The Dramasphere: Adding a Dimensional Lens to the Practice of Developmental Transformations

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THE DRAMASPHERE: ADDING A DIMENSIONAL LENS TO THE PRACTICE OF DEVELOPMENTAL TRANSFORMATIONS

A DISSERTATION

submitted by

RENÉE PITRE

In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

LESLEY UNIVERSITY
June 30, 2020
Graduate School of Arts & Social Sciences  
Ph.D. in Expressive Therapies Program

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SIGNED: __________________________
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ABSTRACT

In this constructivist grounded theory study, seven participants considered experts of Developmental Transformations (DvT) were interviewed and asked about a Dramatic Conversation, a term that was developed during the researcher’s earlier pilot study. Inquiry was focused on each participant’s understanding of the concept of dimensionality as an interaction during the practice of DvT. Interviews were conducted remotely using a video conferencing platform after participants were provided with written working definitions of the terms to review. Transcripts provided raw data for analysis. Using a focused coding method followed by theory construction, four major themes emerged: Therapeutic Frame, Dramatic Core, Interactional Exchange, and Dimensionality. The results suggested that an expansion of DvT terminology should concentrate on the areas of dramatic media, the therapeutic relationship, and the dimensional interactions between those layers. A notable outcome was defining a new term, the Dramasphere; a DvT therapeutic environment which encapsulates multiple dimensions of interactions. A salient conclusion was that a Dramasphere offers the possibility for a comprehensive concept for DvT practice. Opportunities for clinical, educational, and research-based development using this theory are presented.
Chapter 1

Introduction

From the inception of Developmental Transformations (DvT) theory (Johnson, 1991, 2005, 2013), the concepts of playspace, embodiment, encounter, and transformation have guided the practice of this unique form of drama therapy. Dimensionality is considered to be present when an expression transforms into, “a more complex and dynamic representation” (Johnson, 2013, p. 36). This dimensional transformation can be seen as a desired outcome in DvT, yet, it is only briefly mentioned in the practice’s second text for practitioners (Johnson, 2013). Rather, what is typically offered by DvT practitioners as the aim of DvT is to “lower the fear of [the world’s] instabilities” (Johnson, 2013, p. 32). Absent from DvT theory is a comprehensive concept that might simultaneously offer opportunities to lower fear and hold the qualities of complexity apparent in dimensionality. In line with the call which reminded drama therapists that “we cannot afford to continue to reiterate our unquestioned assumptions about drama, play, and embodiment” (Johnson, Emunah, Snow, & Pendzik, 2012, p. 45), this study sought to examine some of the terminology used to explain DvT practice. By first looking at language, this research led to the creation of a theory that ultimately put forward a comprehensive concept for the practice of DvT which embraces dimensionality in theory, and in practice.

Employing a constructivist grounded theory approach, this study was informed by intensive interviews with experts of DvT. They were asked about the Dramatic Conversation, a term that was conceptualized by this researcher during a pilot study (Pitre, 2019). Specifically, this current research focused on an exploration of what dimensions were present in the complex experience of a Dramatic Conversation. For this study, dramatic is defined as: having the quality of an activity, or event, that could be unexpected, emotional, or exciting; while conversation is
defined as: a process of turning to, turning with, delving into something with someone. These definitions were created by this researcher as a result of her pilot study findings. Additionally, for the purposes of this study, dimension was defined as a layer or level of conversational material within a dramatic conversation. Readers are directed to the Glossary (Appendix C) for a more comprehensive review of the terms used in this study. Seven participants offered their understanding through focused conversation, led by the following questions:

1. What are the dimensions or layers within a dramatic conversation?
2. How do these dimensions function in a DvT session?
3. Could any of the dimensions of a dramatic conversation be transferable to other drama therapy processes?

A key objective of this study was to gather new knowledge in order to lay the groundwork for constructing theory for the interactional and improvisational-based experiences within a DvT session. It was hoped that more precise language could frame theoretical concepts and then provide clearer scaffolding for understanding the complexity of DvT work, and applications for its practice. For any model of therapeutic practice to grow, assumptions must be revisited and clarified. Thus, this researcher chose to focus on the potential development of new and helpful concepts and their application for practitioners and educators of this model.
Chapter 2

Literature Review

The Developmental Transformations (DvT) practice has not revised the foundational terminology since its inception (Johnson, 1991, 2005, 2013). Practice-based terminology such as playspace, embodiment, encounter and transformation have not evolved to include newer concepts from DvT theory. This researcher suggests that a revision is overdue. A recent call to strengthen the research foundation of drama therapy has been delivered (Armstrong, Frydman, & Rowe, 2019a; Armstrong, Frydman, & Wood, 2019b). This call echoes previous articulations of this need within the field (Gaines & Butler, 2016; Jones, 2012a, 2012b, 2015; Landy, 2006). Starting in this researcher’s area of expertise, DvT, this study is a small stepping stone on route to strengthening the research foundation of drama therapy. The terminology within one of the main approaches is reexamined.

To revisit the terminology of DvT theory and its use within the practice of DvT, this literature review examines (a) an historical overview of DvT theory and practice, including key concepts [which will also be juxtaposed alongside other theorists in the drama therapy field], (b) a review of the ‘dimensions’ in DvT practice, (c) a review of the application of theoretical concepts in related fields, and (d) this researcher’s pilot study (Pitre, 2019) as context for future examination.

Historical Overview of Developmental Transformations

Developmental Transformations (DvT) has been historically defined as a method of drama therapy (Johnson, 2000, 2009). Beginning with a primary definition as more of a developmental approach to drama therapy (Johnson, 1982), to “an advanced form of unstructured role playing” (Johnson, 1991, p. 289), the practice progressed with a clear focus on an embodied
encounter within a playspace (Johnson, 2005). DvT’s theory and terminology has demonstrated some evolution. Johnson (2013) has listed that some of his conceptual influences of DvT stem from psychotherapy (Klein, 1964; Piaget, 1962; Stern, 1985; Winnicott, 1971), dance/movement therapy (Chace, 1945; Whitehouse, 1979), philosophy (Sartre, 1943), postmodern writers (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987; Derrida, 1978) and spirituality (Buddhism). As a drama therapy method, DvT also has strong ties to theatre and improvisational work (Grotowski, 1968; Spolin, 1966, 1999).

**Philosophy**

DvT is philosophically grounded in the notion that in the world there exists an ‘instability of being’ (Johnson, 2000, 2009) and it aims to lower fears of this instability. DvT is currently framed simply as a method (i.e. not located in any one therapeutic realm) that uses a process called developmental transformations (written as uncapitalized; Johnson, 2013), and defined as, an embodied, aesthetic, relational, developmental process of transformations within a playspace in which a playor [therapist] and player(s) [client(s)] play spontaneously in each other’s proximal, physical presence using arts or performance media (p. 38).

The focus for this literature review orients to historical roots of DvT and its terminology. An exploration of DvT as a method in different therapeutic, performative, or other realms will not be discussed as it is beyond the scope of this review. Rather, readers are directed towards Rosen, Pitre & Johnson (2016) for an application of DvT to art therapy, and to the online open-access journal of Developmental Transformations, *Chest of Broken Toys*, to learn more.


Etymology

Akin to its name, Developmental Transformations (DvT) has followed a developmental progression as a method of drama therapy. DvT was first listed as a developmental approach within the larger field of drama therapy. Of particular distinction, Johnson (1982) wrote that, the drama therapist with a developmental approach works with processes and sequences, not preconceived lists of games and techniques, always sensitive to the subtle transformations in the form of a client’s behavior which signals a developmental advance or retreat (p. 184).

Johnson (1982) also framed the five key developmental processes of drama therapy as “structure, medium of expression, complexity, affect, and interpersonal demand” (p. 184). Minus a small shift of ‘structure’ to the term ‘ambiguity’, these aspects remain the guiding principles which DvT practitioners currently follow concerning group process (Johnson, 2013).

Early Influences. Since its inception, the influence of dance/movement therapy was very present in DvT’s literature canon (Johnson, 1993). In fact, many of Johnson’s earlier publications were combined efforts with Susan Sandel, a dance/movement therapist. Together, they introduced the Structural Analysis of Movement Sessions (SAMS) (Bruno, 1981; Johnson & Sandel, 1977; 1983; Johnson, Sandel, & Bruno, 1984) and later crystallized the theory (Sandel & Johnson, 1996). The SAMS is defined as a “system of observation and research of groups-in-action that provides a useful vocabulary for the dance/movement therapist,” (Sandel & Johnson, 1996, p. 15). The foci of SAMS were the structuring of a group session, and in particular the group leadership styles and what can be gleaned from them (Johnson, Sandel, & Eicher, 1983). The connection to dance/movement therapy, especially through the work of the SAMS, undoubtedly influenced DvT’s early theoretical underpinnings.
**Moving Towards DvT.** In 1991, Johnson introduced the method of DvT as Transformations. In fact, Johnson (1991) listed it as an “advanced form of the Developmental Method” (p. 285). Situating the Developmental Method in a theoretical lens concerning levels of consciousness, Johnson (1991) wrote about the capacity of a human being to exist in an unstable world. Johnson (1991) included literature regarding the sensing of an inner world (i.e. focusing: Gendlin, 1978) pertinent to the practice of DvT, and the developmental distortions or limits to freedom that occur in the daily life of humans. In this publication, Johnson (1991) clearly outlined the method as

an improvisational approach to drama therapy that emphasizes the use of developmental sequences of dramatic forms to facilitate a spontaneous flow of images within the client. Dramatic forms are understood in terms of their structure, complexity, media, interpersonal demand, and expression of affect (p. 289).

**Transformations.** Transformations are referred to “free association extended beyond words into movement, sound, gesture, and dramatic character” (p. 287) and attributed to Spolin (1963, 1999) as a technique of improvisation. The combination of the drama exercise, Transformations, and Johnson’s early connection to the dance/movement therapy world (Johnson & Sandel, 1977; 1983; Johnson, Sandel, & Bruno, 1984; Sandel & Johnson, 1996) demonstrates this primary evolution of DvT. The foundation of the dramatic forms and how they might be understood is clearly retained from Johnson’s (1982) early work. Johnson (1991) combined the structuring of a group session with dramatic media and the transformational aspect of Spolin’s (1966; 1999) exercise in shaping the theory and practice of DvT.

In 1996, the method was formally identified as Developmental Transformations (DvT). This appeared in Johnson, Forrester, Dintino, James, and Schnee’s (1996) article comparing
Grotowskian theatre with DvT. Studies and publications regarding the application of DvT with a variety of populations increased. For example, DvT and the exploration of death anxiety (Smith, 2000), the dismantling violent forms of masculinity (Landers, 2002), group therapy with the older age population (Johnson, Smith, & James, 2002), and an article exploring impasse in DvT (Porter, 2003) were produced. The applications for using DvT in a variety of treatment settings also began to populate the literature. In 2005 Johnson produced *Text for Practitioners* (the first text for practitioners) as the first formalized document for trainees. There were trainees studying DvT before the release of this formal document, however, the text supported moving applications of theory into a formal practice.

Johnson’s seminal text (2005), albeit an unpublished manuscript, established the link between theory and applications in training others in the method of DvT. Building on his earlier publication on DvT theory and techniques, Johnson (1991) first introduced terminology concerning the practice of the method (playspace, flow, and impasse; p. 289-290). These were later clarified and reorganized as playspace, embodiment, encounter, and transformation (Johnson, 2005).

**Four Key Concepts**

The current definition of the developmental transformations (uncapitalized) process includes the four key concepts of embodiment, encounter, transformation, and playspace. These elements have continued to form the base of the theoretical foundations of the method, yet they have not been altered over the years during which the practice has evolved. Furthermore, these concepts continue to remain firm in the two texts for practitioners that outline the practice and teaching of DvT (Johnson, 2005, 2013). They even emerged in recent student’s master theses on the subject of DvT as guiding definitions (Marshall, 2020; O’Connor, 2019; Pollock, 2018).
Furthermore, many DvT practitioners highlight encounter, embodiment, transformation, and the playspace in their publications. For example, authors have placed these terms in their definitions of DvT in clinical settings (Butler, 2012; Frydman & Pitre, 2019; Galway, Hurd, & Johnson, 2003; James, Forrester, & Kim, 2005; Omens, 2014; Pitre, 2014; Reynolds, 2011) and within publications that interpret theory (Mayor, 2012, 2018, 2019; Landers, 2012; Pitre, 2017, 2018; Pitre, Mayor, & Johnson, 2016; Sajnani, 2012; Sajnani & Johnson, 2015). There are no research studies to date that attempt to operationalize or challenge any aspects of core DvT theory or terminology. Taking the perspective that a revisiting of terminology would aid in developing DvT theory, an in-depth exploration of these key concepts, especially that of playspace, is useful.

**Playspace**

The playspace was the first concept of the four that appeared in DvT. Johnson (1991) defined playspace as:

> An interpersonal field in an imaginal realm, consciously set off from the real world by the participants, in which any image, interaction and physicalization has a meaning within the drama. The playspace is an enhanced space where imagination infuses the ordinary. It is the dramatic equivalent of Winnicott’s (1971) concept of transitional space. The playspace embraces the constituent elements of roles: pure movements, sounds, gestures, stillness, and suspense, and so may remain vague, illusory, and undefined. The playspace is where drama therapy takes place, and therefore the drama therapist’s primary task is to introduce and sustain the playspace for the clients (p. 289).

In the first text for practitioners (Johnson, 2005), however, the playspace definition is succinctly defined as “a particular state of play” (p. 13). In the second text for practitioners (Johnson, 2013), the playspace is similarly presented as a state of play. It is crucial to note that initially the
playspace was explained as “an interpersonal field in an imaginal realm” and was the “place where drama therapy takes place” (Johnson, 1991, p. 289) then was reduced to a state. Playspace is a compound word made up of ‘play’ and ‘space’. Both these conceptual roots will be explored.

**The Play.** What happens within the interaction between the participants is often referred to as *the play*, a colloquial term used by DvT practitioners. This term is not used in written publications and therefore not documented. However, in the accumulation of over the 12 years of this researcher’s clinical and teaching experiences in DvT, the play has been used as a sweeping expression or as short-hand, for the experience of the interactional phenomenon in a DvT session. Inevitably, as theory and terminology permeate published articles, training programs, and collegial conversations, the potential arises for a loss of saliency. Taking the primary word play from the compound word playspace, and using it to explain their practice, DvT practitioners may have, unfortunately, reduced the accessibility or comprehension of the method.

As there are no written sources to verify this use of the play as an all-encompassing term in the DvT community, a review of the use of the terminology ‘play’ in other fields can be helpful. The difficulty in defining play will be highlighted. Approaching the term play in this manner will isolate the lexiconic aspects that have contributed to the abridgment apparent in DvT theory.

**Defining Play.** The term ‘play’ has been studied and researched throughout many decades and across many different fields. It has been referred to as ambiguous (Sutton-Smith, 1997), and has been explored based on its biological nature (Bateson, 1972). It has also been reviewed and offered as a potential coping strategy for anxiety (Capurso & Pazzagli, 2016). Ellis (1973) advocated for some important fundamental understanding necessary in order to consider the importance of play within clinical practice:
There are several steps in the process of understanding play. The first step is to define play. The second is to establish the motives for and the content of play. The final step, and usually the reason for taking the first two, is to use the answers in the planning for play. This whole process is based on two assumptions. Firstly, that play is sufficiently important to warrant explaining and managing. Secondly, that it is behavior that is constrained by cause-effect relations and, therefore, can be explained and managed.

Following Ellis’ suggestion, play might be defined and expanded upon, despite difficulties that might arise due to its ambiguous nature. In fact, over 40 years after Ellis, the charge remains. Bergen (2015) highlighted that “because play takes many forms and is often difficult to define, there have been ongoing controversies over the methods that are appropriate and the phenomena to consider as play” (p. 51). Similarly, Pellegrini (2009) highlighted that there is much confusion about the definition and function of play, and also what play is not. He acknowledged that, at times, anything that a child does could be labeled play. He outlined that “when play is defined in terms of function, it is frequently noted that play behaviors resemble serious, or functional, behaviors, but they do not serve the same function if the behavior is playful” (p. 8). Play, as a term, is used for many things that could be identified as play but an overall consensus by those defining play is rare.

Huizinga’s (1955) seminal work on play argued that the two functions of sharing vast knowledge and the ability to “defeat his rival in a public contest” (p. 146) were essential to play. Huizinga defined play as:

a voluntary activity or occupation executed within certain fixed limits of time and place, according to rules freely accepted but absolutely binding, having its aim in itself and
accompanied by a feeling of tension, joy and the consciousness that it is “different” from “ordinary life.” (p. 28)

Most significantly to this study, Huizinga (1955) framed play as relational. He recognized that there was a difference between play and ordinary life, but his thesis centered around the movement between the two. Placing play within the realms of language, civilization and its functions (law, war, poetry, and the arts), and philosophy, Huizinga saw play in all elements of the world.

Due to the lack of consistency in definitions of play, a modern definition was used for this study. Borrowing from a game designer, the term play is thought of as:

Play is a process, not a thing. It is a series of moves, either mental or physical, carried out by the player. These moves are free in the sense that the player has control over what he will do next, but this freedom is bound by a set of constraints. These constraints limit the moves available to the player at any moment to a relatively small number. Furthermore, these constraints aren’t random; they are organized into a system that is structured to deliver a particular experience. (Upton, 2015, p. 15)

It remains difficult to isolate exactly what is meant by DvT practitioners when they use the term ‘the play.’ Upton’s definition provides some guidance, but play’s elusiveness persists.

**Core Process: Playing.** In drama therapy, Jones’ (2007) offered a conceptualization of play in drama therapy, along with other core processes (i.e. dramatic projection, role playing and personification, dramatherapeutic empathy and distancing, active witnessing, embodiment, life-drama connection and transformation). Concerning play, Jones (2007) wrote:
Playing has a part in all dramatherapy\(^1\) work in that it is usual to involve clients in forms of playing as part of the dramatherapy. This occurs on a practical level in that many warm-ups involve forms of playing such as games. The dramatherapy work might use play activities and processes as a mode of therapeutic intervention. It also occurs on a conceptual level: dramatherapy can be said to involve clients in a playful relationship with themselves, other group members and reality (Jones, 2007, p. 164).

Jones (2007) continued by explaining that play is a “precursor to the development of drama” (p. 166) and that it often contains a progression of “increasing complexity and richness of meaning” (p. 166). He discussed that play begins with the body, moves toward developing relationships with objects, to the creation of symbolic play with objects (solitary play into parallel play), to playing together, to finally moving from dramatic play into drama. Jones (2007) differentiated dramatic play from drama by noting the progression in the use of the dramatic media: from “sustained fantasy and enacted roles” to “sustained enactment and consciousness of audience” (p. 183).

Jones (2007) offered an exploration of the relationship of play to drama therapy. Most importantly, as listed by Jones, is the playfulness, or “playing state” (p. 88) that is made possible within the drama therapy session. Similar to the evolution of DvT’s theory on the playspace, this notion of playing state is echoed here. Jones indicated that this playing state is crucial to the drama therapy process as part of the development of an “expressive continuum” (Jones, 2007, p. 88). Jones highlighted that play links with drama therapy in three noteworthy ways:

The first concerns the way in which playfulness and the general process of playing can be the vehicle of therapeutic change within dramatherapy. The second relates to specifically

---

1 In the British tradition, dramatherapy is written in one word.
the notion of developmental play and drama... The third focuses on content. Play involves particular areas of content and has a particular way of articulating that content. (p. 161)

Accompanying this, is Jones’ (2007) presentation of an element referred to as a “play shift” (p. 166). A play shift can be the result from the process of “paralleling reality within a playing state,” which Jones (2007) indicated encouraged “experimentation and digestion” (p. 166).

Layers of Play. The introduction of play shift by Jones (2007) suggests a nuanced conceptualization of play. Furthermore, the idea that play has particular areas of content expressed in particular ways (Jones, 2007) also highlights a layered element of play. Similarly, Marks-Tarlow (2015), in examining conversation within psychotherapy, suggested that “play operates at implicit levels, under the content of the therapeutic dialogue” (p. 108). Franklin (2000) noted that it is through the “tangible representation in a medium” that the significance of an expression takes “shape” (p. 20). In conceptualizing the “medium of play” (p. 17), she included person, actions, objects, space, and speech as its major components. Franklin suggested that the relationship between the expressions within play and how they related to the dramatic medium was an area to consider for research.

In a similar vein, Johnson (2013) listed four layers of play that could be present in a DvT session: play of powers, play of possessions, play of passions, and play of presence (Johnson, 2013, p. 60-62). These fall into the category of playing with the constructed world discussed later in this review. These layers were generally identified as being the pieces of the “player’s constructed world” (Johnson, 2013, p. 60). The definitions provided for each layer of play remain cryptic. They are not listed with qualifying features but as examples of potential content that might be placed into the playspace. In this researcher’s opinion, the evaluation of this content may be facilitated by a seasoned practitioner of DvT, but without qualifying features, this
might be a task too difficult for a beginner. More importantly, it would be a process heavily laden with subjectivity.

**The Space.** The second part of the DvT concept of playspace, is space. The playspace was initially defined as a location where drama therapy happens (Johnson, 1991). According to DvT theory (Johnson, 2005; 2013), there are certain framing elements that make a playspace therapeutic: a mutual agreement that what is happening is play, an agreement to restrain from real harm, discrepancy (there is a mixture of real and ‘as if’ in the imagery), and that the roles and images are reversible (either participant has the ability to shift and change) (Johnson, 2013). These are sometimes informally referred to as the playspace agreements by DvT practitioners.

Of note, the four agreements necessary to create the playspace began simply as three (Johnson, 2005); reversibility was added later (Johnson, 2013). The agreement around the reversibility of roles and images was something that Johnson initially took for granted in the creation of the method, as it was very much embedded in his understanding of play, and therefore he neglected to include it as a separate consideration in theoretical creation of the playspace (Johnson, personal communication, 2020). He also noted that the inclusion of reversibility was a contemporaneous thought with the rise of clinical work using DvT, and the increase in number of drama therapists at the Post Traumatic Stress Center (a hub for drama therapists lead by Johnson).

**Dramatic Reality.** Similar to the concept of the playspace, dramatic reality was articulated in the drama therapy field primarily and clearly by Pendzik (2003; 2006). It is a conceptualization of the ‘where’ drama therapy takes place. Pendzik (2006) referred to the dramatic reality as a “world within a world” (p. 272). She noted that it is a space that exists between reality and fantasy; in that it is not located in a determined area. She reviewed the
varying components of a dramatic reality (i.e. it is a subjective place) and likened it to a container. She labeled it as “elastic” (Pendzik, 2006, p. 275) and also used a metaphor concerning ‘habitat.’ Similar to the initial definition of playspace in DvT, Pendzik (2006) presented dramatic reality as a locatable entity; a habitat even.

In her exploration of assessment in drama therapy, Pendzik (2003) cited other theorists who have used various names for dramatic reality. She noted that Cattanach (1994) referred to this place as the fictional present and that Lahad (2000) referred to it as fantastic reality. Pendzik (2003) also linked the dramatic reality to Winnicott’s (1971) concept of transitional space. Further, transitional space is often connected to the concept of liminality (Turner, 1969). Turner attested that people in transition travel through moments of being neither fully in one reality, nor fully in the other, rather an in-between state (or liminal). Pendzik’s (2003) definition of dramatic reality as “a departure from ordinary reality and the living manifestation of an alternative in the here and now” (p. 93) suggests this liminality. In fact, what is common in all these definitions is not just a notion of different locations, but also a mixture of both.

**Systems.** Playspace and dramatic reality, as terms for a particular state (psychological or otherwise) or place, call forward the concept of a place within which particular types of combinations might exist. These combinations could be of the matter in which the place is built, but it is not clear what these combinations are, nor what elements are combined to create them; perhaps reality and fantasy. Nevertheless, a specific type of location or system operating within a location, appears as a consistent component of both the definitions of playspace and dramatic reality. Viewing the terminology of DvT as a system would entail a thorough exploration into chaos theory, complexity theory, and perhaps even string theory. These topics are rooted in mathematics, physics, and are beginning to be located in the social sciences (Lansing, 2003).
Offering concepts and ideology related to a system with non-linear and complex processes, these theories highlight a growing understanding that underlying and influential layers can exist within systems. Readers are directed towards Lansing’s (2003) work regarding complex adaptive systems in anthropology, Greene’s (2005) TedTalk on string theory, and Shapiro’s (2015) publication that presents dynamical systems therapy which combines complexity theory with therapy for a sampling of the conceptual foundation of these topics.

**Atmosphere.** Although an in-depth exploration into the various system theories pertaining to how systems function and organize is beyond the scope of this literature review, it is important to note that the concepts of playspace and dramatic reality are suggesting that a particular kind of environment, with particular conditions or agreements, is necessary for DvT to occur. These definitions also suggest that combinations of differing (or opposing) locations (i.e. reality and fantasy) are important, such as the concept of atmosphere. It has been defined in theory as “an experience of the in-betweenness of subject and object in which the emotional and sensory experience are central” (Bille, Bjerregaard, & Soren, 2015, p. 32). Introduced primarily by Böhme (1993), atmospheres have been utilized as ways to conceptualize the feeling of a space, or a room, and even that they may be staged (or built). Aligning with Böhme, Liddicoat (2019) narrowed the definition of an atmosphere “to mean the interstitial condition binding subjects with objects” (p. 2). This definition will be used in this study as well.

Böhme (1993) stated that atmospheres are the “spheres of the presence of something” (p. 121-122). Uniquely connected to the particular conditions within an environment, Bille et al. highlighted that there are thus continuities and contrasts in the sensory experience of atmospheres, offering depth, texture, contour, and form to places and situations, which bridges,
obfuscates or confuses the boundaries of humans and things. Atmospheres are therefore not necessarily expounding manifestations of the meaning of a situation or a social scene, nor can we necessarily reduce atmospheres to the meanings produced to by the persons and objects that are part of their realization. (p. 32-33)

Rather, it is important to note that the concept of an atmosphere implies layers, or dimensions that can exist within it, just as the playspace in DvT, Bille et al. (2015) highlighted the expansiveness of an atmosphere and the necessity to avoid a reductionist approach to its understanding.

Freshwater (2005), in their meditative exploration of the creation of space in supervision, remarked that,

as a clinician, I am often aware of my conscious intent to shape the void, the expanse that stretches out ahead, as I begin to work with a new client. I am aware that, in reality, the space will be shaped by both the client and myself, and indeed all the people that are in the room with us. However, one of the aspects of the work that I am less conscious of is how the emptiness shapes the space, the nothing that is present and yet also elusive (p. 178).

For Freshwater, the creation of space consists of a multiplicity of intentionality, relationality, and still, simultaneously, a nothingness – something that is not quite capturable. This elusive element, not unlike those within an atmosphere, is also highlighted by Pendzik (2003) and Johnson (2013) in their definitions of the drama therapeutic space.

The concept of the playspace in DvT has been influenced by its development in DvT theory; it has changed from a location (physical and psychic) embedded with mixtures of interpersonal imagery and physical proximity (Johnson, 1991), to that of an environment with a
particular state of play present, which is not clearly defined. In the second text for practitioner, Johnson (2013) outlined that the source of the playspace comes from our ability to have a space which allows for a combination and existence of both imagined and real ideas. More precisely, the playspace is created from our ability to hold expansive, perhaps nascent, or absent associations. In this vein, the DvT playspace could be synonymous with other therapeutic environments or in-between spaces if the dimensionality present within the practice of DvT was explicitly incorporated. However, despite one article (Webb, 2019) that presented a theoretical version of the playspace in smaller doses (e.g. pocket playspace), there have yet to be any studies focused on the DvT playspace.

**Embodiment**

In DvT theory, the concept of embodiment was first introduced in 1996 in Johnson et al.’s article. The authors echoed Growtoski’s (1968) approach to theatre. They stated that “Developmental Transformations embraces the body perspective, viewing language as a secondary phenomenon” (p. 298). They continued with:

Placing the clients in touch with their bodily-felt sensations, not prematurely defining or naming feelings states or seeking images to work with, the method attempts to tap into physical body, similar in aim to Gendlin’s focusing method (Gendlin, 1978) and dance therapy approaches (p. 298).

Embodiment, in this article, was said to be the source of all thought and feeling. In the first text for practitioners, embodiment has a small paragraph highlighting that the bodies are engaged in DvT and language should be directed towards bodily action (Johnson, 2005). In the second text for practitioners, this is again echoed (Johnson, 2013). Focused on the proximal aspect of bodies, physical touch is highlighted (it is mentioned in the first text as well, Johnson, 2005, p. 15). An
addition to the second text for practitioners is the identification of activation and how it is tied to embodiment. Johnson (2013) states:

In drama and movement forms of DvT, exuberant, physical movement is essential. This activates the person, allowing images, feelings, and thoughts to arise, and encrusted social defenses are softened or collapsed through repetitive, engaged physicality (p. 46).

There are no articles in the DvT literature canon that focus primarily on embodiment and it remains very underdeveloped as a concept in the overall theory. Considering DvT’s early connections to dance/movement therapies, one would consider a more in-depth conceptualization of the use of body in the theoretical terminology.

**Core Process: Embodiment.** Jones (2007) lists embodiment, or being in the body, as the most critical aspect of drama therapy. He likens it to that of the actor in the theatre; we need an actor to have the story revealed to us, and lists the following areas in which the body serves to produce therapeutic change:

1. The first area involves clients in developing the potential of their own body. Here the body is focused upon terms of dramatic skill. Dramatic work aims to aid the client to inhabit or use their body more effectively. This might, for example, concern communicating with others more efficiently…

2. The second area has as its main focus the therapeutic potentials and benefits of the client taking on a different identity within the dramatherapy. Within this area the self is transformed by taking on a different bodily identity. This transformation can result in insight, new perspective, and release, which can bring about change in the client’s life outside the created identity. For example, the client might grant themselves new permissions in terms of their relationship to their body.
3. The third area concerns work that explores the personal, social, and political forces and influences which affect the body. Here dramatherapy offers the opportunity to work on areas such as body image or emotional traumas related to the body (p. 113).

Jones’ outline of the impact of the body exploration (or embodiment) highlights that there are several ways in which the body can be present in drama therapy.

**Encounter**

In Johnson et al.’s (1996) publication related to Grotowskian theatre he labeled encounter as part of DvT theory. Comparing the Grotowski’s (1968) Actor and Spector concepts (e.g. these concepts being the focus of the theatre created and that these two roles could be interchangeable), Johnson et al. remarked that “the encounter is the basis of healing” (p. 296). In DvT, the encounter remains the focus of the practice. No props or stage settings are used in DvT; all distracting material is removed so as to provide a clear focus on those in the encounter. The therapist is called the playor, and the client is referred to as the player. The relationship between subjects and objects (or in Grotowskian theatre, actor and spector), is the place of healing.

**Core Process in Art Therapies: The Triangular Relationship.** While constructing a conceptualization of the core processes, Jones (2005) presented a list and applied it to arts therapies. This list is as follows:

1. Artistic projection
2. The triangular relationship
3. Perspective and distance
4. Embodiment
5. Non-verbal experience
6. The playful space and the informed player
7. The participating artist-therapist
8. The active witness (p. 213).

According to Jones, these core processes are present in all arts therapies. He lists the triangular relationship as being essential to the overall arts therapies as “an art form enables something different to occur as an arts process or created product enters the therapy room” (p. 215). Linking it to a third presence in the therapeutic relationship, Jones highlighted that the relationship between client and therapist has additional factors that influence it. This could be thought of as similar to DvT’s use of encounter. Currently, other information from a larger arts therapies’ perspective regarding the triangular relationship seems to be non-existent, but a second edition to Jones’ 2005 publication is set to be released in the summer of 2020. In accordance, a select few articles (Bat & Zilcha-Mano, 2018; Springham & Huet, 2018) make mention of the triangular relationship but link it to art therapy scholarship only.

**Kinesthetic Intersubjectivity.** When considering an encounter in DvT, the term *intersubjectivity* has been used. Intersubjectivity can be viewed as a shared perception or an agreement between people. Samaritter and Payne (2013) noted that intersubjectivity as a term is most often used “in the course of investigating the nature of a subject’s experiences of being in the world with others” (p. 143). They noted that Gallagher (2005) provided the first look at intersubjectivity as an embodied approach. Combining the concepts of encounter and embodiment in DvT, intersubjectivity could be considered synonymous with this combination.

Samaritter and Payne outlined that kinesthetic intersubjectivity included a “highly attuned mutual responsiveness” (p. 145) on behalf of the participants. Akin to DvT’s focus on encounter, kinesthetic intersubjectivity holds an “in-between experience” (Samaritter & Payne, p. 146). Of
interest, De Ajuriaguerra and Angelergues (1962) called this type of embodied interaction a “dialogue tonique” (p. 21), or “tensional dialogue” (Samaritter & Payne, p. 146). Samaritter and Payne remarked that this tensional dialogue is similar to what they are presenting: “kinaesthetic [sic] engagement in a non-conceptual shared space, time, and weight allows direct movement reactions” (p. 146). Correlating with the concept of encounter, they highlighted that a responsive, or reaction-driven interaction is present especially within an elusive (i.e. non-conceptual) environment.

**Enactive approach.** The enactive approach, largely introduced into the field of sociology by De Jaegher and Di Paolo (2008), is focused on the body and what can be gleaned from the interaction between bodies. According to Samaritter and Payne (2013), the focus of the enactive approach is on interaction. Precisely, “sense-making derives from responsive sensi-motor engagement with the environment...the shared in-between space itself becomes the source of sensations, intentionality and meaning” (Samaritter & Payne, p. 44). Combining the concepts of embodiment and encounter from DvT, the enactive approach provides a conceptualization of how this might look. In particular, in a recent publication, Di Paolo et al. (2018), noted that enaction operates “through multiple levels of interconnected networks” (p. 21). They continued with:

> The relations between parts and whole in an organism are circular means-end relations, relations of closure. The individual parts of a tree, its roots, branches, and leaves, depend not only on each other for their ongoing generation and regeneration. They form a network of mutually enabling dependencies. (p. 25)

Encounter with embodiment, and within a playspace, create a particular kind of environment. Di Paolo et al. call this *linguistic bodies*. DvT does not have a term for this phenomenon.
**Transformation**

Transformations is at the core of the DvT method. Its roots harken to Spolin’s (1966; 1999) exercise. The concept of transformation is again mentioned as a pillar of the method in the canon of DvT, but theory about it has not expanded much. Johnson (2005) did offer that, the transformation of a scene is based on an association to some other dramatic element, evoked by some behavior in the play…Full transformations are shifts that fully indicate the nature of the new scene of the client, so that the new scene emerges rather quickly. Partial transformations are shifts that only partially suggest the nature of the new scene or characters, leaving some ambiguity to be clarified by both parties (p. 16)

Related to the body of work in drama therapy provided by Landy (1993, 1994, 1996, 1997, 2008), transformation as outlined by Johnson (2005), highlighted a type of spectrum in which the scenes or dramatic material change. Landy (1993), borrowing from Scheff (1981), introduced “overdistance,” “underdistance,” and “aesthetic distance” as terminology to the drama therapy canon. The drama therapist can manipulate the media in which they are working in these varying ways in service of the facilitation of the process. Landy (1993) outlined an overdistanced state as being more in a rational state of mind (and less affectual), an underdistanced state as being in a very affectual state of mind, and aesthetic distance as having a balance between the two. A recent study (Henson & Fitzpatrick, 2016) analyzed fives cases in drama therapy and found that there were some suggestions of relationship between “therapeutic distancing and attachment styles in early sessions” (p. 250).

**Varielation.** Varielation is an invented word in the DvT lexicon. It is formed from the combination of the words variation and elation (Johnson, 2013). Varielation is the movement of the dramatic material, back and forth, which transforms images, scenes, or the encounter in DvT
Johnson (2013) noted that it is varielation that is the “main engine of transformation” (p. 50). A reviewing, revising or resolving of this dramatic material within the dramatic realm actively produces a transformation. Johnson (2013) wrote about the similarities to Stern’s (1985) purposeful mis-attunement. Johnson (2013) likened varielation to the mis-matching that can occur with parents and their infants as discussed in depth by Stern (1985). Conceptually, varielation in DvT describes what is now viewed as how the play would develop. Varielation is key to how all aspects within a DvT encounter, move. However, varielation is primarily a theoretical concept that does not have an empirical framework, thus it remains vague.

**Core Process: Transformation.** Jones (2007) remarked that in drama therapy, transformation can “refer to the transformation of human being to player/performer, or to audience member, of objects or props into representations of other things” (p. 119). Jones also stated that change in drama therapy is produced “by offering transformation through bringing drama and life into contact with each other” (p. 120-121).

**Application of DvT Practice**

In the early iterations of DvT, basic tasks for the therapist to follow were delineated. Johnson et al. introduced these for the first time in 1996. Briefly, they were listed as:

1. the therapist intervenes within the playspace
2. the client is the therapist’s text
3. the therapist is the client’s playobject
4. the therapist sacrifices his or her [or their] position of privilege
5. projective objects and predetermined exercises are avoided

(p. 297).

These tasks of a DvT therapist were then expanded upon in the second text for practitioners (Johnson, 2013) through an esoteric lens. Johnson (2013) listed the tasks as: being in the present
moment, being in the constructed world, and noticing how one would play with the constructed world (Johnson, 2013).

**Being in the Present Moment.** At the core of being in the present moment in DvT, is the recursive cycle. Johnson, in both texts for practitioners (2005, 2013), highlighted the process of the recursive cycle as critical to DvT. In fact, the recursive cycle is often the first aspect of DvT to be taught to newcomers to the practice (Pitre, 2017) although, this is not reliably documented as there is no formal manual for the teaching of DvT. The recursive cycle, in its essence, is an adaption of the ideas generated by theorists of symbol formation (Werner & Kaplan, 1964). In this cycle, a therapist is thought to move through phases (and in turn, the client would as well), which:

- consists of noticing new behaviors in the other, allowing a feeling about that to arise within, animating that feeling by associating it with images, ideas, or forms, and then expressing these forms outward in one’s own behavior (Johnson, 2013, p. 72)

These phases are not considered unidirectional, but rather, cyclical. They overlap as internal processes that are singularly experienced and build on one another during DvT. This process is assumed to be occurring within and between the therapist and client as a way of engaging in the interaction (Johnson, 2013).

**Being in the Constructed World.** According to DvT, each of us has our own constructed world view made up from our experiences, societal systems, et cetera. A constructed world, as defined by Johnson (2013), is one in which “layers of repeated experience accrue [and] build an increasingly stable representation of the world, both at the individual and societal/cultural levels” (p. 26). There are four delineations that organize the idea of how a world is constructed in DvT theory: Difference, preference, territory, and history. Johnson (2013) wrote
that when our world is constructed (and then later represented in a DvT session) it gives rise to
difference. From this, individuals note their preference. These preferences allow for territories to
be produced (e.g. in protection of our preference) and then histories appear from the
accumulation of territories and time. These concepts also scaffold together with the different
layers of play (power, possessions, passions, and presence). They evoke various responses in the
world which prompt these types of organizations. For example, power and possessions derive
from the rise of boundaries or territories. Johnson (2013) explains it as such:

   The fundamental phenomenology of territory’ is *possession*, for to survive a territory
   must hold onto its contents, defend its boundaries. However, because the boundaries
   between territories are constantly changing, with unpreferred elements arising within, and
   preferred elements arising without, requiring constant negotiations and redrawing
   boundaries with others, who may threaten to cross these boundaries, the maintenance of
   territory requires effort or energy, and this is what we call the exercise of *power*. (p. 27)

Being in the constructed world evokes desires for stability which prompt people to exercise
preference, that breeds territories, which over time, produce histories.

   *Static versus Dynamic Equilibrium.* In response to being in the constructed world,
Johnson (2013) referred to our coping with the instabilities in the world through varying levels of
equilibrium. In short:

   Static equilibrium aims to decrease movement and degrees of freedom in the
   environment, which often leads to various forms of restriction or withdrawal. The
   advantage of static equilibrium is clarity. Dynamic equilibrium allows for more degrees
   of freedom, and attains stability by learning how to balance in response to challenges
   from the environment (p. 27).
More precisely, static equilibrium promotes moments “the wobble of the world is reduced, simplified, and clarified” and dynamic equilibrium, the opposite: “instability is mastered through more complex, active, and relational means” (Johnson, 2013, p. 28).

**Giving up Control, Linearity, Privilege, and Objectivity.** Lastly, the how-to of playing in the constructed world is presented. Johnson (2013) outlined the task of the playor (i.e., DvT therapist) as needing to let go, or give up. In particular, as advised by Johnson (2013), the DvT playor should give up control especially around ideas or beliefs (and that they have a unique claim to them); give up linearity concerning the flow of the play (e.g. it does not have to proceed sequentially); give up their privilege (DvT does not try to improve or repair a person); and give up objectivity (DvT players are not encouraged to achieve enlightenment, but rather accept that they too, are struggling).

**Dimensionality.** Dimension, as a term, can be thought of in two ways: as (a) a measurement, or (b) an aspect or feature of something (Oxford dictionary definition). In somewhat of a circular definition, dimensionality, in the second text for practitioners, is defined as being related to measurements or dimensions and having substantial depth (as in three-dimensional vision) (Johnson, 2013). Johnson’s (2013) definition of dimensionality does not make it clear who or what is forming the perspective. It appears that both might be, however, it is unclear in what way. The concept of dimensionality denotes a depth in measurement, yet, one cannot be sure, based on Johnson’s (2013) definition. One can assume that they must be related to the concepts of playspace, embodiment, encounter, and transformation, however, there is no definitive theory or research that can provide any context. Given its roots in dance/movement therapy and eventual classification as drama therapy, the dimensions used in DvT would certainly correlate to those fields. However, as presented by Johnson et al. (2012), the
assumptions in drama therapy, particularly those of play and embodiment, need to be questioned. This study offers a possibility for this inquiry. Imaginably, the lack of explicit presentations of what the dimensions are in DvT could be related to its grounding in a post-graduate practice and therefore, it could be assumed that practitioners would already have knowledge of the dramatic media. This connotation, although plausible, reduces the ability to hold a comprehensive perspective on the practice of DvT and circumvents a clear definition of dimensionality.

Despite the lack of clarity in defining dimensionality, the aim of DvT is to dimensionalize one’s experience of the world (Johnson, 2013). Dimensionality is the main goal in DvT as outlined in the second, and most current, text for practitioners. As DvT is based on the philosophical foundation of instability of being, dimensionalization is achieved through lowering the fear of this instability. Therefore, dimensionalization is achieved as one becomes more capable of responding to a multiplicity of challenges in their environment. More precisely, as varielation occurs, dimensionalization is the process in which a more dynamic representation of the world can be created. Furthermore, the nuances within an environment could also impact the necessity for the ability to dimensionalize.

There are no studies or publications that concern dimensionality or even varielation. In fact, dimensionalization, or dimensionality, only appear in the second text for practitioners (Johnson, 2013) on one and a half pages of the hundred and eleven page document. Considering the importance of this concept, one would anticipate a sub-theory concerning the topic. In fact, dimensionality is, at this time, completely bypassed in the present literature canon of DvT. Since the aim of DvT is to lower fear of the instability of being and it is dimensionalization that is defined being the way to do so, it would bode that studies should examine this process.
Guiding Frameworks

By exploring how theory appears in practice, one can often glean aspects of the theory that work, or do not work. The creation of frameworks, even those loosely structured, or expansively permissive suggest an attempt to capture a theory, whilst providing structure for practitioners to employ. This employment can prompt future clarifications or revisions of theory and/or practice. They can additionally promote reflection in practicing therapists. Relatedly, self-awareness in psychotherapists has been identified as key in effective psychotherapy work (Knapp et al., 2017). Therapists who partake in a self-examining practice may ask themselves the extent to which they (a) recognize their emotional reactions to patients or events, (b) judge their competencies accurately, (c) strive to identify any implicit prejudices, (d) appreciate the potential influence of systematic thinking errors, and (e) show an awareness to how their personal values influence their professional judgement (Knapp et al, 2017, p. 164)

Utilizing self-awareness as an entry point to exploring, or even reflecting on one’s practice introduces the possibility for frameworks. Frameworks for practice could offer potential guidelines for therapists wishing to practice self-awareness, or, as more pertinent to an embodied therapeutic approach such as DvT, the practice itself can offer places for reflection (Gil & Rubin, 2005; Miller et al., 2015). Furthermore, frameworks often present opportunities to develop assessment tools. Over time, this type of inquiry could divulge the potential skillsets needed for practitioners or even the creation of competencies for a field.

Dramatic Resonances. Pendzik (2006) who offered a comprehensive theoretical overview of dramatic reality, additionally provided another concept of *dramatic resonances* (Pendzik, 2008). Pendzik (2008) outlined that these resonances are a technique that can be
employed in therapeutic settings, supervision, or training. Loosely defined, these resonances are “creative responses offered from within dramatic reality to a personal experience, a dream, a question, a text, a therapeutic session, or any stimuli conveyed within a drama therapy setting” (p. 218). Pendzik (2008) does not delve into any other qualities of interactions, or combinations, but she does note that

although resonances always keep a connection to the original input, they are not meant to be a mere reflection of it: they aim at expanding and deepening its scope, while keeping in sync with it. They resemble an aesthetic, living feedback performed within dramatic reality, more than a mirror image. (p. 218)

Pendzik’s (2008) offering marks an attempt at capturing the information that is present in a drama therapy session (within the dramatic reality). Pendzik (2008) provides DvT practitioners with language and some conceptualization for reflection of one’s practice.

**6 Keys Assessment.** The 6 Keys Assessment (Pendzik, 2003; 2013) is a measure based assessment that evaluates a client’s interaction with the dimensions of the dramatic reality. Pendzik (2003) outlines that in every dramatic reality, there exist dimensions or ‘keys’ that can be used as “anchor points” (p. 93) for the drama therapist. A drama therapist would use this assessment to gather information on how their client engages in the dramatic reality. They would assess their client’s:

1. Ability to transport oneself to and from ordinary reality
2. A particular quality
3. Roles and characters
4. Patterns: plots, themes, and conflicts
5. A response to it
These are the six core parameters “around which drama therapy processes tend to constellate” (Pendzik, 2003, p. 93). Most importantly, Pendzik (2003) offers drama therapist’s guidelines for how to frame applications in practice. Using the framework outlined by Pendzik (2003) provides drama therapists the opportunity to review their work and potentially glean pertinent information from it. It may also encourage curiosity into one’s practice.

**Mapping.** Some other fields, such as dance/movement therapy (Koch, 2017; Lauffenburger, 2020; Sheets-Johnstone, 2009, 2010, 2011; Tortora, 2006), art therapy (Pénzes, van Hooren, Dokter, & Hutschemaekers, 2018), and music therapy (Honig, 2017) have pursued formal mapping of observations as a model for their practice. Mapping can be thought of as the record or the representation of the dispersal of something. Maps can act as guides and provide significant information about location, direction, and overall terrain.

**Laban Notation Style.** As a choreographer, Laban (1966) offered his understanding of movement and how integral a fuller conceptualization or marking of this was indispensable. One of his intentions was to create a system that could help “find out the natural characteristics of the single phases we wish to join together in order to create a sensible sequence” (p. 4). Finding a common thread that could be comprehended by others viewing his notation style, Laban (1966) did not wish for his work to be reductive, rather be able to hold the dimensionality innate in movement. Laban Movement Analysis has also been used to explore the movement patterns and sequences in health (Foroud & Whishaw, 2006), psychology (Levy & Duke, 2003), and even in human-computer interaction (Kim et al., 2013). Most studies explore how LMA can be used to further understand the process at work. For example, in their study of the combination of Actor-Network Theory and LMA, Loke and Baki Kocaballi (2016) noted that “human’s actions and
movement, choreographies cannot be considered independent phenomena; they take place within a network of other human and nonhuman actors acting as multiple sources of influences” (p. 49-50). The LMA notational style (typically called Labanotation) is used as an instrument to determine meaning from movement.

Studying Laban’s (Ullman, 2011) choreosophical model, Salazar Sutil (2012) combined this sentiment within relationality. Salazar Sutil (2012) describes the double infinity of Laban’s concepts of kinesphere and dynamosphere. These two spheres are defined as: one, a personal sphere (kinesphere) and two, inner movements (mental and affectional; dynamosphere). The combination of movement and feelings is very relevant and related to the combination of the core concepts of DvT:

Rather than occurring, as kinesthetic movement does, as fixed and separate positions in a geometric space, dynamospheric movement occurs in terms of a continuous opening and closing of energy, as part of a chain of intensities that moves…(Salazar Sutil, 2012, p. 153).

Salazar Sutil (2012) gives some shape to the complex inner and outer experiences of movement in Laban’s (1966) work in his presentation of how these experiences mix and interrelate. These mixtures offer up particular information about the person or persons involved in the movement experience. This information could be helpful for a practitioner’s self-awareness or reflective process. Turning their attention to dynamospheric movement within their session might allow for an expansive or holistic approach to their practice.

**Ways of Seeing.** Tortora’s (2006) ways of seeing approach is a method that is used to comprehend how people move and how the qualities of their movement might inform the session. Additionally, it is the “action-reaction” between the therapist and client (seeing and
perceiving each other’s movement and movement qualities) that “influence developing social-emotional relationships and affects the therapeutic and educational interventions” (p. 63). Akin to this researcher’s understanding of the DvT playspace, Tortora’s ways of seeing approach takes the interaction of the dance/movement experience into consideration. Tortora’s approach echoes the large body of knowledge concerning microanalysis within dance movement therapies assessment (Houghton & Beebe, 2016), music therapy (Suvini et al., 2017; Ullsten et al., 2017), or even a combination of both music and dance movement therapies (Skrzypek, 2017). Although Tortora’s ways of seeing approach may be considered an area of future development for the method of DvT, without a comprehensive concept that captures their practice, renders this potential development moot.

**Combinations of Art Materials.** Pénzes, van Hooren, Dokter, and Hutschemaekers (2018) conducted a constructivist grounded theory study concerning how art therapists associate formal elements with mental health. Interviewing eight art therapists, the authors found that art therapists in [their] study observe the combination of movement, dynamic, contour and repetition (i.e. primary formal elements) with mixture of color, figuration, and color saturation (i.e. secondary formal elements)...[and that] primary and secondary elements interacting together construct the structure and variation of the art product (p. 1). Participants focused on combinations of the artistic material used by their clients and what they might glean from these combinations. Interestingly, the framework that Pénzes et al. (2018) outline from their study is one of balance and adaptability. Their participants noted that the observations of formal elements in the produced artworks were rarely used for interpretation of diagnosis, but rather a framework for understanding their clients better. Further, the authors noted that the these “patterns provide perspectives on client’s strengths, resources, and
challenges” (p. 11). Akin to Pendzik’s (2008) dramatic resonances, Pénzes et al.’s (2018) study offers some conceptualization of the way in which materials mix and combine to produce an output of expression. This type of inquiry is necessary for the practice of DvT.

**Heterotopia.** Heterotopia, an idea first presented by Foucault (1986), is compared to the Bonny Method of Guided Imagery (GIM) in music therapy (Honig, 2017). Honig details the concept of heterotopia (and its five principles) as being uniquely relatable to GIM. Defined as existing in all cultures, functioning “as culture changes and time passes”, containing or juxtaposing “multiple places that are otherwise incompatible within a single real place”, functioning “as heterochronies” and that have “embedded system to both restrict and allow access” (Honig, p. 30). Ultimately, a heterotopia is the opposite of a utopia. It is a place that is placeless, and timeless. Akin to the playspace of DvT, or dramatic reality as presented by Pendzik (2003), Honig uses the concept of heterotopia as “a way of understanding and describing the connectedness of spaces in GIM in a nuanced way” (p. 26). Honig describes the therapy space (as in the four walls) being permeated with additional ‘spaces’: “the space within this session expands and contracts, shifts places and time, and transitions between cognitive, emotional, physical, artistic, and integrative perceptual modalities” (p. 26). Furthering this perspective, Honig notes that these multiple modes of perceptual experience combine in unique permutations and instantiations to create distinctive spaces dependent partially on what modes are utilized in perceiving that experience. Yet, they are within the distinctly internal space of the client’s imagination and at the same time contained with the concrete and emplaced space of the therapy session. (p. 29)
Honig also highlights how important it is to have a comprehensive concept to provide structure to such an alive process like therapy. Honig expresses that where other theories have described relationships within and between imager, imagery, music, and therapist, this approach describes the properties of the spaces in which these related elements are situated. Additionally, it provides framework for understanding time relationships and relationships between the spaces in which each segment of GIM session occurs. By noting the shared heterotopic qualities, these segments, sessions, and series of sessions appear self-similar, or fractal-like, in their properties. This heterotopic approach also provides a framework for understanding the space (s) in which therapeutic change occurs, which may point towards new ways of studying mechanisms for growth in GIM.

Honig highlights that having a concept to provide framework, even with a seemingly elusive term like heterotopia, influences and aids his understanding of the overlapping and multidimensional experience of GIM with his clients. Like Honig’s experience with GIM framed by heterotopia, DvT could benefit from terminology that could encapsulate its complexity.

Divergent Thinking. The skill of divergent thinking can be considered as essential for DvT practitioners. Deacon (2000) outlined that divergent thinking “involves the cognitive process of creating new or different idea to solve some problem or to advance innovation or change” (p. 67). Citing Guilford (1988) as the pioneer, Deacon noted that divergent thinking could be broken down into four segments: “fluency, flexibility, originality, and elaboration” (p. 67). Deacon discusses them in relation to supervision practice but, they bring forward qualities that a DvT practitioner might need in order to dimensionalize. Combining the elusive, yet, mixed combinations of a playspace, with the mutual responsiveness in an encounter, with the embodied
practice of change, there is a lot for a DvT practitioner to consider. Having the ability to remain flexible, fluent, original (or creative), and having the ability to elaborate echo the DvT practitioners’ giving up control, linearity, privilege, and objectivity.

**Drama Therapy Knowledge Areas.** Recently, in the North American Drama Therapy Association (NADTA), a list of knowledge areas for drama therapists was established (Wood, personal communication, 2020). These knowledge areas are part of the first stage in a larger movement towards delineating the competencies of drama therapists:

1. Professional Identity
2. Theories and Processes of Drama Therapy
3. Performance, Theater Perspectives, and Aesthetics
4. Human Growth and Development
5. Cultural Humility, Equity, and Diversity
6. Ethical Practice and Standards
7. Research and Evaluation
8. Assessment and Psycho-diagnostics
9. Group Dynamics

A second part of this process will consist of educators and board-certified trainers being tasked to develop competencies for the knowledge areas and produce a competency exam for drama therapists. This will most likely include guidelines that all approved educational sites for drama therapy would have to demonstrate. The movement within the NADTA echoes the call for a research foundation (Armstrong, Frydman, & Rowe, 2019a; Armstrong, Frydman, & Wood,
Terminology in the various drama therapeutic practices must be comprehensive in order to enhance efficacy within these endeavors.

**Pilot Study: Languaging a Dramatic Conversation**

A phenomenological pilot study was conducted by this researcher (Pitre, 2019) concerning the phenomenon of the interactional, improvisational based experience of participants in DvT. The interpretation of the outcomes by this researcher generated language that might capture these phenomenon, and thus, this researcher identified the term: Dramatic Conversation. This researcher created a working language document (WLD) based on observation of archived video of DvT sessions. An outline of what might occur in a dramatic conversation was designed. The WLD consisted of a theorized process of “shaping” based on the lived experience of this researcher in her clinical work. Shaping was further expanded to include a spectrum of terms one could engage in while shaping: scaffolding into framing, tracing into marking, tucking into blending and threading into weaving. The archived videos (of this researcher and clients of DvT sessions) were segmented by this researcher and then offered to two focus groups ($N = 11$) for their viewing with the WLD. Participants were asked to reflect on the utility of the WLD. Data were collected, qualitatively analyzed and results highlighted the necessity for accurate language development in achieving more clarity in the practice of drama therapy, particularly DvT.

**Conclusion**

The practice of drama therapy is founded on “relationship, intimacy, creativity, action, [and] interaction” (Johnson & Emunah, 2009, p.32) and Developmental Transformations (DvT) is an epitome of this statement. DvT is well established as a practice, yet there are some discrepancies in the continued evolution of its theory. There are no research studies related to
expanding the language that frames DvT practice. The delineation of playspace, embodiment, encounter and transformation as the main concepts of the practice does aid in the conceptualization of the practice. In contrast, the absence of dimensionality in DvT theory diverts from it. A comprehensive and cohesive concept that could bridge theory and practice together does not exist in DvT. This review of the current literature of the foundational theory of DvT and its terminology in practice have highlighted that it is a prudent time to revisit the terminology in DvT and offer a comprehensive concept for its practice. Furthermore, touching on the framing that other expressive art therapies have explored within their practice suggest that having guidance whilst practicing a method of therapy offers opportunities for learning. Thusly, the revisiting of DvT terminology could bolster the way DvT practitioners approach their work, their skill development, and the overall teaching of their craft.
Chapter 3

Method

Research Questions

This study was conducted with the aim of creating a conceptual theory that could capture the interaction and its dimensionality within a DvT session. Seven expert participants provided reflection and feedback concerning terminology provided by this researcher. The research questions of this current study built on this researcher’s pilot study findings (Pitre, 2019) and continued to focus on conceptualizing terminology for the practice of DvT.

1. What are the dimensions or layers within a dramatic conversation?
2. How do these dimensions function in a DvT session?
3. Could any of the dimensions of a dramatic conversation be transferable to other drama therapy processes?

Terms

Dramatic conversation is a relational exchange that includes elements of the dramatic media. Broken down, we see the definition of dramatic as having the quality of an activity, or event, that could be unexpected, emotional, or exciting. The definition of conversation was outlined as: A process of turning to, turning with, delving into something with someone. Within DvT work, Johnson’s (2013) term dimensionality, is related to measurements or dimensions as well as having substantial depth (as in three-dimensional vision). These are sometimes referred to as layers, but in this study the term dimensions will be used.

Constructivist Grounded Theory

The methods for this study were developed using a constructivist grounded theory approach (Charmaz, 2014) to ground the inquiry. The inclusion of the constructivist aspect was
essential so that the concept of building something, as well as co-constructing (Charmaz, 2017), was central to the research. In this researcher’s opinion, the inclusion of multiple voices in the revision of a particular group’s terminology is imperative. Grounded theory, without the constructivist lens, can be solely representative of the researcher’s opinion, which does not suit the purposes of this study. Rather, the constructivist grounded theory approach has embedded reflexivity processes for the researcher and is typically built on conversational style interviews.

**Participants**

Participants for this study \((N = 7; n_{female} = 4, n_{male} = 3; M \text{ age} = 44; Nationalities represented} = 5)\) were adults who had graduated from the post-graduate training of Developmental Transformations (DvT). They were recruited by purposive sampling, with the criteria of having: 10 or more years of clinical experience as a drama therapist, currently engaged in clinical practice, 5 or more years of teaching/training experience in DvT, and having a demonstrated expertise with a diverse educational background of theatre, drama, a range of psychological therapeutic methods that related to DvT practice. They all had experience in being the therapist (referred to as “playor” in DvT) and trainee/client (player) of DvT. Experts were located both nationally (USA) and internationally (outside USA).

Participants were recruited through email via the researcher’s professional contacts within the Developmental Transformations community. The initial response rate was relatively low (only four responses from two attempts were received) so a further purposive selection took place. This researcher personally reached out to individuals meeting the above criteria, seeking their participation. Eight responses were received and ultimately seven (7) intensive interviews were scheduled.
Design

The Institutional Review Board at Lesley University reviewed a detailed overview of the research design and purpose and responded with approval to conduct this study (Appendix A). All participants signed a written consent form (Appendix B) with approval to share audio and video documentation. All participants were identified by number for confidentiality. All of the interviews were conducted within current professional standards of practice and codes of ethics of the North American Drama Therapy Association.

Building on pilot study research design (Pitre, 2019), segments of play showing DvT sessions were used for reflection and feedback. A total of five video selections of dramatic conversations were shared with the participants for their review prior to the interview. Video segments were new to participants as they were not contributors in this researcher’s pilot study. Also of note, this researcher appeared as the playor in all the DvT sessions that were distributed as field sample. Having a field sample is often desired for constructivist grounded theory (Charmaz, 2014) and this researcher considered this to be an essential inclusion in the design.

Materials

Glossary. Stemming from pilot study findings (Pitre, 2019), this researcher developed a one-page Glossary (Appendix C) for this current study. The terms provided were a combination of pilot study findings (e.g. dramatic conversation) and DvT theory (e.g. dimensionality). The definitions focused on the interaction within a dramatic conversation and descriptions of these components. Participants were informed that the interview questions would be based on the glossary terms provided and were requested to review them.

Field Sample Videos. Five videos segments as a field sample were also shared with each participant. Consent for video segments had been granted by those appearing in them, their
guardians, and by the organization where the videos were filmed. In order to view the study materials, each participant was given a password protected link to a Dropbox folder which included the glossary, field sample, and informed consent (Appendix B).

**Interviews**

**Interview Questions.** The interview questions for this study were developed within the framework of an intensive interview style outlined by Charmaz (2014). Questions were intended to guide the process of a collaborative interview conversation. A pre-interview occurred with two fellow doctoral colleagues who had experience as qualitative researchers in order to clarify and refine the interview questions and align them with the research questions. Five questions were developed to guide the interviews in a semi-structured manner.

1. When you think of a dramatic conversation, what comes to mind? What associations do you have?
2. In your own words, can you describe a dramatic conversation you have encountered recently in your clinical practice? What impressions are you left with after this dramatic conversation?
3. How do you understand the word dimension? What about dimensionality?
4. What are the different elements that would aid in the formation of a dramatic conversation?
5. Have you found this interview useful and/or applicable to the larger drama therapy field?

Responses to these questions led to other emergent lines of conversation and questioning, unique to each participant. This emergent quality is a key component of constructivist grounded theory (Charmaz, 2014).
Each participant was given two weeks to review all materials (glossary and field sample videos, informed consent) in the Dropbox folder. Participants were informed that they were not required to review the field sample. Only three participants shared that they had reviewed the field sample videos. The option to review the video was given so that each participant could approach the glossary from their own experiences rather than be informed by this researcher’s selections of a Dramatic Conversations.

All informed consent forms were completed prior to interview. All interviews took place virtually via Zoom video chat, and were conducted in a private residence over the course of four weeks during the summer of 2019. All interviews of this study were videotaped and later transcribed. Each participant was given the transcript of the interview to review and approve prior to data analysis. Each participant was interviewed one time, with interviews lasting approximately 60 minutes.

**Reflexivity**

Attention to bias of the research design (e.g. the size of the DvT community and the pre-existing professional relationships the researcher had with the experts) required reflexivity on behalf of this researcher. This was done through frequent note taking throughout the research process, with attempts to bracket out any pre-conceived ideas or perceptions of the participants and their particular orientations to DvT work. Following grounded theory protocol, the researcher used memo-writing as a “the pivotal intermediate step between data collection and writing drafts of papers” (Charmaz, 2014, p. 162). Additional attention to the importance of reflexivity was met through the following steps:
1. The researcher created artistic representations: In the vein of crystallization (Ellingson, 2009), these artistic representations served to balance out the qualitative continuum by adding another representation of knowledge.

2. The researcher used Clustering: A shorthand system of representation to allow for a “non-linear, visual, and flexible technique to understand and organize your material” (Charmaz, 2014, p. 184) to represent the interaction of relationships.

3. The researcher recorded experimentation with theory construction in a Methodological journal: A compilation place for all the memo-ing throughout the process. This was located within a journal and was dated and organized. The researcher’s thoughts about theory as it emerged through the coding process were included in this journal.

(For examples of these materials, see Appendix D)

**Data Analysis**

*Initial Coding*

This researcher reviewed all of the transcribed data as well as videotaped interviews. Notes were taken to identify feedback about the phenomenon of a shared language. First, notes were reviewed and prominent and or repeated information were highlighted, to conduct initial coding according to constructive grounded theory. Data were analyzed through manual techniques with items or processes such as pens, colored markers, colored highlighters, cutting/ripping of paper, etc. Words and phrases were grouped into meaning units and sorted to reflect common threads of ideas, beliefs and observations.

*Focused Coding.* Focused coding was performed after initial coding was completed. Focused coding entailed using the earlier codes to “sift, sort, synthesize” large chunks of data
Traditional grounded theorists often employ axial coding in this stage of data analysis. Axial coding provides a frame or a predetermined structure for the researcher. Constructivist grounded theory’s focused coding, instead, provides “flexible guidelines” (Charmaz, 2014, p. 148) where the researcher can follow emergent data. In this study, focused coding was especially useful in maintaining the detail of the data as this researcher progressed through the analysis. The focused codes were grouped, categorized, reflected upon, then finally formed into themes.

**Themes.** Four themes and eleven sub-themes were generated through the analysis of the data through initial, then focused coding. They were: Therapeutic Frame (sub-theme: Creation of the therapeutic frame), Dramatic Core (sub-themes: Representation and symbolic communication, performance of self and other, sensation, negotiation and co-creation, relationality, and transformation), Interactional Exchange (sub themes: variation, and awareness and capacity), and Dimensionality (sub-themes: Related to therapeutic frame and related to dramatic core).

**Peer review**

A colleague and qualitative researcher (also a doctoral candidate at the time) reviewed the raw interview data and conducted a preliminary coding analysis of the material. This was conducted after the researcher had completed her own coding analysis. The peer reviewer located similar themes to the researcher’s. She also highlighted an area of wording that could be clarified within the first theme. The peer reviewer did not share their findings until this researcher’s full data analysis was completed. The reviewer was in agreement with the codes this researcher had located.
Chapter 4

Results

This grounded theory study consisted of intensive interviews with seven Developmental Transformations (DvT) experts who were asked about their experience of a phenomenon referred to by this researcher as a Dramatic Conversation. The outcomes were guided by the three research questions (1) What are the dimensions or layers within a dramatic conversation (2) How do these dimensions function in a DvT session and (3) Could any of the dimensions of a dramatic conversation be transferable to other drama therapy processes?

Specifically, participants were asked to review language that this researcher had developed in conjunction with the results from her pilot study (Pitre, 2019) and comment on the appropriateness and accuracy of the language’s descriptions to convey the concept of a dramatic conversation and the layers within it.

Thematic Results

Participants shared their thoughts concerning their experiences of a dramatic conversation and the language provided by this researcher in response to the interview questions outlined in Chapter 3 - Method. It is important to note that while all participants responded positively to the third question, it was minimally attended to or focused on by all participants. One word answers, or even a ‘thumbs-up’ was offered in response to the question. The scope of the question could be considered too broad for the participant’s experience of the language provided by the researcher and/or their experience with the interactional exchange in a DvT session. More precisely, it could have been too far-reaching for this researcher to include it with this study. Therefore, it will be excluded from the below results, theory construction, and overall discussion. Rather, participants’ responses to the first two questions were analyzed and combined, and four
major themes were identified, as well as eleven sub-themes (Table 4.1). In this section, the emergent themes and sub-themes will be outlined.

Table 4.1

*Thematic Results*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Sub-themes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Therapeutic Frame</td>
<td>A. Creation of the therapeutic frame</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Dramatic Core</td>
<td>A. Representation and symbolic communication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>B. Performance of self and other</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>C. Sensation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>D. Negotiation and co-creation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>E. Relationality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>F. Transformation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Interactional Exchange</td>
<td>A. Varielation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>B. Awareness and Capacity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Dimensionality</td>
<td>A. Related to Therapeutic Frame</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>B. Related to Dramatic Core</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Therapeutic Frame

Creating, or beginning a dramatic conversation was discussed by participants. Participants agreed that a therapeutic frame is a necessary part of the creation of a therapeutic environment in that it marks the forming of a session. Participant 2 noted that her training in DvT informed her idea of how a session is framed, stating “I think it has to do with mutuality….there’s a mutuality in that you are both connected to what’s happening between us.” She linked the DvT playspace agreements (e.g. mutuality, discrepant communication, restraint from harm, and reversibility) suggesting that for her, framing was an important feature of the beginning of a session. In fact, a few participants mentioned that framing was an essential first step to the creation of a therapeutic space. For example, Participant 4 said that “…the conversation that we’re having has qualities that would be dramatic….a dramatic frame of reference for what’s different about them than other conversations.”

The theme of therapeutic frame captured discussions regarding a variance in potential forming styles. This might be seen as how each therapist combined their skillset and overall theoretical orientation for DvT therapy. This created a lens to view their work. Participant 6 remarked that a person’s “orientation to that conversation can be very different.” Participant 4 noted that the consideration of the therapist’s intentionality within the frame is also important “I think, this idea of expectation, reciprocity, what’s the frame, what’s the obligation to each other” and that “…being a drama therapist…that particular role transforms the purpose of the conversation, essentially.” Both participants here noted that the way in which a therapist approaches the process of framing is influential in the creation of the frame itself.

Creation of the therapeutic frame. Creation of the therapeutic frame concerns the way in which a therapist would structure the shape of their session. Participants offered varying
approaches to the creation of the therapeutic frame. Participant 5 noted that for him it was creativity that was crucial. He noted that what DvT brings to the therapeutic environment had to do “to do with that potentiality…If I can experience the moment as a place of possibility, where I’m comfortable with, that’s related to me to creativity.” Participant 5’s remark illustrates that for him, a moment of possibility allows for creativity and produces the potential for the creation of a therapeutic frame possible. For Participant 1, the creation of a location similar to a “meeting point” was key and for Participant 7 the creation of therapeutic frame “involves an invitation…it involves a contract.” Participant 3 remarked that it is “improvising and sort of moving closer to connecting to vulnerability and then a little bit away again” that “maintains that dramatic conversation.” She referred to the connection with the emotional state within the dramatic conversation as something that helps to maintain its presence. Regardless of the content of the creation, participants noted that the creation of the therapeutic frame was essential to the later maintenance of a dramatic conversation.

**Dramatic Core**

The dramatic core is a theme that encompassed aspects related to dramatic media. Dramatic core is defined here as the dramatic media that are used within a drama therapy session. Participants used the definition of dramatic medium (or media) from the glossary, reflecting on the form, or combinations of forms, that carry the dramatic material (i.e. role, metaphor, sound, body etc.) within a dramatic conversation.

**Representation and Symbolic Communication.** Participant 7 emphasized that the dramatic conversation required representation; the act of representing an object as another, or using an object in an unintended way. She felt that representation was the center of the entire
conceptualization of the dramatic conversation. Highlighted through the literature review, this is also a key component of drama therapy and DvT. She defined a dramatic conversation as:

- a conversation that takes place in the realm of representation. That drama already involves a discrepant symbolism…it’s symbolism of the real. Refers to the real. It can also refer to fiction, but that fundamentally it involves a representation so that there is a discrepancy between what is being symbolized and what is happening in real time. It can be enhanced through objects, enactment, embodiment, but…at the base, a dramatic conversation requires representation. A symbolic communication.

Participant 3 also placed importance on representation. In fact, she labeled representation conceptually as, “I can dimensionalize…by embodying different qualities or different personas or different characters…to kind of amplify the possible ‘other’…other possibilities of that situation.” She highlighted that within the act of representation, there is also a process of extension, or movement.

**Performance of Self and Other.** The sub-theme of performance of self and other emerged as the rendering of something, or someone that is done with the understanding that it is not fully based in reality. Participant 7 noted that a dramatic conversation, in and of itself denotes a “lifting off from the everyday commonly shared understanding of the symbols.” Here, Participant 7 combined representation (i.e. symbols) with that of performance (i.e. lifting off from the everyday). Participant 7 highlighted that it is through the intentional movement and separation away from reality (i.e. every day) that can produce performance. She also referenced Richard Schechner (a performance studies theorist) and stated that performance is “twice repeated behavior.”
Participant 6 stated that “I think a dramatic conversation would need to have a sense of performing oneself in some way, because you’re commenting and articulating and you’re heightening certain things.” Participant 6 introduced the element of witnessing (or ‘audience’) that is common in DvT, theatre or drama, and stressed, “this awareness in one sense, that we’re performing together.” Both participants highlighted that performance was a necessary element of a dramatic conversation.

**Sensation.** The sub-theme of the sensation emerged frequently through the interviews in different ways in referencing body-based awareness. First, for Participant 5, he noted that “for me, it starts with movement…and within the movement, it’s very much related, for me to sensing…Like, what do I sense, what is client sensing? And what is the client communicating?” Participant 3 added that for her a dramatic conversation needed a “connecting to what isn’t being said in words.” Secondly, Participant 7 noted that a “dramatic conversation involve consumption through the senses…multi-sensory input.” For these participants, sensation was firmly located in their perceptions that dramatic conversation was experiences sensually as well as conceptually.

**Negotiation and Co-Creation.** Participants discussed elements related to how the playor and player might relate within a dramatic conversation. Participant 3 remarked that “negotiation” was key. This is also an essential ingredient in the co-creation of what DvT practitioners informally refer to as play; players need to be able to navigate a shared environment while supporting its continued growth. Negotiation in the process of this is vital. Participant 1 stated that it is “something that has potential for discovery” and Participant 7 reflected on what a dramatic conversation might evoke that: “we’ve conjured the pretend.” The notion of possibility was important to both Participant 1 and 7 in considering negotiation and co-creation as an element of a dramatic conversation.
Participant 6 highlighted a process from the field sample which, to her, was an example of a dramatic conversation:

But it also helped, you know, of course when you’re using sound, it didn’t shut things down. It increased the possibilities of ‘the play’ by not defining and not shutting it down. It was a process of defining, too. Because you’re not sitting there going: oh, well, this means this. Who knows what this means at this moment. And who cares? Except that when we’re watching one another and respond to one another. But to me, the kinds of noises and touch that she was doing and her trying to figure something out with you.

Participant 6 highlighted negotiating the process of play: the creation, exploration (with intentional holding of ‘not knowing’) and the responsiveness with both client and therapist. She noted that to her, this was a dramatic conversation. Overall, negotiation and co-creation were important sub-themes of dramatic core that participants discussed through each of their interviews.

**Relationality.** Participants also noted the importance of relational connections within a dramatic conversation. This builds on the negotiation and co-creation theme if we see relationality as a product of those elements. Participant 5 shared: “And a joy which is involved…for me, that has so much to do…also, not only authenticity, but also autonomy…This agency…This feeling of: yes, I’m part of it, and this reversibility quality.” He remarked that a shared creation, or being a part of the experience, was a key component in his view of a dramatic conversation. Participant 4, too, stated that “prioritizing the conversation ultimately prioritizes the dramatic relationship.” Participant 4 highlighted the quality of relationship when he noted that: “we’re tied together by eight strings and at any moment I’m going to turn my attention to
this connection between us, or this other connection between us, and this conversation, the way we’re moving together.”

Adding a different dimension to the subcategory of relationality, Participant 3 discussed a session in which she felt she was helping the relationship between a mother and son: “It feels like I’m taking some of what she said, putting it into a more digestible and accessible form for him.” In this vein, Participant 4 also added that the concept of being in a co-created space showed “how power plays out in these arrangements.” For these participants, there was more to gain from the co-creation than a dramatic conversation; it offered some type of information to the therapist.

Transformation. Transformation has to do with change in the dramatic conversation. Participants, when asked about dimensionality, primarily spoke about change. They discussed how a dramatic conversation needed to evolve, as Participant 2 stated “I think…develops…a dramatic conversation develops…it changes, one way…. It’s not just one moment. It’s an ongoing process.” Similarly, Participant 5 added that for him, “the process refers to something moving in time…the developmental aspect refers to something actually transforming…time.” Participants echoed that without the element of change or development over time (e.g. in a singular session, or a course of treatment), there would be no dramatic conversation. Thus, it is important to include movement over time in the conceptualization of a dramatic conversation.

Interactional Exchange

The theme Interactional exchange contains the type of interaction and exchanges that participants noted in a DvT session. Participants spoke about the communicational movement between client and therapist, the awareness it brought them as therapists, and additionally what
this might mean about the client’s capacity to engage in the dramatic conversation. Participants also referenced an interactional exchange embedded in the interviewing process for this study.

Varielation. In all seven interviews the notion of a ‘back and forth’ type of movement and exchange was noted to occur within a dramatic conversation. The term ‘varielation’ is often used by DvT practitioners to refer to this movement (Johnson, 2013). For example, Participant 6 noted this type of movement when she referenced a moment in the field sample provided to participants:

she became energized around a certain sound, you would repeat it and then you would varielate it. I was watching all of that. So I was more, yes it was certainly dramatic. It was about, among other things, many things, I don’t know her and your work with her, but, to me, there was negotiation going on. And also trying to find out what and how to play.

Participant 6 noted, that for her, varielation was a part of negotiation in a session, particularly on deciding on what or how to play. In referencing the work done in a DvT session, Participant 6 said:

It’s all a negotiation of: how do we manage the turbulence? How do we manage the discomfort? How do we manage the gates? How do we find something mutual that is going on? What is it? Where are we going? Actually, not knowing, often the question of: what are we doing in here? What am I working on? And it comes up.

Participant 6’s comments highlight both the interaction between client and therapist including the ‘back and forth’ of varielation, and the negotiation required for a dramatic conversation. This additionally ties in with the negotiation and co-creation sub-theme of dramatic core.

Other participants also discussed the interactional aspect of the dramatic conversation. Participant 2 expressed that “there is a dramatic conversation happening in what the client brings
in and what is projected back and how the client responds to that again.” She noted that the dramatic conversation has an interactional exchange in it. Participant 3 also spoke at length about interaction from the beginning of her interview. Throughout, she noted that it was not just a back and forth exchange, but rather, a process of sorts:

…it feels like something about both participants are…have valid contributions. Even if it’s a slight pulling back or a slight turning away that might look like a ‘no-more’ or a ‘no’ or something, that’s still a valid expression because it’s received by the playor, by the facilitator. And maybe because it’s received, it continues. There’s space even if there’s a wish to not communicate or to resist it or to hide it or something…there’s still a reciprocal responding.

Participant 3’s mention of reciprocal responding also connects with the sub-themes of relationality, and negotiation and co-creation. She continued with the notion that “actually so much therapeutic processing happens through the therapist communicating their attunement to the person’s state.” Participant 3’s comments regarding this movement introduced the quality of being impacted by the conversation, while it is happening.

**Awareness and Capacity.** In relation to the client, the participants noted several aspects that might connect to their understanding of a dramatic conversation. While all participants had experience as both the player (client) and playor (therapist), it is important to note that most of them spoke from the perspective of the playor. Participant 3 mentioned that “there’s something about joining the client’s reference points.” In reflecting about a particular client, Participant 3 noted: “He’s timid. He’s within his limits quite often, or flexibility is really restricted. But the idea of a dramatic conversation helps me encompass what he does offer, as ‘his offering’ still.” Thus, referencing a dramatic conversation was helpful for Participant 3 in order to conceptualize
that her client was locatable in the process. It gave her language to be in relationship with her client.

In discussing how a dramatic conversation might be connected to the client, Participant 7 spoke about a tolerance of ambiguity that was a marker of sorts, stating:

…[there must be some kind of…] playfulness to be able to lift off from the here and now into dramatic representation, into a dramatic conversation. But as you’re saying, it also involves the capacity to notice the other. And to attune to the capacity or the play space of the other. The playfulness of the other. The capacity for aesthetic representation, the capacity for ambiguity, the capacity for symbolic ambiguity for the other.

In this statement, Participant 7 highlighted that measuring a client’s capacity to be in a dramatic conversation could be seen through their ability to locate and move within the dramatic conversation.

Participants also noted that they were impacted by the back and forth exchanges in their work. This appeared to be related to how they were applying their skills within the dramatic conversation. The participants spoke about how this movement process gave way to the therapist’s abilities. For example, Participant 5 stated that “it’s more bringing awareness to it…or being curious about it.” Participant 4 related this to a skillset of sorts: “being able to move from one dimension of content to another as freely as possible” and “how skillful can you become at conversation.” Similarly, Participant 3 remarked that “there’s something about the facilitator’s capacity to adjust and meet” that relates to their capacity for conversation.

This sub-theme also includes reflections about the interviewing process. This was an interesting and surprising finding from the data. Participant 4 remarked that the process of conceptualizing a dramatic conversation is very much like “we’re trying to take a human
experience, a relational experience, and we’re trying to talk about it as if it were an object…And it’s not…It’s alive…It’s a thing in process, and it remains in process.” He continued with “…there’s something about this idea of a dramatic conversation that gives more structure to the shape of what we’re talking about…It puts some boundaries around it that allows our conversation to have a flow while still putting the responsibility on us to keep it alive.” The alive-ness attributed to the overall process was a significant factor in conceptualizing the outcomes in order to refine the language surrounding the dramatic conversation. In fact, the quality of being a living entity shifted this researcher’s perceptions about how to discuss the dramatic conversation.

The role and concept of responsibility for keeping the conversation alive was highlighted by Participant 4. He stressed that it is not a linear process within a dramatic conversation, and the way it is conceptualized is very important. The notion of responsibility towards the aliveness of the dramatic conversation highlighted that there is an active connection within the domain of the dramatic conversation which impacts its presence and continuation. Participant 4 pointed to the investment he felt when participating in a dramatic conversation.

**Dimensionality**

The theme of Dimensionality encompasses the way in which participants described the dramatic core (such as the type of representation, or the way in which the body was present in the session), the interactional components (such as the quality of the interaction, or the presence or absence of communication) and the overall creation of the dramatic conversation. As defined throughout, the term ‘dimension’, in this study, is thought of as the layers of conversational material in a dramatic conversation. Participants used different adjectives or explanatory words to capture how they experienced the therapeutic frame or the elements of the dramatic core.
Throughout the interview process, participants used multiple qualifying words, metaphors, or imagery to explore the proposed concept of a dramatic conversation. For example, many of the participants would explain a dramatic conversation based simply on adjectives or what they might imagine it was composed of. Participant 4 spoke about the qualities and actions of how he might create a dramatic conversation: “you waver, you tease, you stop, you shift, you jump…that quality of variability, to me…could be a way to talk about the quality of a dramatic conversation.” Participant 4 highlighted that actively engaging in the creation of a dramatic conversation through the different inflection in his expression (by wavering, teasing, stopping, shifting, jumping), he also actively dimensionalizes the expressed dramatic material.

**Related to Therapeutic Frame.** Participants discussed the therapeutic frame from multiple levels such as theoretical and metaphorical. In theory, Participant 3 suggested “the dynamic is set and fixed.” From a metaphorical level, Participant 3 used the example of a light to describe how the dramatic conversation might change shape: “There’s something about trying to reach out beyond my light to bring him into the light or something, but rather that light expands to hold both of us within it.” Participant 3 discussed the shape or framing of a dramatic conversation, as “sharing in a language that’s more curvaceous and round.” These qualities offer a perspective on the therapeutic frame that has more depth to it. The metaphor of a light that expands to include both therapist and client points to a frame that is wide enough to include all participants whether their expression is connected to the immediate moment, or more loosely connected.

Other participants also referred to the frame and its variations. Participant 6, in referring to DvT, stated:
It breaks the form, right? It purposely breaks the form. It becomes a form onto itself, but it purposely breaks the form so that a new surprise, the things you talk about, the unexpected or the emotional, free up the constrictions of a dramatic form at the same time.

Participant 4 used both music and dance as examples on how the shaping of the frame change the result: “You’re constricting the form, like ballet, and the end result is pretty impressive in a different way than improvised contact-dance.” Discussing the frame of DvT, Participant 4 said “I often think that all drama therapy methods put certain restrictions on this music played in the conversation, and DvT has one of the least rigid frames.” Both Participant 4 and 6 highlighted that the breaking of the form (and how varied it was) would impact how the therapeutic frame was created in a dramatic conversation. The variation they introduce connects to how the overall construction of a therapeutic frame is full of dimensionality. To break or constrict a frame suggests that there is a dimensional form to it; that it can be shaped rather than being restricted to a linear path.

**Related to Dramatic Core.** When considering the dramatic core, Participant 3 noted that a dramatic conversation was “something beyond a normal conversation…an amplification of an interaction.” The amplification relates to the dramatic core in that Participant 3 is referencing the difference between a dramatic conversation and an ordinary one. Participants were able to expand on these differences, sharing that a dramatic conversation encapsulated multiple strains of communication. Further, they seemed to be saying that an ordinary conversation is typically denoted by verbal discussion, while a dramatic conversation is qualified by drama, including many layers of possible communications.
Expanding on this idea, Participant 5 noted that “the dimensionality is kind of part of the development… the process… a dimensional process means one that’s moving forward in time but also extending.” The movement or stretching that both Participants 3 and 5 attributed to the dramatic conversation aligned with Participant 4’s statements which cited that pieces of the dramatic media such as “…rhythm, affect, volume, shape, structure” that would combine into elements of the above mentioned sub-themes of the dramatic core. Participants all highlighted that there was a particular type or kind of way the dramatic core can exist within a dramatic conversation. Noting that the dramatic part of a dramatic conversation is somehow qualified, this might then inform how a therapist could proceed. For example, Participant 4 highlighted:

We often have this experience of widening, but what we’re really doing is focusing our attention on a few very specific dimensions. Maybe we can only hold seven, five to seven. This is max at any given time. So ok, I’m going to note of what’s happening in my body. I’m going to take note of proximity and space, shape, role, content – Ok done! And so our experience of it is it feels like it’s broadening, because in a normal conversation where we’re turning our attention is usually very, very limited, there’s so much happening more in an unconscious way. But then in a dramatic conversation we’re a little more intentional about the places where we’re working.

In attributing qualifying features to the dramatic core, participants were expressing that there was a difference in the way the dramatic media was influencing a dramatic conversation.

Responding to the main two points of inquiry in this research, participants highlighted various elements they deemed important to a dramatic conversation. Discussing the creation of a therapeutic frame, the varying elements of the core of the dramatic media present in a dramatic conversation, the interactional exchange that occurs between participants in a dramatic
conversation, and finally, the dimensionality within all these different layers, participants offered noteworthy impressions concerning the terminology of dramatic conversation.

**Theory Construction**

As per grounded theory, the theory construction phase was essential in teasing out a refined conceptualization of a dramatic conversation (see Appendix C for a visual representation of a dramatic conversation from this researcher’s pilot study which was shared with participants for this current study). The final completion of coding and meaning making resulted in a more profound understanding of the terminology for this researcher. For example, participants shared some hesitation about the word ‘conversation.’ Participant 6 stated: “…conversation, when I hear that word, I hear more of a neck-up experience”; Participant 4 said “…the idea of a conversation is really beautiful image for a theoretical frame…I thought of this earlier on, oh, is there another image that is maybe less verbal?” Considering the emergent themes (Therapeutic Frame, Dramatic Core, Interactional Exchange, and Dimensionality) with the reflection that the term dramatic conversation did not fully capture participant’s experience, a shift needed to occur.

As an additional surprise, this researcher did not anticipate the passion that participants expressed regarding the motion within the interaction in a DvT session. Each participant spoke about this ‘back and forth’ exchange (as detailed in the theme Interactional Exchange). This surprise was contemplated in this researcher’s reflections found in Appendix D. This researcher illustrated different angles on what participants were offering. The theme of Dimensionality played a key role. The additional step taken by participants towards the descriptions of the qualities of the therapeutic frame, or the dramatic core was unforeseen by this researcher. The inclusion of this depth of detail by the participants prompted this researcher to begin to consider a more dimensional system for DvT rather than merely the exchange of a conversation.
Combining the participants’ and this researcher’s reflections with other adjectives used by participants (e.g. curvaceous and round) was what created the spherical concept for the DvT therapeutic environment. With the intention of the research to explore the concept of a dramatic conversation, the outcomes, rather led to a broader, more comprehensive theoretical conceptualization which is discussed in the next chapter.
Chapter 5

Discussion

The intention of this constructivist grounded theory study was to explore, develop, and refine comprehensive terminology that might bridge theory with the practice of Developmental Transformations (DvT). A new conceptual theory emerged as well. This inquiry was guided by three research questions:

1. What are the dimensions or layers within a dramatic conversation?
2. How do these dimensions function in a DvT session?
3. Could any of the dimensions of a dramatic conversation be transferable to other drama therapy processes?

Four themes were generated through complex data analysis. These themes (Therapeutic Frame, Dramatic Core, Interactional Exchange, and Dimensionality) also included eleven sub-themes that eventually led to defining a concept which included the foundational practice-based aspects of DvT, and simultaneously privileged dimensionality: Dramasphere.

Dramasphere

Theoretical Model

After examining the data, it became apparent that although participants could relate to the concept of a dramatic conversation, there was a lingering question about the preciseness of the term itself. Participant feedback prompted this researcher to further explore the word ‘conversation’ as it was pointed to as limiting. Reflexivity was a key component in this phase of the research. This researcher contemplated the phrasing of the concept through written reflections and drawings related to her experience with the data (see Appendix D). Combined with a synthesis of the emergent themes from the interview data, an original concept and name
was developed: The *Dramasphere*. This term incorporates the emphasis that all participants placed on the ‘back and forth’ exchange in DvT. Additionally, there was a lot of hesitancy surrounding the word “conversation.” Conceptually, Dramasphere, captures the back-and-forth motion and eliminates restrictive associations to conversation as a primarily verbal encounter. For example, as participants talked about the back-and-forth element, they highlighted that it was a continuous reciprocal responding between therapist and client. The continuous nature of this back and forth movement could generate many lines or traces of communication (e.g. multiple associations, projections, and/or topics), which ultimately dimensionalize the overall exchange. During a period of reflexivity, much of this researcher’s illustrations demonstrated this (again, see Appendix D for this depiction). The spherical nature of holds the multiplicity of tracks that could be found in a DvT therapeutic environment.

Constructivist grounded theory (Charmaz, 2014) requires an element of co-construction of meaning rather than typical grounded theory that privileges the researcher’s objectivity over the participants. Therefore, an amalgamation of participant’s feedback and this researcher’s reflexivity is important to the overall conceptualization of new theory. Furthermore, it was essential to highlight the aspect of dimensionality that was central to feedback from participants during this research. The concept of Dramasphere is a product of this integration of this feedback to create new knowledge in terminology and conceptualization.

**Defining a Dramasphere**

A Dramasphere is defined by this researcher as: a therapeutic environment consisting of combinations of dimensions related to dramatic media and the interactions between the inhabitants of the environment at the time. Shifting from a focus on a process as a Dramatic Conversation might evoke, the Dramasphere concept attempts to capture this study’s
participants’ fuller descriptions and experiences of DvT. Participants commented on the multiple
dimensions present in dramatic media, the different types of engagement between therapist and
client (and what could be gleaned from them) and the creation of a space that promotes this
behavior. Therefore, rather than refine terminology that was process-based, it became obvious
that the discussion needed to widen; it needed to dimensionalize. Participants responses
generated a distinction about the types of building blocks or components necessary to create a
DvT therapeutic environment which prompted a continued reflective examination of this
researcher. This ultimately stimulated the creation of a new term for the particular environment
participants experienced. Future studies may navigate towards inquiry into the particular kinds of
processes that may exist in a Dramasphere.

Thus, a Dramasphere can be thought of as a DvT therapeutic environment which includes
the practice-based foundational concepts of DvT (e.g. embodiment, encounter, and
transformation) and privileges the goal of dimensionality. This researcher suggests that the term
Dramasphere is more accurate, comprehensive, and contemporary than the DvT concept of
playspace; yet it retains its sentiment. The term also adds dimensionality which had previously
been absent from the meaning of the playspace. However, it will be for future studies to explore
this assumption, and determine whether or not the Dramasphere is a term that can be used to
accurately describe and effectively teach DvT.

**Etymology.** The term Dramasphere can also be understood through its etymology.
Similar to DvT’s historical roots and the emphasis on the progressive (i.e. developmental)
change (i.e. transformation) over time (i.e. dimensionality), etymology can be utilized here as a
lens to understand the term Dramasphere. What largely shapes the impact of this term is the
‘sphere’ at the end of it. The roots of drama have been previously discussed, but a sphere can be
thought of as having two meanings: (a) a round object (which has dimension to it, as in three-
dimensional) and (b) as a suffix (-sphere) meaning an area or a section of society or life defined
by particular characteristics (Oxford dictionary). Participants discussed a dramatic conversation
as being round, curvaceous, and non-linear. Furthermore, linguistically a Dramasphere conjures
the image of something more dimensional and in fact, more round or curvaceous than a
playspace. Typically, a space, regardless of its underlying meaning,
suggests a fixed field-based location. To enhance this definition, a
visual representation illustrating the spherical aspect and multiple
spaces that can theoretically exist in a Dramasphere can be seen in
Figure 5.1.

**Shifting the Shape of the Space.** The DvT playspace has been defined as a place where
play happens (Johnson, 2013). The shift to using a sphere for theoretical terminology allows for
the concepts of space and location to be imagined from a multidimensional perspective,
expanding on a more restrictive linear space. It can also be considered, like a dramatic reality as
defined by Pendzik (2003), as a habitat. When employed as a suffix, -sphere is an area where
particular characteristics are present; where they can be located. Connecting to Jones’ (2007)
presentation of play in drama therapy, he noted that “play involves particular areas of content
and has a particular way of articulating that content” (p. 161). A Dramasphere is a place where
particular content related to drama is present.

Additionally, both Johnson (2013) and Pendzik (2003; 2006) discussed an in-
betweenness of the place where drama therapy happens. Further, they both noted that it is a
mixture of reality and fantasy that create a playspace or dramatic reality. A Dramasphere is a
dimensional environment where there is room for movement and the mixture of several aspects
of DvT. Having a therapeutic environment that is defined with more dimension and movement thus also supports the therapeutic intentions of DvT work. A Dramasphere, for example, in its definition provides more space for the possibility of an in-between of reality and fantasy to emerge. More precisely, the spherical lens of the DvT therapeutic environment allows for literal space to exist between these two concepts which theoretically allow for more combinations, and combinations on multiple levels to exist. Thus, a Dramasphere offers an infinite number of possible combinations of reality and fantasy, with a focus on the scaffolding between them, in its creation.

**Components of a Dramasphere**

The expression in dramatic media combined with the various intentions that framing of the therapeutic environment could take, produce multiple layers in a Dramasphere. There is much more to study concerning the creation of therapeutic environments in DvT and of drama therapy as a whole. However, by combining the results of this study with refining terminology, it is hoped that the components of the Dramasphere can more accurately reflect the landscape of DvT.

A salient component that was important to include in refining terminology was the impact of the shape of the therapeutic environment. Participants discussed the nuances in creating a therapeutic frame, the different layers that might be produced in it, and what is can be communicated within it. The emergent theme of dramatic core highlighted that there were many dramatic media related angles in which participants were considering a dramatic conversation (e.g. representation, sensation, relationality, etc.). Thus, a Dramasphere needed to be able to hold multiple developments along multiple tracks, while simultaneously extending feedback to its inhabitants. Semi-reminiscent of the recursive cycle outlined by Johnson (2013), and the
dynamospheric movement of Laban’s (1966; Ullman, 2011) choreosophical model, this type of environment is indeed complex. It is a very complicated task to hold double, triple, or an infinite number of ongoing layers of input and output while simultaneously allowing it to move freely. One participant framed this task as something that needed to remain in motion because it is an alive process. Perhaps participants were suggesting that a delicate balance is required; a holding, yet also a releasing. This mirrors divergent thinking or more precisely, DvT’s concept of dynamic equilibrium. Despite the difficulty in creating a delicate balance, it is a necessary task for DvT practitioners. As the main aim of DvT is to dimensionalize experience, the skill required to layer and weave these multiple tracks (as illustrated in Figure 5.2) is crucial.

**Dramatic Core, Dramatic Frame, and Dramaspheric Dimensionality.** Dramatic media had been discussed as the contents of a ‘dramatic conversation.’ However, after reflective examination of appropriate terminology based on the outcomes from this study, the dramatic media present in a Dramasphere are being labelled the *Dramatic Core*. An overarching concept that includes both the framing of the therapeutic environment and the therapeutic relationship is being classified and identified as the *Dramatic Frame*. Thirdly, there are combinations that are created by the mixtures within the Dramatic Frame and Dramatic Core, which produce different types of expressions, reactions, or responses in a Dramasphere. These are collectively labelled as *Dramaspheric Dimensionality*.

Drama therapy, as detailed by and Pendzik (2003, 2006, 2008, & 2013), has outlined much of the core processes of drama therapy. The Dramatic Core also attempts to replace the colloquial use of ‘the play’ by DvT practitioners. The Dramatic Core is made up of dimensions related to representation, performance, body (or sensation), relationality (and negotiation/co-creation within that relationship), and transformation (i.e. results from data analysis; sub-categories of the theme dramatic core). Particular to note, for DvT, embodiment, encounter, and transformation are fused into the Dramatic Core’s sub-categories. DvT practitioners are using dramatic media to produce a particular kind of therapeutic environment in which particular processes exist. For example, these processes could include the expressive output within the back and forth movement as highlighted by participants, but unfortunately, they have not been studied in that type of minute detail as of yet. Future studies could, and in this researcher’s opinion, should, examine these intricacies.

**Dramatic Frame.** During this study participants described the form surrounding the conversation (between therapist and client) and how it is ‘built.’ A Dramatic Frame in a Dramasphere is a more refined term to describe the intentionality needed for constructing a space that is also creative. Themes related to the framing (i.e. Creation of the therapeutic frame) were prominent in the participant’s interviews. One participant alluded to a particular kind of orientation to the construction of a frame, similar to that of Bille et al. (2015) who discussed how an atmosphere can be staged or built. Further, the Dramatic Frame becomes therapeutic by holding the bifurcation between reality and fantasy essential to its creation. The Dramatic Frame has “continuities and contrasts” which would offer “depth, texture, contour, and form” (Bille et al., 2015, p. 32-33). This branching allows a Dramatic Frame to remain open while it also effectively blurs the lines between reality and fantasy. Like Turner’s (1969) concept of liminality
and Pendzik’s (2006) dramatic reality, the dramatic framing of a Dramasphere provides the necessary conditions for dramatic media and the therapeutic relationship to mix.

The functionality of any therapeutic environment must consider the impacts from what is created in between the therapist and the client. Relationality (as a sub-theme in this research’s findings) was present in all participants’ interviews. Additionally, participants offered multiple perspectives on the interactional exchange between therapist and client; a primary theme in this research. The therapeutic relationship might be considered equivalent to De Ajuriaguerra & Angelergues’, “dialogue tonique” (tensional dialogue; 1962, p. 21). Samaritter and Payne’s (2013) label of ‘kinesthetic intersubjectivity’, similarly, requires a “highly-attuned mutual responsiveness” and holds an “in-between experience” (p.145-146). Tortora (2006) claimed that it was the “action-reaction” (p. 63) between the therapist and client that influenced the shape of the relationship and the content produced by it. Samaritter and Payne (2015) and Tortora (2006) all echo the complexity of a therapeutic relationship, yet, highly value the multiple threads in a relationship that can create varying combinations of expression. Both components of the Dramatic Core and the Dramatic Frame highlight the dimensions (and their functionality) present in a DvT session.

**Dramaspheric Dimensionality.** Dramaspheric Dimensionality can be understood as the by-product of the varying combinations throughout the action of DvT. For example, using an embodied sculpt as a way to begin an individual DvT session provides the DvT therapist with a potential set of projected material. Embodying this sculpt would also produce feelings, thoughts, or even associations related to the DvT therapist’s own personal history. It may also, similarly to the dynamosphere of Laban (1966; Ullman, 2011), present the varying combination of the mental and affectional movements that can occur while embodying a sculpt. The combinations of
these threads of client projection with therapist’s history, can produce a more complex response, or further dynamic reaction in either of the participants. Of course, if this is noticed, or not noticed, can also add another layer to this one thread. This complexity and how it evolves, transforms and further combines, is one example of Dramaspheric Dimensionality. It is an essential component of a Dramasphere; the fiber to the foundation of the therapeutic environment.

Given the complexity presented concerning the practice of DvT, this notion of combinations is vital. One participant pointed towards this when he discussed the multiple threads in a session:

We often have this experience of widening, but what we’re really doing is focusing our attention on a few very specific dimensions. Maybe we can only hold seven, five to seven. This is max at any given time. So ok, I’m going to note of what’s happening in my body. I’m going to take note of proximity and space, shape, role, content…

One could consider that the dimensions within a Dramasphere entangle, mix, or even stack to form more complex, or more dimensional expressions. As a Dramasphere allows for this expansion of a space, the practice of DvT could exist and develop here as well.

The underlying layers that create Dramaspheric Dimensionality in a Dramasphere might be comparable to the microscopic strands of energy that create the particles or shapes in the universe (String Theory; Greene, 2005). The dimensions of each component will impact the experience. Participants in this study discussed how shaping the dramatic media and the therapeutic frame impacted a DvT session. For example, if a DvT therapist is working in a group setting with in-patient adults who have been labelled with psychiatric disorders, they might frame the entrance to their DvT group practice to match the rules that no physical touch is
permitted as prescribed by the hospital. This type of framing would impact and influence the group’s experience of each other. The particular way in which a frame is constructed is also under the influence of the synergy created by the inhabitants of that environment. Thus, the DvT therapist, in this case, would be working to co-create frames within frames. The multiple frames and how they are stacked, intermingled, or even organized give opportunities to group members to consider how they might create the dramasphere despite of and in addition to this prescription from the hospital. What might be their experience? How would this differ than in other settings in the hospital? These combinations, and layers offer the opportunity for group members to explore the nuances of their experience. The concept of a Dramasphere permits a theoretical frame to hold this unpacking. In fact, this is an aim of DvT: to dimensionalize one’s experience.

Similar to Honig’s (2017) argument related to the movement of spaces in therapeutic sessions, the layers or dimensions within a DvT session also “expand”, “contract”, and “shift” (p. 26). Di Paolo et al. (2018) highlighted the “interconnected networks” (p. 21) that exist in an action driven relationship. Furthering, the example from above, the group members might alter how they enact a scene where a doctor is giving medication within the frame of no physical touch. The DvT therapist might employ different combinations of how a doctor might come closer to a patient, or how there was a miraculous tool that allowed them to transplant medication within a patient without their knowledge. The DvT therapist would be adjusting and shifting the representation of the scene to allow for the particular rules regarding touch. The offering here, is full of potential Dramatic Dimensionality. The possibility that the group members might have a chance to express their experience or even be surprised at their peers’ reactions to the secret medicine implantation adds to the possibility that their experience might begin to transform, or dimensionalize. The stacking and stretching of the variables in the overall experience, here,
highlights that the combinations and variations within the Dramatic Core, and the Dramatic Frame can work to produce opportunities for Dramaspheric Dimensionality.

**Dramasphere In Motion**

Difficult to capture with the written word, a Dramasphere can been seen below in an embedded video created by this researcher by using a free online platform’s (Giphy; Sanderick, 2019) initial graphic and animating it through iMovie software. Readers are encouraged to click on Figure 5.3 below to view a visual representation of Dramasphere in motion¹.

![Figure 5.3: Video: Dramasphere in Motion](image)

**Applications for the Concept of the Dramasphere**

The application of the concept of Dramasphere is principally enveloped in the modeling of curiosity in one’s personal, clinical, educational practice. Knapp et al. (2017) noted the essentiality for self-awareness in therapists. They suggested that this self-awareness could aid in

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¹ The use of an Adobe Acrobat reader versus other programs is more likely to facilitate the video’s playback.
the overall comprehension of the process of the therapy that therapists are conducting. Having a concept that unites the basis of DvT theory would allow for more guided reflection into one’s practice. Akin to Pendzik’s (2003) 6 Keys Assessment, a Dramasphere offers resting points for a therapist to pause and reflect. For example, if a student were to wonder about their interaction with a client, an educator, or supervisor, could help them scaffold their experience through the theory of the Dramasphere. Did the student feel that they had created a therapeutic environment, if yes, then what would they consider as components that aided this creation? An example of a hypothetical decision tree can be viewed in Figure 5.4 below. This framework of a Dramasphere suggests an attempt towards future clarity and accuracy within DvT practice, and opportunities for exploration and enrichment in the overall pedagogy of DvT.

Figure 5.4: Dramasphere: Decision Tree

From ‘The Play’ to Dramasphere

Participants noted that they recognized some of their clients’ abilities because of the scope and dimensions of the interactions. The concept of Dramasphere posits that DvT practitioners would benefit from dimensional scaffolding to build their interventions for clinical
work. In the field of play studies (Bateson, 1972; Ellis, 1973; Huzinga, 1955; Sutton-Smith, 1997), many researchers have contemplated and studied the who, what, where, when, why, and how questions concerning the phenomenon of play (Capurso & Pazzagli, 2016; Cordoni & Palagi, 2016; Kuba, Gutnick, & Burghardt, 2014; Magerko et al., 2010; Pelligrini, 2009), yet much of the ambiguity of it remains (Sutton-Smith, 1997). Taking guidance from terminology such as Focault’s (1986) heterotopia (as discussed by Honig, 2017), and Laban’s (1966; Ullman, 2011) choreosophical model (as discussed by Salazar Sutil, 2012), a comprehensive concept would provide DvT practitioners the ability to refer to elusive processes whilst expanding on them. Rather than continuing to use the term ‘the play’ to capture their practice, a Dramasphere provides DvT practitioners a necessary concept that can encompass the depth of their practice.

**Dramaspheric Patterns**

The components of a Dramasphere could provide trainees with guidance and reference points for their clinical development. Continuing to employ terms that are strictly in the lexicon of DvT has been, in this researcher’s opinion, far too alienating of the practice. Given the multiple threads within a Dramasphere, DvT practitioners might be able to view them as “patterns [that] provide perspectives on client’s strengths, resources, and challenges” (Pénzes et al., 2018, p. 11). With these patterns, DvT practitioners would have the ability to begin to contemplate their interactions in a Dramasphere and begin to bring conscious effort to the designing of their therapeutic environments with clients. Perhaps if DvT practitioners were to use Dramasphere to inform their practice, the potential for clinicians to map their sessions might emerge. DvT Practitioners might be inspired by the seminal work of Laban’s (1966) notational style or other derivatives of body-based knowing (e.g. Di Paolo et al., 2018; Tortora, 2006).
Practically speaking, through a reflective process, a DvT practitioner could also become aware of the underlying threads potentially hidden in their therapeutic sessions. Practitioners could isolate different dimensions of the Dramatic Core (e.g. Performance) and begin to note where they observe this dimension present, and even what kind of performative qualities are present. For example, a supervisor could have their supervisee review their DvT session in using the concept Dramasphere (and its components) to reflect on their work. The supervisee might review how they set the frame of the session (Dramatic Frame) and what dimensions combined to create the non-linear role play and scenes that developed (Dramatic Core). In particular, it would be imperative for this supervisee, with help of their supervisor, to remain curious as they reflect on their session. What might have been the reasoning they played the role of mother in that particular way? Can they, in the here and now with their supervisor (as suggested by Gil & Rubin, 2005 and Miller et al., 2015), take on the role again and allow themselves more time to connect to how it might feel in their body? Can they wonder to what the expression of the role in this way, might mean to their client? These questions are merely examples of what the concept of Dramasphere provides. The Dramasphere gives conceptual scaffolding for practitioners to unpack the dimensionality in their work to potentially better improve their skillset, or even return to a future session with more dimensionality lens present in service of their client(s). This unpacking can be considered akin to the rehearsal before the live performance.

While a Dramasphere does not provide the necessary components to know exactly what is happening in a session, the term does allow for some structuring and fostering of curiosity. It promotes a quality of divergent thinking, a skill that could be listed amongst the North American Drama Therapy Association’s (NADTA) future movement towards competencies for drama therapists. Despite the inability of this study to connect the concept of Dramasphere to the larger
drama therapy field, divergent thinking as a skill might be a window of opportunity to explore this researcher’s initially asked sub-question (i.e. Could any of the dimensions of a dramatic conversation be transferable to other drama therapy processes). Future studies may offer a further glimpse into this potential transferability.

Limitations

The primary limitations of this study are situated in the extensive knowledge base of this researcher of DvT. Having years of personal experience in DvT both as a playor and player and being an international teacher of the method, ideas about the composition of DvT have been forming for years. The lack of diversity in the sample of participants is another limitation of this study. Using only experts in the DvT field limited the diversity across experience that could have been found in the participants. Additionally, due to the small amount of DvT training Institute graduates to choose from, all participants were personally known to this researcher (for more information about the DvT training Institute, readers are encouraged to go to their website www.developmentaltransformations.com). These relationships undoubtedly informed the participants answers as they would have held prior knowledge to this researcher’s view on the topics within the study. Furthermore, the limited number of graduates produced by the DvT Institute combined with the commitment and access to resources required to pursue post-graduate training in the first place, highlight areas of systematic oppression indisputably present in this academic setting. This oppression limits the voices that were able to be represented within the confines of this study.

An important limitation to this study was this researcher’s personal biases concerning therapy, drama therapy, and her overall understanding of the DvT practice. These are no doubt informed by her own experiences in life and in the DvT and drama therapy community. As an
advocate for the use of DvT as a method of drama therapy, this researcher demonstrates bias to its efficacy as a therapy and its relative importance as a topic of study. Additionally, as the only person conducting the interviews and any follow-up questions, this was no doubt an area of limitation for the results of this study. The interpretation of the data was viewed through the lenses of this researcher, which, despite having a peer reviewer, inevitably influenced the outcomes.

Lastly, the expansiveness of the Dramasphere and the theory behind the Dramasphere can be viewed as a limitation to this theoretical creation. Given that it is a theory with its roots in dimensionality, this is not surprising for this researcher, however, it does present that some difficulties in capturing the nuances in a precise manner. Future studies may help to distil the functionality of components of a Dramasphere (e.g. Dramatic Core, Dramatic Frame, and, Dramatic Dimensionality) and their interplay in a Dramasphere. In the interim, the concept of a Dramasphere offers a bridge for the key aspects of DvT theory with its practice.

**Future Research**

Clearly, Developmental Transformations (DvT) has evolved as a theoretical model and practice over the 38 years of its existence. This study was a contribution in the future evolution of DvT. Future studies would benefit from a more diverse sampling of participants and on a larger scale. Considering that a Dramasphere is presented as a constructed DvT therapeutic environment, a detailed inquiry into this construction amongst DvT practitioners would be applicable. A research study, for example, that uses a multi-case study design in which a supervision group, or even a dyad, review the case material through the lens of the concept of Dramasphere might promote this detailed inquiry. Ultimately, it is this researcher’s hope that with the addition of the concept of a Dramasphere, the theory concerning the playspace (and
other foundational concepts) and dimensionality could be more intricately explored and expanded upon in the overall DvT theory.

The next steps for the theory of the Dramasphere may include a follow up study with the DvT community in which the theory of Dramasphere could be applied to clinical practice. For example, a post-clinical session review using the theory of Dramasphere might promote insight or changes for future sessions. A study where a comparison between the use of the foundational DvT language and the Dramasphere to describe a DvT session might also be a worthy undertaking. The comparison of the application of the two differing languages could potentially highlight if there is anything lost or added. Furthermore, in studying the application to clinical practice, following a similar design to the current study would be an option, however, some necessary additions (such as member-checking and diversification of the sample) would be necessary. Do practitioners find the terminology helpful to their practice? Is it a burden? Does it accurately reflect DvT theory in practice? Feniger-Schaal and Orkibi (2019) called for an “integrated theory [that could] generate unified and robust research findings” (p. 11) and the concept of Dramasphere could offer this opportunity especially if after future theory development research could be focused towards the application of Dramasphere in DvT interventions.

In the future, a study to consider the Dramasphere terminology as teaching tool would also be beneficial. Does the terminology capture what this researcher imagines it might? Do students find it beneficial to guide their learning or training in DvT? There are many possibilities in which this research can continue to unfold; it remains imperative, however, to produce research through the lens of co-construction, collaboration, and conversation. This will ultimately birth solid theoretical shared language that simultaneously reflects DvT.
Conclusion

This constructivist grounded theory study began as a way to explore, develop, and refine comprehensive terminology that might bridge theory with the practice of Developmental Transformations (DvT). Reflective examination led to the development of a new conceptual theory as well. A Dramasphere emerged as a DvT therapeutic environment that more accurately integrates the practice-based terminology of DvT and connects with two salient factors of transformation: dimensionality and movement. Its complexity also offers a richness to the method. The infinite number of combinations for creating a therapeutic environment within the Dramasphere are theoretically the same as an incredible kaleidoscopic image. Further, the DvT therapeutic relationship and all its interwoven layers are represented, embraced, and enlivened within the concept of a Dramasphere. Future use of a Dramasphere’s constructs and language will provide much needed steps towards expansiveness in clinical practice, research, and education. Burns (1972) offers a closing frame for this study:

For drama is not a mirror of action. It is a composition. In composing words, gestures, and deeds to form a play, dramatist and performers operate within the constraints (or generate drama according to the grammar) of...convention. Together the constraints amount to a code of rules for the transmission of specific beliefs, attitudes and feelings in terms of organized social behavior (p.33)

As such, it can be conceptualized that a Dramasphere allows for each DvT session to be its own work of dramatic art; creating a Dramaspheric composition (Figure 5.5).

Figure 5.5: Dramaspheric Composition
APPENDIX A

Institutional Review Board

DATE: 2/6/19

To: Renee Pitre

From: Robyn Cruz and Ulas Kaplan, Co-Chairs, Lesley IRB

RE:  **IRB Number: 18/19-032**

The application for the research project, “Conceptualizing a Dramatic Conversation” provides a detailed description of the recruitment of participants, the method of the proposed research, the protection of participants' identities and the confidentiality of the data collected. The consent form is sufficient to ensure voluntary participation in the study and contains the appropriate contact information for the researcher and the IRB.

*You must remove the email addresses of the IRB Co-Chairs from the consent form before using it as the IRB no longer allows it.*

This application is approved for one calendar year from the date of approval.

You may conduct this project.

**Date of approval of application: 2/6/19**

Investigators shall immediately suspend an inquiry if they observe an adverse change in the health or behavior of a subject that may be attributable to the research. They shall promptly report the circumstances to the IRB. They shall not resume the use of human subjects without the approval of the IRB.
APPENDIX B

INFORMED CONSENT

Lesley University
29 Everett St., Cambridge, MA 02138

Research Informed Consent
You are invited to participate in the research project titled “Conceptualizing a dramatic conversation”. The intent of this research study is to further explore the terminology of a ‘dramatic conversation’ and uncover definitions pertaining to its composition and its dimensionality. Creating language for the drama therapeutic process is essential for the continued development of the drama therapy field.

Your participation will entail attending an up to 2-hour in person initial interview (or via Zoom) where you will be asked for your impressions and feedback on the language provided regarding a dramatic conversation. There may be further interviews throughout the research study as data is collected and analyzed. The interview(s) will be videotaped only for the purpose of recording the conversation. Video recordings will not be used in the presentation of results.

In addition
- You are free to choose not to participate in the research and to discontinue your participation in the research at any time.
- Identifying details will be kept confidential by the researcher. Data collected will be coded with a pseudonym, the participant’s identity will never be revealed by the researcher, and only the researcher will have access to the data collected.
- Any and all of your questions will be answered at any time and you are free to consult with anyone (i.e., friend, family) about your decision to participate in the research and/or to discontinue your participation.
- Participation in this research poses minimal risk to the participants. The probability and magnitude of harm or discomfort anticipated in the research are no greater in and of themselves than those ordinarily encountered in daily life.
- If any problem in connection to the research arises, you can contact the researcher Renée Pitre at (203) 581-0753 and by email at rpitre@lesley.edu or Lesley University sponsoring faculty, Michele Forinash at michele.forinash@lesley.edu.
- The researcher may present the outcomes of this study for academic purposes (i.e., articles, teaching, conference presentations, supervision etc.)

My agreement to participate has been given of my own free will and that I understand all of the stated above. In addition, I will receive a copy of this consent form.

_________________________________________ __________________________
Participant’s signature Date Researcher’s signature Date

There is a Standing Committee for Human Subjects in Research at Lesley University to which complaints or problems concerning any research project may, and should, be reported if they arise. Contact the Committee Chairpersons at irb@lesley.edu.
**APPENDIX C**

GLOSSARY PROVIDED TO PARTICIPANTS

**Definition of Terms**

*Dimension*: A layer or level of conversational material within a dramatic conversation. Typically would be considered a piece or element of communication either in, about to be in, or has already been in a dramatic conversation.

*Dramatic medium*: The form, or combinations of forms, that carry the drama material (i.e. role, metaphor, sound, body, etc.) within a dramatic conversation.

*Dramatic Conversation*: Formed from the definition of ‘dramatic’ and ‘conversation,’ a working definition could be thought of as: A process of turning to, turning with, delving into (something) with (someone) which has a quality of an activity, or event, that could be unexpected, emotional, or exciting. An example of a dramatic conversation would include a combination of elements of relationality, process, and the dramatic medium.

Figure 1: A dramatic conversation with assumed dimensionality surrounding it
Illustration 1: Trying to capture
Illustration 2: An open system
Illustration 3: One angle
Illustration 4: Focal point
Illustration 5: Further focal
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