questions such as:

⁹¹ Lynn Fels, "Coming into Presence: The Unfolding of a Moment," 10.

⁹² Mariana Caplan, *Untouched: The Need for Genuine Affection in an Impersonal World* (Prescott: Hohm Press, 1998), 91 and Stephen J. Smith, "Gesture, Landscape and Embrace: A phenomenological Analysis of Elemental Motions," 1.

How can we create a process for allegations that safeguards both the accuser and the accused until the accused is proven guilty or innocent? How do we begin to create a discourse and environment in which men are not made to feel or are seen as potential predators? How can we create spaces with children and adults where there is no need to fear interpersonal physical touching? Is a pedagogy of touch even possible? We need to ask these questions because as Desmond Morris pointed out in nineteen seventy-one:

We often talk about the way we talk, and we frequently try to see the way we see, but for some reason we have rarely touched on the way we touch. Perhaps touch is so basic – it has been called the mother of senses – that we tend to take it for granted. Unhappily, and almost without our noticing it, we have gradually become less and less touchful, more and more distant, and physical untouchability has been accompanied by emotional remoteness.⁹³

My inquiry into touch came from the personal realization that myself, and many others, go through life untouched. This awareness brought me to question our cultural habits in and out of educational contexts. I questioned my own practice. Having come out the other side of my research, I am still questioning that practice. I do not want to engage in a pedagogy of distance, yet there are external forces that affect my decisions. Myself, and the others I interviewed to conduct this inquiry all have become more reflective in our practice of touching children. We all are more hesitant to touch. It is an unfortunate side effect, given that at the beginning, I was advocating for touch's use. However, we cannot always predict the unintended outcomes of our research.

What is most important about this inquiry is that it is calling us to the realization that we collectively need an Applebaum stop moment. We need, as Lynn Fels describes the stop, to "choose, not blindly, or in response to habits of engagement,

⁹³ Desmond Morris, *Intimate Behaviour* (London: Vintage, 1994): viii.

but with full awareness that there are choices of action available."⁹⁴ We need to be, as Maxine Greene has called us to be, wide-awake. Pedagogical touch is becoming an endangered species in the learning environments we create with our students. We need to decide if touch in education is something worth opening up a dialogue about and saving. Will we chose a pedagogy of distance or a pedagogy of touch?

You see, I can't pretend I haven't been touched by this, that this work hasn't touched me, or that my students aren't going untouched. I can't pretend I don't get tense, torn, and heartbroken every time I watch a child break down from two feet away. I feel it in in my body, to the depths of my core, unable to find that axe that Descartes so readily seemed to locate. I want to place my hand on a shoulder, a back, to offer a hug, one of those gestures of bodily origins. Of human origins. Of comfort. And in that quest for comfort we must sometimes become uncomfortable. So that we may open our eyes and our hearts – to touch on what connects us all.

⁹⁴ Lynn Fels, "When Royalty Steps Forth: Role Drama as an Embodied Collective Learning System," *Complicity: An International Journal of Complexity and Education* vol.6, no.2 (2009): 136.
<http://ejournals.library.ualberta.ca.proxy.lib.sfu.ca/index.php/complicity/article/view/8823/7143>

References

- Ackerman, Diane. *A natural history of the senses*. Vintage, 1990.
- Avison, Donald J. "A College Divided: A Report of the Fact Finder on the BC College of Teachers." 2010.
http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/pubs/2010_factfinder_report_bcct.pdf
- Barber, Katherine ed. *The Canadian Oxford Dictionary*. Don Mills: Oxford University Press, 2001.
- Bradley, Jon. "False Accusations: A Growing Fear in the Classroom." *Canada Education Magazine* <http://www.cca-ace.ca/education-canada/article/false-accusations-growing-fear-classroom>
- Bramham, Daphne. "Little's Changed Since Child Molester Noyes Taught," Vancouver Sun, September 15, 2006.
<http://www.canada.com/vancouversun/news/business/story.html?id=5cb5927f-2d2e-496c-85c3-ebd1f337911>
- British Columbia Teacher's Federation. "Summary of Changes from the Teachers Act and New Regulations."
<http://www.bctf.ca/uploadedFiles/Public/ProfessionalResponsibility/CollegeOfTeachers/SummaryOfChanges.pdf>
- Brown, Samuel. (Teacher), in discussion with the author, January 2013.
- Cancienne, Mary Beth and Celeste Snowber. "Writing Rhythm: Movement as Method." *Qualitative Inquiry* vol. 9, no. 2 (2003): 237-253.
<http://qix.sagepub.com.proxy.lib.sfu.ca/content/9/2/237.full.pdf+html>
- Caplan, Mariana. *Untouched: The need for Genuine Affection in an Impersonal World*. Prescott: Hohm Press, 1998.
- Carver, M. Heather. "Methodology of the Heart: A Performative Writing Response," *Liminalities: A Journal of Performance Studies* Vol. 3, No. 1, (March 2007): 1-14.
<http://liminalities.net/3-1/heart.pdf>
- Cixous, Hélène, Keith Cohen and Paula Cohen. "The Laugh of Medusa," *Signs* vol.1, no.4 (1976): 875-893.
http://www.jstor.org.proxy.lib.sfu.ca/stable/3173239?seq=1#page_scan_tab_contents
- Conrad, Diane. *Athabasca's Going Unmanned: An Ethnodrama About Incarcerated Youth*. Rotterdam: Sense Publishing, 2012.
- Denzin, Norman. "A Call to Performance," *Symbolic Interaction* vol. 26, no.1 (February 2003): 187-207.
<http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com.proxy.lib.sfu.ca/doi/10.1525/si.2003.26.1.187/full>

- Ellis, Carolyn, Tony E. Adams and Arthur P. Bochner. "Autoethnography: An Overview," *Historical Social Research* vol.36, no.4 (2011): 273-290.
http://www.jstor.org.proxy.lib.sfu.ca/stable/23032294?seq=1#page_scan_tab_contents
- Ellis, Carolyn. "Heartful Autoethnography," *Qualitative Health Research* 9, no.5 (September 1999): 669-683
<http://qhr.sagepub.com.proxy.lib.sfu.ca/content/9/5/669.full.pdf+html>
- Egan, R. Danielle and Gail L. Hawkes. "Endangered Girls and Incendiary Objects: Unpacking the Discourse on Sexualization," *Sexuality & Culture* vol. 12, no. 4 (2008): 291-311.
- Egan, R. Danielle and Gail Hawkes. "Girls, Sexuality and the Strange Carnalities of Advertisements: Deconstructing the Discourse of Corporate Pedophilia." *Australian Feminist Studies* vol.23, no.57 (2008): 307-322.
- Evans, Joan A. "Cautious Caregivers: Gender Stereotypes and the Sexualization of Men Nurses' Touch." *Journal of Advanced Nursing* vol.4, no. 4 (2002): 441-448.
<http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com.proxy.lib.sfu.ca/doi/10.1046/j.1365-2648.2002.02392.x/full>
- Fels, Lynn. "Catching my Breath: In Full Flight Over the Prairies," *Emotion, Space and Society* vol.11 (May 2014): 52-60.
- Fels, Lynn. "Collecting Data Through Performative Inquiry: A Tug on the Sleeve." *Youth Theatre Journal* vol. 26, no. 1 (2012): 50-60.
<http://www.tandfonline.com.proxy.lib.sfu.ca/doi/abs/10.1080/08929092.2012.678209>
- Fels, Lynn. "Coming into Presence: The Unfolding of a Moment," *Journal of Educational Controversy* 5, no.1 (2010) p. 1-16.
http://cedar.wvu.edu/jec/vol5/iss1/8/?utm_source=cedar.wvu.edu%2Fjec%2Fvol5%2Fiss1%2F8&utm_medium=PDF&utm_campaign=PDFCoverPages
- Fels, Lynn. "Complexity, Teacher Education and the Restless Jury: Pedagogical Moments of Performance." *Complicity: An International Journal of Complexity & Education* vol. 1 no. 1 (2004): 73-98.
<http://web.b.ebscohost.com.proxy.lib.sfu.ca/ehost/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?sid=a2998f9e-cdb2-497a-8251-42bad9573b29%40sessionmgr110&vid=1&hid=109>
- Fels, Lynn. "When Royalty Steps Forth: Role Drama as an Embodied Collective Learning System," *Complicity: An International Journal of Complexity and Education* vol.6, no.2 (2009): 136.
<http://ejournals.library.ualberta.ca.proxy.lib.sfu.ca/index.php/complicity/article/view/8823/7124-143>.
- Field, Tiffany. *Touch*. Cambridge: MIT Press, 2001.
- Gallace, Alberto, and Charles Spence. "The Science of Interpersonal Touch: An Overview." *Neuroscience Biobehavioral Reviews* 34, (2010): 246-259.

- Gallagher, Kathleen Marie. "In Search of a Theoretical Basis for Storytelling in Education Research: Story as Method." *International Journal of Research & Method in Education* vol. 34, no. 1 (2011): 49-61.
<http://www.tandfonline.com.proxy.lib.sfu.ca/doi/abs/10.1080/1743727X.2011.552308#aHR0cDovL3d3dy50YW5kZm9ubGluZS5jb20ucHJveHkubGliLnNmdS5jYS9kb2kvcGRmLzEwLjEwODAvMTc0MzcyN1guMjAxMS41NTIzMDhAQEAw>
- Gallagher, Kathleen Marie. "Off the Beaten Track: A Reflection on Intention and Unpredictability in Arts Education Research." *Journal of the Theory and History of Education International Research Group* vol. 11 (2010): 35-43.
- Gallagher, Kathleen Marie. "Sexual Fundamentalism and Performances of Masculinity: An Ethnographic Scene Study," *Journal of Gay and Lesbian Issues in Education* vol.4, no.1 (2006):47-76.
http://www.tandfonline.com.proxy.lib.sfu.ca/doi/abs/10.1300/J367v04n01_05#aHR0cDovL3d3dy50YW5kZm9ubGluZS5jb20ucHJveHkubGliLnNmdS5jYS9kb2kvcGRmLzEwLjEzMDAvSjM2N3YwNG4wMV8wNUBAQDA=
- Gallagher, Kathleen Marie. "Theatre Pedagogy and Performed Research: Respectful Forgeries and Faithful Betrayals." *Theatre Research in Canada* vol.28, no.2 (2007) 105-119.
- Gallagher, Kathleen Marie. "Verbatim Theatre and Social Research: Turning Towards the Stories of Others," *Theatre Research in Canada* vol.33, no.1 (2012): 24-43.
- Guerrero, Laura K. and Michael L. *The Nonverbal Communication Reader*. Long Grove: Waveland Press, 2008.
- Glegg, Allastair. "The British Columbia College of Teachers: An Obituary." *Historical Studies in Education* 25, no. 2, (Fall 2013): 45-64.
http://historicalstudiesineducation.ca/index.php/edu_hserhe/article/viewFile/4310/4455
- Halimi-Falkowicz, Severne G. M. and David C.F. Vaidis. "Increasing Compliance with a Request: Two Touches are More Effective Than One," *Psychological Reports* vol.103, no.1 (March 2008): 88-92.
- Hansen, Jacqueline. "The Truth about Teaching and Touching." *Childhood Education* vol. 83, no. 3 (Spring 2007): 158-162.
- Jones, Alison. "Touching Children: Policy, Social Anxiety, and the 'Safe' Teacher," *Journal of Curriculum Theorising* vol.19, no.2 (Summer 2003) 103 -116.
<http://web.b.ebscohost.com.proxy.lib.sfu.ca/ehost/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?vid=3&sid=7806a887-399f-47ff-b726-15d79969d687%40sessionmgr110&hid=109>
- Jones, Beth. (Teacher and Union Representative), in discussion with the author, July 2012.
- Jourard, Sidney. "An Exploratory Study of Body-Accessibility" *British Journal Social Clinical Psychology* 5, (1966): 221-231.

- Knowles, J. Gary, and Ardra L. Cole. *Handbook of the Arts in Qualitative Research: Perspectives, Methodologies, Examples, and Issues*. Thousand Oaks: Sage, 2008.
- Luymes, Glenda. "B.C. Teacher Suing Over 'Unimaginable Hardship' After False Accusations of Rape, Torture," in *National Post*, April 10, 2015
<http://news.nationalpost.com/news/canada/b-c-teacher-suing-after-discovery-that-students-claims-of-torture-rape-were-ripped-off-from-law-and-order>
- Major, Brenda, Anne Marie Schmidlin, and Lynne Williams. "Gender Patterns in Social Touch: The Impact of Setting and Age." *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* vol.58, no. 4 (1990): 634-643.
- Manning, Erin. *Politics of Touch: Sense, Movement and Sovereignty*. Minneapolis: University of Minneapolis Press, 2006.
- Mommie Dearest*. Screenplay by Robert Getchell, Tracy Hotchner, Frank Perry, & Frank Yablans, 1981. <http://www.whysanity.net/monos/mommie.html>
- Montague, Ashley. *Touching: The Human Significance of the Skin*. New York: Harper and Row 1971.
- Morris, Desmond. *Intimate Behaviour*. London: Vintage, 1994.
- Myer, Karen. "Living Inquiry: Me, Myself and Other." *Journal of Curriculum Theorizing* vol.26, no. 1 (2010): 85-96.
- Myer, Karen. "Teaching Practices of Living Inquiry." *Annual Meeting of the Canadian Society for the Study of Education*, Vancouver, BC. 2008.
- Nolan, Yvette and Adams, Phillip. "Shakedown Shakespeare," (1997)
http://www.canadianshakespeares.ca/spotlight/s_p_shakedown.cfm
- Owen, Pamela M. and Jonathan Gillentine. "Please Touch Children: Appropriate Touch in the Primary Classroom." *Early Child Development and Care* Vol. 181, No. 6, (July 2011): 857-868.
<http://www.tandfonline.com.proxy.lib.sfu.ca/doi/pdf/10.1080/03004430.2010.497207>
- Pelias, Ronald J. "Performative Writing as Scholarship: An Apology, an Argument, an Anecdote." *Cultural Studies: Critical Methodologies*. Vol.5 no.4 (November 2005): 415-424.
- Piper, Heather, John Powell and Hannah Smith. "Parents, Professionals and Paranoia: The Touching of Children in a Culture of Fear." *Journal of Social Work* Vol.6 No.2 (2006): 151-167. <http://jsw.sagepub.com.proxy.lib.sfu.ca/content/6/2/151.full.pdf+html>
- Piper, Heather, and Hannah Smith. "'Touch' in Educational and Childcare Settings: Dilemmas and Responses." *British Education Research Journal* vol.29, no.6 (2003): 879-894.

- Pratt, John and Allen Mason. *The Caring Touch*. London: HM + M Publishers, 1981.
- Precious*. Screenplay by Geoffrey Fletcher, 2009
<http://www.filmsite.org/bestspeeches75.html>
- Richards , Jeff. (Teacher), in discussion with the author, February 2013.
- Saldana, Johnny. "An Introduction to Ethnodrama," in *Ethnodrama: An Anthology of Reality Theatre*, ed. Johnny Saldana (Thousand Oaks: Sage Publishers, 2005), 1-36.
- Saldana, Johnny. "Dramatizing Data: A Primer," *Qualitative Inquiry* vol.9, no.2 (2003): 218-236.
- Saldana, Johnny. *Ethnotheatre: Research from Page to Stage*. Walnut Creek: Left Coast Press, 2011.
- Smithe, Holly. (Teacher/Counselor), in discussion with the author, April 2014.
- Snowber, Celeste. "A Curriculum of Longing," *Journal of Curriculum Theorizing* Vol.22, no.1 (Spring 2006): 79-88.
<http://web.b.ebscohost.com.proxy.lib.sfu.ca/ehost/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?vid=10&sid=7806a887-399f-47ff-b726-15d79969d687%40sessionmgr110&hid=109>
- Snowber, Celeste. "Dance as a Way of Knowing." *New Directions for Adult and Continuing Learning* vol.2012, no.134 (2012): 53-60.
<http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com.proxy.lib.sfu.ca/doi/10.1002/ace.20017/epdf>
- Snowber, Celeste. "In Praise of the Vulnerable: A poetic Autobiographical Response to Salvio's Abundant Sexton," *Journal of the American Association for the Advancement of Curriculum Studies* vol. 5 (February 2009): 1-15.
http://www2.uwstout.edu/content/jaaacs/Vol5/Snowber_Wiebe.pdf
- Snowber, Celeste. "Let the Body Out: A Love Letter to the Academy from the Body." *Epistemologies of Ignorance in Education*. 185-196. Charlotte, NC: Information Age Publishing 2011.
- Spry, Tami. "Performing Autoethnography: An Embodied Methodological Praxis," *Qualitative Inquiry* vol. 7, no. 6 (2001): 706-732.
<http://qix.sagepub.com.proxy.lib.sfu.ca/content/7/6/706.full.pdf+html>
- Smith, Stephen J. "Gesture, Landscape and Embrace: A Phenomenological Analysis of Elemental Emotions." *Indo-Pacific Journal of Phenomenology* vol.6, no.1 (2006): 1-10. <http://www.ajol.info/index.php/ipjp/article/view/65596>
- Sterk, Helen M. and Annelies Knoppers. *Gender, Culture and Physicality: Paradoxes and Taboos*. Plymouth: Lexington Books, 2009.

Stronach, Ian and Heather Piper. "Can Liberal Education Make a Comeback? The Case of "Relational Touch" at Summerhill School." *American Educational Research Journal* vol.45, no.1 (2008): 6-37.

Teacher Regulation Branch Website

<http://www.bcteacherregulation.ca/AboutUs/PanelAppointments.aspx>

Teacher Regulation Branch Website

<http://www.bcteacherregulation.ca/AboutUs/ProfessionConductandDisciplineBoard.aspx>

Willett, Julie A. "A Father's Touch: Negotiating Masculinity and Sexual Subjectivity in Child Care," *Sexuality and Culture* vol.12, no.4 (September 2008): 275-290.
<http://link.springer.com.proxy.lib.sfu.ca/article/10.1007/s12119-008-9033-y>

Appendices

Appendix A.

Interview Prompt Questions

1. What place/role did touch have growing up in your family? Think about how each parent used/not used touch.
2. Did these relationships change during different stages of your life? When did these occur and why do think this happened?
3. What kind of role does touch play within your social circle? Are there different ways of interacting based on gender?
4. If you do perceive differences in gender relations, why do you think this is?
5. What role does the media play in these differences?
6. During you teacher training what messages were sent to you, either tacit or implicit, on the use of touch in the classroom?
7. In what ways did these messages alter your behaviour? ☐
8. What are your personal experiences using touch in the classroom?
9. Have you seen any benefits or drawbacks to its' use?