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Forming and Performing Online Playback Theatre for Drama Therapy Students and Faculty

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Forming and Performing Online Playback Theatre

for Drama Therapy Students and Faculty

Capstone Thesis

Lesley University

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Abstract

As a growing number of university students complete school online, either by choice, or due to the unpredictability and severity of the Covid-19 pandemic, new issues have arisen regarding the structures in place to assist students in developing peer support. Within the drama therapy graduate field, students studying online may lack creative ways to express and connect with others in the virtual classroom. Thus, this community engagement project was designed to offer drama therapy students studying at Lesley University opportunities to learn, perform, and watch playback theatre, with the goal of increasing peer engagement, community connection, and clinical insight. Based on student reflections during the event, preliminary evidence suggests that students who engaged in the playback theatre performance felt a greater sense of connection to peers after attending. Implications for further research suggest examining how playback theatre may influence and strengthen students' empathy and social connection to one another, potentially supporting students' engagement in course curriculum and overall psychological experience attending school online.

Keywords: Playback theatre, drama therapy, online learning, graduate school, storytelling, performance, mental health counseling.

Forming and Performing Online Playback Theatre for Drama Therapy Students and Faculty

Introduction

It is 2009 and I stand on stage in front of dozens of aging adults who live in my small suburban town. I am 11-years-old and have only recently learned playback theatre from my mother. An elder with white hair shares a story of innocent childhood trickery and mischief. As the audience watches, I spontaneously improvise an enactment of the teller's story by skipping, rolling, and sneaking across the stage. The audience bursts into laughter, and the teller tears up. I conclude my enactment and wait for the teller to share their experience watching their story played back. But even before they speak, I innately feel as though the teller sees me as a mirror reflecting back their emotions and the playback theatre enactment as a portal to their memories. Since then, I have been called to the playback theatre stage time and time again, seeking to act as a mirror and portal, bringing teller's stories back to life.

Playback theatre is a method of unscripted, improvisational theatre that uses real-life stories from audience members to inspire embodied reenactments by trained actors onstage (Bird, 2017). The goal of playback theatre is for actors to express a teller's emotions authentically and bridge empathy among audience members (Bird, 2017). Throughout the Covid-19 pandemic, however, many playback theatre troupes have had to adapt how they create community engagement in a playback theatre rehearsal and performance. Playback theatre troupes have had to develop proficiency in online video platforms, adapt playback theatre forms, and consider how to cultivate a positive community environment in the virtual realm (Salas, 2021).

Not only has the Covid-19 pandemic affected live, in-person performance art, but it has also impacted non-essential businesses and schools. Early in the pandemic, many transitioned

completely virtual, and some have continued remotely even as the pandemic persists (Kardam et al., 2021). On the educational level, although online learning brings more flexibility to students' academic lives, it impacts their level of engagement with professors and peers (Coman et al., 2020). At Lesley University, in Cambridge, Massachusetts, graduate students have taken most of their classes online since the beginning of the pandemic in March 2020. As a master's student studying Mental Health Counseling & Drama Therapy at Lesley University, I have experienced firsthand the shift from in-person classes in early 2020, to almost only virtual classes through spring semester of 2022. Although studying online has offered me flexibility in my own schedule, as well as the opportunity to avoid contracting Covid-19, I have missed the opportunity for easeful collaboration and connection with peers in my program.

This unwelcome and necessary transition to a more virtual graduate school experience has presented an opportunity for me as a playback theatre artist and drama therapy graduate student. Having practiced playback theatre for fourteen years, and taught playback theatre to children and teenagers for six years, I have wanted to integrate playback theatre into my drama therapy learning and practice. While playback theatre uses many of the same basic principles found in drama therapy practices, there still is a lack of awareness of the value of integrating playback theatre in drama therapy spaces (Keisari et al., 2020a; Pendzik, 2006) and literature on playback theatre's use in university settings (Fox & Leeder, 2018; Weinstock-Wynters, 1996). However, over the pandemic I wondered if playback theatre may enhance students' peer-to-peer connection during this period of predominantly virtual learning through mutual storytelling and witnessing in the playback theatre performance ritual. Also, as a secondary aspect, I sought to explore if students found motivation to join this project because of the similarities between

playback theatre and drama therapy practices and the ways in which playback theatre can influence their clinical perspective and methodology moving forward.

In considering those questions, I proposed a community engagement project to my thesis advisor involving training and performing playback theatre with drama therapy students at Lesley University. I created a playback theatre practice troupe with six other drama therapy student members. In December, we held an end of the semester performance online for students to share personal stories. I facilitated and conducted the actors in playback theatre for an audience of four drama therapy professors, and roughly 20 drama therapy students.

Within this thesis I will discuss my methodological approach to building the practice troupe, teaching playback theatre to members, planning and publicizing the performance, and reflecting on my own personal experience of bringing playback theatre into the drama therapy graduate school virtual space. I will critically examine current research on playback theatre, drama therapy, and the issues that face university students schooling online. I further seek to develop an understanding of how my research is built upon and influences previous scholarship within these fields of study. I will additionally share my impressions of the students' experiences participating as actors and audience members and discuss how playback theatre may continue to be implemented in university settings and drama therapy programs moving forward.

Literature Review

University Students' Experience with Remote Learning in the Pandemic

Over the past decade, and particularly during the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic, researchers have more readily examined the opinions and experiences of on-campus university students attending school online. For many students studying remotely, they experience further freedom and convenience in their schooling since there are less geographical barriers to

attending class in-person (Glover & Lewis, 2012). Additionally, professors indicate that online

learning provides more flexibility, and students feel as though studying online saves more time

than attending classes in-person (Nambiar, 2020). Some students have felt increased self-

motivation and independence by studying online because the course materials often include self-

guided projects (Glover & Lewis, 2012; Kardam et al., 2021). Overall, online learning has

provided educators with diverse manners of conducting schooling, and it allows students to have

new opportunities to complete university degrees.

However, students' and professors' experiences of studying online have not been solely

positive. Many authors have found that students' academic experiences varied greatly in online

learning, and that peer-to-peer relatedness was significantly impacted by professors' design and

implementation of the course material in online classes (Coman et al., 2020; Fabriz et al., 2021;

Kardam et al., 2021; Nambiar, 2020). In a Romanian study of 762 university students,

researchers found that technological problems and educators' technological proficiency played

primary roles in student experiences with remote learning (Coman et al., 2020). Additionally,

multiple authors found that professors must have technological proficiency to make the overall

experience for students more easeful, engaging, and collaborative (Coman et al., 2020; Fabriz et

al., 2021; Glover & Lewis, 2012; Kardam et al., 2021; Nambiar, 2020). Thus, instructors may

need specialized training on conducting engaging online courses, if they have primarily taught

in-person (Glover & Lewis, 2012; Kardam el al., 2021; Pilgrim et al., 2020).

Beyond technological issues, various authors outline that students may experience

isolation from peers and professors while studying online and less academic motivation (Coman

et al., 2020; Kardam et al., 2021; Nambiar, 2020). For example, in an article outlining drama

therapy students' experience studying via an online low-residency program at Lesley University,

the authors note that students can often feel like their professors are unapproachable, and professors must make themselves available virtually so that students can communicate with them more readily (Pilgrim et al., 2020). Not only are students impacted in their relationship to professors, but also with their connection to peers. Kardam et al. (2021) describe that students may feel distanced from peers because there are less informal opportunities for students to receive support from peers academically. On an emotional level, online learning may result in students having fewer opportunities to receive "venting support" from peers because they do not feel comfortable sharing frustrations with acquaintances online (Kardam et al., 2021, p. 5). Kardam et al. (2021) also detail individual students' experiences with peers studying online and found that most college students responded that they missed face-to-face collaboration with students, and that it was difficult to work with peers in class when some students were participating off-screen. Wood et al. (2020) describe that students struggle with similar difficulties in a group drama therapy course because of the "lack of opportunities for non-verbal language in the online encounter negatively affected group and facilitator attunement" (p. 159). Additionally, in a study of 70 teachers and 407 students' experiences with online learning during the Covid-19 pandemic in Bangalore, India, the authors found "that face- to -face learning was perceived more positively than online learning in terms of social presence, interaction, satisfaction and overall quality" (Nambiar, 2020, p. 791).

Even though there appears to be a consensus that online learning significantly impacts students' social connection with peers, research on this topic found inconclusive evidence to suggest that students' academic performance was impacted by online learning (Coman et al., 2020; Fabriz et al., 2021; Glover & Lewis, 2012; Kardam et al., 2021). Thus, it is difficult to understand the lasting impact of peer relatedness on students' academic performance and

emotional health (Coman et al., 2020; Kardam et al., 2021). Overall, while it is difficult to identify consistent opinions regarding online schooling, much of the current research postulates that in-person learning provides natural and simpler opportunities for students to connect with one another both academically and emotionally (Coman et al., 2020; Nambiar, 2020; Wood et al., 2020). The question then becomes, how do educators make online learning environments easeful and connective for students? So far, alternative methods for collaboration have been developed in online learning, such as blog-posting and breakout sessions in Zoom to combat students' feelings of isolation (Fabriz et al., 2021; Kardam et al., 2021).

Nevertheless, playback theatre methods may enhance students' peer relatedness in online school settings. Outside of the classroom context, playback theatre methods have transferred well to the virtual environment, as playback theatre troupes began teaching and performing playback theatre online during the Covid-19 pandemic (Salas, 2021). However, there is a current lack of research on the benefits of playback theatre with students at the university level, and that limited research examines the use of playback theatre in tandem with psychodrama, theatre of the oppressed, and autobiographical theatre (Fox & Leeder, 2018; Weinstock-Wynters, 1996). Thus, in that research, it is difficult to identify the benefits of playback theatre independently from those other methods. Therefore, further research on the influence of playback theatre techniques on virtual schooling may help with our understanding and development of strategies for engaging and supporting students studying online.

The Playback Theatre and Drama Therapy Connection

Playback theatre and drama therapy share common origins as both methods originate in part from psychodrama (Emunah, 1994; Salas, 2009). In psychodrama, a person (called the protagonist) acts-out their "life drama" with the help of a trained facilitator (called the director)

and other participants who act as other characters (called auxiliary egos) and observers (called witnesses) (Emunah, 1996, p. 18). The goal of psychodrama is to have the protagonist externalize their psyche through role-play and enactment to help adapt their behaviors and beliefs, and prepare them for real life situations (Emunah, 1996). Jacob Moreno (1972), the founder of psychodrama, states that within psychodrama, theatrical embodiment and enactment allows protagonists to resolve internal conflicts. Likewise, drama therapy utilizes theatrical methods to strengthen self-expression (Emunah, 1994). Role play and expanding role repertoire are two key drama therapy concepts that tie to psychodramatic philosophy (Emunah, 1994).

Similarly, Jonathan Fox and Jo Salas, the co-founders of playback theatre, developed playback theatre with psychodramatic techniques in mind. Spontaneity, improvisation, role-playing, empathy, real-life story telling, and community engagement are all key aspects of both playback theatre and the psychodramatic processes (Salas, 2009). Through storytelling and witnessing the actors onstage, audience members can see their stories reenacted and gain insight into their experiences and connections to other audience members (Salas, 2013). However, unlike psychodrama, in playback theatre, trained actors play back a teller's story, rather than having the teller participate in the enactment as the protagonist in psychodrama (Emunah, 1994, p. 234). Additionally, Salas (2009) explains that although playback theatre is *therapeutic*, it "is not primarily a therapy" (p. 445). Although many playback theatre practitioners are also psychotherapists, drama therapists, and creative arts therapists, playback theatre is most widely used in both public spaces and private organizations to help bridge community connection through storytelling and witnessing actors onstage (Salas, 2013). Unlike both psychodrama and playback theatre, drama therapy is not limited to expression of real-life stories, and instead allows for more improvisation and fictionalization in the therapeutic space (Emunah, 1994).

Thus, within a drama therapy session, a client may enact a multitude of scenes, some having no tie to reality or characters from real life (Emunah, 1994). In general, drama therapy and playback theatre have many similar foundational theories and practices stemming from a common origin in psychodrama. As a result, although both practices have differences, drama therapists may find that they connect with playback theatre practices and methodologies by conceptualizing playback theatre from the framework of their drama therapy practice.

Ritual

Drama therapy and playback theatre practices include a theatrical *ritual*, or process, that structures and guides the therapy or performance (Emunah, 1994; Salas, 2021). Within playback theatre, the goal of maintaining a ritual in performance is to create a "recognizable arc" of the show "that serves to hold and weave together the unpredictable stories themselves" (Salas, 2021, p. ii). Through this process, the facilitator— or "conductor"— creates an inviting environment that "helps set up the conditions for openness and generosity to risk sharing an intimate story" (Bird, 2017, p. 33). The role of conductor can be described in two metaphors. The playback theatre conductor acts much like an orchestral conductor of a group of performers, guiding them in their action onstage (Salas, 2013). The name also applies to the metaphor of an energy conductor that channels electricity between different networks (Salas, 2013). The playback theatre conductor is known to create connection between the actors and audience with the intention to create opportunity for creative exploration together through collecting teller's stories and directing actors by deciding what improvisational form the actors will use for the enactment (Salas, 2013). Playback theatre actors and musicians hold an equally challenging role in the playback theatre space. "The work of the actor in playback theatre is largely, if not entirely, improvisational… Acting in playback theatre requires creativity, imagination, expressiveness,

but most especially, listening and a sense of story" (Rosin et al., 2021, p. 14). The playback

theatre musician, onstage with actors, works simultaneously with the actors to support the actor's

creativity, and often guides the enactment through its natural arc including the beginning, climax,

and end (Rosin et al., 2021). Together, the playback theatre team works together to express the

teller's story onstage, with the hope of bridging audience members with both similarities and

differences in beliefs towards empathetic understanding and community building (Bird, 2017;

Salas, 2021). Overall, the playback theatre ritual, including the performer's roles, largely

influences the arc of the performance and the structure of storytelling and enacting.

Despite ritual being a key feature of both the playback theatre container and the drama

therapy process, it is important to conceptualize the word 'ritual' in historical and ethnocentric

contexts to better understand the implications of using that word to describe playback theatre and

drama therapy practices. Capitman (2021) describes that many creative arts therapies, including

drama therapy, use words like 'shaman' and 'ritual' to describe the drama therapy session and

the drama therapists' role in that container. "This kind of comparison is made without credit to

any specific practitioners or peoples and therefore lacks cultural humility" (Capitman, 2021, p.

15). For example, Salas (2009) describes that playback theatre "combine[s] aspects of tribal

ritual" (p. 445). Additionally, Snow (2009) writes, "this realm of healing through dramatic ritual,

which for millennia had been owned by shamanic practitioners, was being reclaimed,

reconstructed and reconstituted by contemporary drama therapists" (Snow, 2009, p. 120).

Language such as "owned," "reclaimed" and "reconstituted" in this context undermines

systematic oppression through White colonialism and anthropological studies, that stole diverse

indigenous practices of individuals in different tribes and communities, to be misappropriated in

oppressive, neocolonialist cultures today (Napoli, 2019; Owen, 2008; Reed, 2018).

Although ritual can be understood as a mechanism to create safety in the drama therapy and playback theatre spaces, it may not take into consideration all clients' perspectives and experiences (Salas, 2009). When the concept of ritual itself is being misappropriated by therapeutic practitioners in drama therapy and playback theatre, it cannot meet its own expectations to create safety, support, connection, and healing for everyone included. It is important to transparently discuss the historical implications of using the broad and appropriated terms of 'ritual' and 'shamanism' within drama therapy and playback theatre in considering the benefits or harm these practices may induce for specific clients and participants. In general, playback theatre and drama therapy ritual create structure for exploration to take place. However, ritual alone should not be superficially conceptualized, and instead, practitioners of both practices should prioritize "reexamining the roots of drama therapy" and playback theatre to "be a form of social justice" (Capitman, 2021, p. 16).

Playback Theatre to Bridge Community

Research in the playback theatre field is limited to specific subsets of populations in the research. For example, there have been a multitude of articles on how playback theatre supports communities in countries who are experiencing social and political unrest (Barolsky, 2021; Dennis, 2008; Meer, 2007; Ramos, 2014), and on healing communities who have experienced the trauma of natural disasters and other losses (Munjuluri et al., 2020; Smigelsky & Neimeyer, 2018). Some authors have found that playback theatre is an effective tool for assisting aging adults with improved mental health and community engagement, but this research has struggled with producing generalizability (Keisari et al., 2018; Keisari et al., 2020a; Keisari et al., 2020b). Other articles have written about how playback theatre can be used in psychotherapeutic environments and with people who have mental health conditions who experience stigmatization

because of their diagnosis (Kowalsky et al., 2019; Faigin & Stein, 2015; Moran & Alon, 2011; Yotis et al., 2017). Additionally, there have been several articles written on how playback theatre can be used with young people in middle and high school facing diverse issues (Bornmann & Crossman, 2011; Jordann & Coetzee, 2017; Reagan, 2015; Wilson, 2011). Overall, many articles illustrate the social and psychological advantages of playback theatre.

For example, Keisari et al. (2020) discuss the effectiveness of a 12-week playback theatre group, using the life-review method to tell real-life stories, with aging adults (ranging 63-96 years old) to increase mental wellness. The study included aging adults from four Adult Day Centers (ADCs) in Israel and was a randomized controlled trial. Compared to the control group who had reported stable and increased depression, the participants in the experimental group experienced multiple social and psychological benefits from completing the program (Keisari et al., 2020a). Similarly, in another article by Keisari et al. (2020b), the authors found that aging adults in three ADCs in Israel experienced improved social and creative engagement, and personal growth. The act of participating in these multi-weeklong projects offered participants opportunities to engage with their community, share stories, and bridge connections (Keisari et al., 2020a; Keisari et al., 2020b). Both articles corroborate that playback theatre methods may help participants increase their mood and decrease the negative effects of mental health issues overall, specifically by offering opportunities for elders to socialize and share about their experiences with others. Although these recent 2020 studies are limited in their sample size, their findings are encouraging to the continued research development of playback theatre to benefit mental health of participants through community cohesion efforts.

Playback theatre has also been used to support community engagement and psychological recovery of audience members who experience distressing situations. Munjuluri et al. (2020)

discuss how natural disasters can cause lasting psychological distress to those who were exposed to the event. The authors studied the brain imaging of thirteen volunteer participants who were impacted by Hurricane Harvey in Texas. Participants completed self-assessments and brain imaging before and after participating in four playback theatre performances (Munjuluri et al., 2020). Their levels of anxiety, depression, and post-traumatic stress were assessed, and the authors found that participants' mood improved in these areas after their participation in playback theatre (Munjuluri et al., 2020). The authors made no claims that this study proved playback theatre's effectiveness with this population, since it had a relatively small sample size (Munjuluri et al., 2020). Instead, they introduced the concept that playback theatre could benefit those who have experienced natural disaster, and that it is a relatively low-cost method for helping people receive emotional support in a community and creative environment (Munjuluri et al., 2020). Similarly, when playback theatre was introduced to citizens of Cuba, actors felt a sense of community and "personal rebellion" against the government who censored free speech (Meer, 2007, p. 117). Playback theatre offered opportunities for Cuban performers and audience members to express their frustrations with the current politics and reclaim their stories and personal agency in a discrete way (Meer, 2017). Beyond this example, Dennis (2008) describes the playback theatre forum as a "space for reflection and a collaborative production of culture" (p. 193). In Palestine, Ramos (2014) details a group of playback theatre artists who travel across the country and offer the people of Palestine opportunities to reflect on their culture and restrictions imposed on them by the government. Often during this process of sharing and enacting during the playback theatre performance, audience members begin to relate to one another and find the commonality in their experiences of hardship (Ramos, 2014).

In considering the current climate of the Lesley University graduate school programs,

many (if not most) students are currently attending classes virtually, in part, due to the ongoing

and threatening nature of the Covid-19 pandemic. Although previous research has not addressed

how playback theatre can aid students during the Covid-19 pandemic, adjacent research supports

the use of playback theatre as a method to strengthen community connection and bolster

emotional health. There is a need for further research to outline how students' psychological and

social experiences have been disrupted by the Covid-19 pandemic and to determine whether

there is the potential of using playback theatre to help address common experiences among

students.

Playback Theatre Online

Many playback theatre troupes from around the world have adapted from almost

exclusively public, in-person playback theatre events to virtual rehearsals and performances

(Salas, 2021). A newfound freedom has emerged during this evolutionary switch to live online

performing (typically on Zoom), in that it allows anyone with an internet connection to join a

show no matter where they are in the world (Salas, 2021). This process has made performing

playback theatre more adaptable and allowed for new fans to join the playback theatre

community. Also, because of this shift, playback theatre troupes have reduced yearly travel and

space rental expenses and found ways to network and learn from other playback theatre artists

online at shows, virtual workshops, and conferences (Salas, 2021). However, although there are

new advantages to online playback theatre, there are also issues that arise with virtual

performance space. For example, although performers can offer technological support to viewers

during the online show, there often still lacks a sense of cohesiveness and simplicity like in an in-

person performance (Salas, 2021). Beyond the audience, actors face difficulties performing

online in that they can no longer relate to one another three-dimensionally. The screen forces

everyone into a two-dimensional perspective, making it significantly more complex for actors to

act with one another seamlessly (Salas, 2021).

Because of the complexities of performing online, playback theatre practitioners began

developing resources to share within the community on manners to conduct playback theatre

online. Ellinger and Ellinger (2020) and Rosin et al. (2021) created written guides to conducting

playback theatre online. These materials have helped troupes navigate the complexities of

delivering playback theatre to audiences in appropriate and authentic ways. Early in the Covid-

19 pandemic, Playback North America (2020) organized an online video library for its members.

The video library offered step-by-step instructions and video illustrations of modifying playback

theatre forms to suit the Zoom format. Lastly, playback theatre artists strengthened their use of

social networking online to connect with other playback theatre artists around the world. On

Facebook, the Playback Theatre Around the World (2015) and Zooming Playback Theatre

(2020) digital groups allowed for practitioners to share resources and publicize playback theatre

performances and workshops online with ease. Overall, playback theatre practitioners welcomed

innovation and adaptability during the Covid-19 pandemic, and were able to serve communities

virtually, as a result (Salas, 2021). Witnessing playback theatre artists' ingenuity inspired me to

create this community engagement project using playback theatre methods with students online.

Methods

The process of creating a playback theatre performance for drama therapy students at

Lesley University involved detailed planning for enlisting students to meet regularly to learn

playback theatre forms and creating standard rehearsal practices. Additionally, I had to develop a

theme, process, and objective for a playback theatre performance to both serve graduate students

and meet the criteria for a capstone thesis through a community engagement project.

Recruitment of Actors

To hold a playback theatre performance at the end of the semester, I needed to recruit

drama therapy students as playback theatre actors. In early September I met via Zoom with a

fellow drama therapy student who is an international playback theatre practitioner and a graduate

school professor interested in supporting a playback theatre event. The graduate school professor

communicated that she would be available throughout the semester for consultation and

continued to follow-up regularly with myself and the fellow student about the progress of the

troupe and marketing of the final performance. We all mutually decided that I would act as the

full conductor and organizer of this project, and I felt creative agency over the troupe and

decisions that were made.

Firstly, I organized a 'A Taste of Playback Theatre' event on September 29, 2021, for

drama therapy students. The goal of the event was to recruit students to join the playback theatre

practice troupe. I marketed the Taste of Playback Theatre event as an opportunity for students to

meet peers, practice basic techniques of playback theatre, and learn more about how to get

involved in playback theatre on campus moving forward. Ellinger and Ellinger (2019), state that

when recruiting participants to a playback theatre event, "always speak to the benefits" of how

the event could positively impact them (p. 149). They also suggest that facilitators should

minimize commitment requirements to entice preliminary engagement. Thus, for my event, I set

no requirement for playback theatre experience nor any requirements for level of commitment

for students to join the event.

I created a colorful infographic to market the event and I posted the graphic and a small invitation blurb to a private 'Lesley Drama Therapy' Microsoft Teams chat with 98 members made up of drama therapy professors, current students, and alumni (see Appendix A). I was also able to ask more specific questions, including "have you ever practiced playback theatre?", "what drew you to attending this event?" and "are you a Lesley Drama Therapy student?" Those questions helped me assess the familiarity of students' experiences with playback theatre to tailor the event towards their skill levels.

Of the 13 students who registered to attend, six students participated in the Taste of Playback Theatre event on September 29, 2021. At the end of the hour and fifteen-minute event, I asked participants to rate their interest in continuing to practice playback theatre with the opportunity to perform for graduate students at the end of the semester. All six students communicated interest in continuing.

I sent out a formal email to all thirteen students who registered for the Taste of Playback Theatre event inviting them to continue in the project (see Appendix B). I detailed the formal rehearsal schedule and requirements for joining. To join, students had to agree to coming to at least three of the five rehearsals, including the mandatory dress rehearsal and performance in mid-December. Of the seven respondents to the email, six agreed to continuing.

Our first formal online rehearsal took place on October 14, 2021. The rehearsal was open to new members, and I publicized it in the broader Lesley Drama Therapy Microsoft Teams chat. By the end of our first rehearsal, I had seven students who agreed to join the practice troupe. The troupe continued meeting privately, per our agreed upon schedule. After several weeks, one participant dropped out from the troupe after missing more than three sessions.

Troupe Development

As the director of the practice troupe, I prioritized developing rehearsal procedures and scaffold teaching playback theatre forms to prepare students for the end of the semester performance. I realized that I needed to both create personal and troupe goals to help clarify the objectives of this project and help outline the focus of rehearsals towards maximum efficiency and success (Ellinger & Ellinger, 2018). I put my attention on creating a consistent ritual in rehearsals, standard practices for troupe engagement, and opportunities for creative exploration and different perspectives.

Rehearsal Ritual

Although every playback theatre troupe has their own unique way of organizing and running rehearsals and performances, it is vital that the troupe is still guided by the foundational aspects of playback theatre ritual (Rosin et al., 2021). For example, Rosin et al. (2021) state that playback theatre performance rituals typically start with welcome music, a description of playback theatre, and an invitation for audience members to participate in sociometry or brief sharing of feelings (Dayton, 2005; Rosin et al., 2021). Not unlike performances, in which audience members need to be warmed-up to sharing stories on a specific theme, actors need to be warmed-up in rehearsal to gather focus, engage their body and voice theatrically, and attune to their emotional expression, listening skills, and creativity (Ellinger & Ellinger, 2018).

As the troupe director, I formulated my own playback theatre ritual style influenced by my previous playback theatre teaching and playback theatre acting in conferences and other troupe performances. I started each rehearsal with a different welcome song. My choice in music was often personally driven by my own musical preference, however, I would typically choose songs that had strong and quick melodic beats that invited participants to increase their energy and invite movement in their body.

After a brief movement warm up to music, I often led actors into checking in briefly about any feelings they experienced throughout the day for the other actors to embody in brief playback theatre vignettes. During this section of rehearsal, my goals were to warm actors up to telling, listening, and enacting stories, while also assessing participants readiness to engage with the group. As director, I use many of the same skills as a group therapist. For example, during the check-in warmup section of rehearsal, I assessed how participants were sharing and engaging with one another in the "here and now" (Wood et al., 2020, p. 152). Although each participant was sharing about their experiences previously in their day, the act of assessing participants' feelings provided a manner to reflect on the mood of the group as a whole and helped mold and adapt the overall objectives of the rehearsal to best support the group members' current feelings and needs.

I documented my rehearsal agenda and any follow-up notes for myself after rehearsal in a private Google Document. I additionally video recorded each rehearsal session, with the consent of all members, to assess my teaching and facilitating techniques to describe my experience more thoroughly.

Setting Group Norms

In the second troupe rehearsal on October 20th, 2021, after the dance and check-in warmup, I facilitated time for the troupe to identify group rules around giving and receiving feedback, along with assessing troupe members' motivation to understand the craft of playback theatre and develop deeper skills to performing playback theatre in the end of the semester showcase. Ellinger and Ellinger (2018) state that troupes should make clear agreements about giving and receiving artistic feedback in rehearsals to avoid giving damaging criticism that may isolate or disenfranchise group members. To get a clearer understanding around troupe members'

openness to receiving artistic feedback, I led a sociometry exercise (Emunah, 1994). In the sociometric exercise, I had participants respond to specific prompts such as, "how do you feel when you hear the word 'feedback'?" and "what does good feedback feel like to you?" Troupe members created frozen sculptures with their bodies to represent their feelings to the given prompts and were asked to share one word to describe their pose. After they shared their pose and word with the group, I asked the actors to discuss what themes they noticed in group members' responses.

Additionally, I used sociometry to assess group members' level of commitment to developing their playback theatre techniques. The consensus by the actors was that they were interested in developing their skills in the playback theatre craft, while still finding opportunities to "have fun" in rehearsals and the performance. Thus, as a group, we mutually decided that rehearsals would involve structured playback theatre learning time where they would be given specific positive and constructive feedback by the director to develop their skill set, along with informal warm-up and closing sections of rehearsal for playful exploration without critique.

Preparation & Execution of Performance

Over the several weeks of rehearsals, I taught playback theatre forms to actors including Flairs, Pairs, Fluid Sculpture, Chorus, Perspectives, Tableau, and Closing V (see Appendix F for descriptions of each technique). Teaching these playback theatre forms online involved both modeling the forms with the help of the fellow playback theatre practitioner in the troupe and showing demo videos of playback theatre actors performing the specific forms online.

In considering the community of students who would be attending the performance, I created a specific theme for the show to be tailored towards drama therapy students and staff. I structured the event around the theme of "What does drama therapy mean to you?" I created a

promotional infographic and wrote an invitation email to students that I posted on the Lesley

Drama Therapy Microsoft Teams chat (see Appendix C).

Rosin et al. (2021) explain that playback theatre performances must follow the common

ritual of performance to best support the arc of the performance. Most often this arc begins with

a welcome to the audience. This involves including music and movement to begin, then a

"description of event for first-timers, introduction of the actors (often with short stories of their

own on the topic of the performance enacted by the rest of the team to demonstrate playback

theatre)" and opening sociometric exercise to get reactions flowing among audience members in

relationship to the theme (Rosin et al., 2021, p. 15). After welcoming the audience, the conductor

can begin inviting tellers to share stories, connect with others in breakout rooms, and end the

evening with a closure that allows for participants to reflect on the performance (Rosin et al.

2021). I created an agenda for the show that included instructions for me to follow, directions

that I could copy and paste into the chat for participants to follow, and timestamps for me to

ensure I stay on track of schedule during the show (see Appendix D). The document also

included prompts that I might ask the audience in the performance to gather stories related to the

theme (see Appendix E). Additionally in this document I included information about cast

introductions and playback theatre forms for the convenience of my actors (see Appendix F).

Rosin et al. (2021) share that conductors can begin playback theatre performances with

actors sharing how they relate to the theme of the performance, with the intention to help

audience members relate further to the theme and even gather inspiration for their own stories in

hearing the actor's self-disclosure. Prior to the dress rehearsal for the performance, I requested

that actors write and practice an introduction monologue about "what drama therapy means to

them" for them to recite at the beginning of the performance.

At the beginning of the playback theatre performance on December 16, 2021, I welcomed audience members by sharing my computer audio and playing the song, Peace Train (Stevens, 1971), for audience members and actors to dance along to. As I let people in from the waiting room, I wrote in the chat, "Please join us for dancing and stretching! Mirror others and move with your own creative spin! There is no right or wrong way to join us." After finishing the song, I introduced myself to the audience. I asked participants to change their Zoom name to include their name, pronouns, and year of study in the Lesley drama therapy graduate program.

The cast introduced themselves and how they related to the theme. I then asked audience members to write in the Zoom chat one word that described how drama therapy makes them feel. After writing in the chat, I collected the first playback theatre story. After performing three participant stories, at 8:07-8:16 pm ET, I created breakout rooms for participants to meet fellow students in groups of 3-4 members to discuss their experience with drama therapy and the graduate school program at Lesley University.

After returning from breakout rooms, I conducted several more enactments, and the show concluded with participants sharing their closing reflections in participating in the event via the chat. Actors played back participants' final reflections using a playback theatre form titled, Closing V (see Appendix F).

After the performance, I met with the actors on Zoom for 15 minutes to debrief the show and celebrate their accomplishments. In the debrief I asked actors to rate how they were feeling before the performance, how they felt after the performance, and how they felt they served the audience using an informal thumb rating scale (Ellinger & Ellinger, 2018). I allowed actors an opportunity to share their feelings and reactions to the event and set aside time for troupe members to give and receive "appreciations" regarding a moment in the show where someone

did something delightful, took a positive risk, or made a bold and dynamic theatrical offer (Ellinger & Ellinger, 2018, p. 114). I dismissed the actors at 9:30 pm ET, and in the following days after the performance I organized my post-show notes of the performance in a private Google Document. I included details about the specific stories I collected, the feelings expressed by tellers, and the forms I called. I wrote about these topics in a bulleted format to concisely describe specific aspects of the event to help me when writing my thesis in the following months. Through the process of creating the troupe and performing for drama therapy students, I attempted to clarify and reflect on my research question.

In the following sections of this paper, I will assess the results from creating and conducting this community engagement project, engaging students both personally and professionally, and my impressions about the effectiveness of this event to promote peer relatedness among students in the Lesley University drama therapy program.

Results

Roughly 20 drama therapy graduate students and four drama therapy professors attended the playback theatre performance. Over 11 students identified as low-residency first year students, which implied they were completing their first semester in the program online. Five students shared personal stories related to the theme of *what drama therapy means to me*. Themes that arose from tellers' stories about the positive ways drama therapy has impacted their lives included: feeling increased joy, playfulness, creativity, passion, gratitude, emotional fulfillment, confidence, and connectedness from studying drama therapy in the Lesley University program. One student shared about feeling excited about starting this program, while also feeling overwhelmed managing school and her personal life as a mother. Another teller shared that they were struggling to decide to stay in the program or pursue their passion in another field. Students

additionally shared about the struggles they experienced regarding studying drama therapy,

feeling "senioritis" and stress from the semester, distance from peers and lack of socialization

studying online, and managing their anxiety regarding building a drama therapy career.

During the closing of the playback theatre event, several students shared how they felt

while attending the performance by writing in the Zoom chat as well as sharing aloud. Some

examples include participants stating that it felt "great to connect deeper with my cohort

members," and that they felt "validation and camaraderie" from sharing stories, being honest

with peers and professors, and watching several students' "unique journeys" played back on

screen. Although students openly shared their positive reactions to the event, no participants

shared constructive criticism towards the event, the playback performance, or my facilitation.

Based on the reactions participants shared at the end of the event, there is preliminary evidence

to suggest that this playback theatre performance offered drama therapy students the ability to

share openly with peers, engage with the student community more readily than in class alone,

and empathize and understand other students' differing experiences in the drama therapy

program.

Discussion

Contributing Factors to Performance Success

Multiple contributing factors played a role in the perceived success of the performance.

I believe the event would have been more difficult to organize and facilitate if I had not had

previous experience both planning and conducting a playback theatre performance on Zoom.

Being both a member of a playback theatre troupe that performed regularly online and a member

of Playback North America, I was able to identify tools and strategies developed by other

playback theatre artists for executing the event. For example, I integrated sociometry, cast self-

introductions, small group sharing in breakout rooms, and storytelling all directly related to the

theme of the show. Additionally, on a more personal level, my experience as a conductor—

understanding the basic principles of structuring a playback theatre performance and the

techniques required to conduct and elicit stories from tellers— contributed to my projecting a

high level of confidence in facilitating the event. My comfortability throughout the evening may

have also subtly influenced both actors and audience members to feel welcomed and more

relaxed in the virtual performance than if I was exuding angst or ambivalence towards the

storytelling and enactments (Salas, 2021).

The performance's success was also deeply influenced by the quality of the playback

theatre performance from the actors. It is critical to have skilled playback theatre actors onstage

who can execute playback theatre forms, as well as empathetically add their own theatrical

insight to the teller's story. The troupe members' commitment to rehearsal, study of the playback

theatre craft, and integration of drama therapy skills into their acting played a substantial role in

our success. Having had previous experience teaching playback theatre to children and adults, I

was able to scaffold the steps to performing playback theatre in a manageable manner for the

actors. I often would start rehearsals with more basic playback theatre forms to warm up the

actors, and then leave substantial rehearsal time to practice more complex playback theatre

forms. I offered encouragement and praise to actors often, while also offering guidance for them

to challenge and improve their playback theatre offers. My teaching style may have supported

actors to feel respected and may have influenced their feelings of readiness for the final

performance. Also, the troupe members' graciousness and support of my vision for the event

played a substantial role in my excitement and fulfillment from the rehearsal process. Overall,

the actors' motivation to develop their skills and my previous playback theatre teaching

experience played a part in the troupe's ability to perform strongly.

Beyond the role of the actors, the population of the audience may have greatly influenced

the success and audience members' personal take-aways from the event. Because the event was

open to drama therapy students and faculty at Lesley University, there was a shared commonality

of membership in an established community. Simply understanding one another's experiences as

drama therapists and drama therapists-in-training may have created a shared sense of identity.

This connection may have influenced students' reflections at the end of the performance.

Students may have felt 'validation and camaraderie,' along with deeper connection to peers from

feeling like they belonged at the performance and were not outsiders looking in. Additionally,

opportunities to talk to peers in small group breakout rooms may have allowed students an

opportunity to learn more about each other on a deeper level than class alone provided. Although

these factors do not directly relate to the impact of playback theatre enactment, creating this

community event using the playback theatre performance arc may have supported drama therapy

audience members' willingness to engage, promoted comfortability in sharing stories, and

facilitated interest in participating in the playback theatre performance (Salas, 2021). Community

identity may have also played a role in the positive themes that emerged from audience sharing,

including feelings of gratitude, joy, playfulness, and connectedness. Based on the reflections

from participants at the end of the performance, the event appeared to assist participants in

meeting peers socially on a deeper level than class alone, along with helping them see new and

shared perspectives between their and other students' experiences. In considering previous

research that highlights the lack of socialization and playful collaboration in online schooling

(Coman et al., 2020; Kardam et al., 2021; Nambiar, 2020; Wood et al., 2020), it appears that this event provided students an outlet to experience joy and connection to peers.

Logistical factors may have also contributed to the perceived success of the event. Because the performance was held at the end of the Fall semester, students most likely had already completed final assignments for their courses. Thus, the event may have felt like a celebration of the semester since it took place just a day before winter break. If the performance had been held on December 23, as I had initially planned, students may have felt increased ambivalence towards attending because of their responsibilities towards completing assignments. The overall mood of the event may have also been affected negatively by students' academic stress. Meeting regularly with my mentoring professor to discuss the coordination of the event helped me amend the event to better serve students to celebrate the end of the semester. Additionally, I was also able to help distribute invitations and recruit more attendance to the performance with the help of my mentoring professor. Her practical support offered me opportunities to fine-tune the purpose, theme, marketing materials, and date of the event to best serve the actors, audience members, and my thesis capstone.

Integration of Playback Theatre Philosophy

Beyond the structure and execution of the performance, integrating playback theatre philosophy and technique may have played a part in supporting students' engagement in the event and interest in playback theatre. Along with my goal of the playback theatre performance helping to unify students in a creative space, I also had a secondary goal of improving students' curiosity towards playback theatre and assisting them in understanding how playback theatre may benefit their drama therapy practice and learning.

Within the performance I created multiple opportunities for audience participants to learn basic forms of playback theatre. Audience participants practiced the foundational techniques of playback theatre, such as spontaneity, improvisation, and empathizing with the teller (Salas, 2009). For example, allowing participants to perform alongside the actors may have both increased their participation and interest in the show, along with challenging them to creatively integrate their skills as actors and drama therapists in brief playback theatre enactments.

Beyond offering opportunities for participants to act, I found moments to share informally about playback theatre methodology and philosophy. After the actors enacted one participant's story about their diminishing interest in continuing in this program, I thanked the participant for their honesty and explained to the audience that playback theatre enactments are not intended to "solve" or "fix" teller's stories. If a teller shares about their present lack of clarity on the direction of their life, or something upsetting and sad that happened, it is not the job of the actors to make-up a happy and resolved ending to their story. Instead, actors should authentically play back teller's current feelings, with the intention of validating the teller's present feelings (Keisari et al., 2020a). Much like a therapist in a clinical session with a client, the playback theatre performer must respect the teller's perspective and avoid attempting to artificially fix the teller's present feeling (Madsen, 2007; Sajnani & Johnson, 2011). Instead, the hope is that through validating teller's present experiences, they feel supported to consider new possibilities with the therapist's help (Madsen, 2007).

At another point in the playback theatre performance, one teller shared how she was awakened and validated when witnessing her story played back by actors because the process allowed her to see the "chaos" of her current situation in a way she was unable to see before the performance. After the teller shared her post-enactment reflection, I told the audience that a

primary goal of playback theatre is to offer tellers opportunities to discover new parts of their stories. Salas (2013) explains that in playback theatre, "our job is to reveal the shapeliness and meaning in any experience, even the ones that are unclear or formless in the telling" (p. 22). Thus, I utilized that opportunity to communicate with the audience about the goal of playback theatre performers to validate tellers through interpreting and mirroring their stories, much like the therapist in the clinical session (Harden, 2014; Keisari et al., 2020a). Overall, I found it personally gratifying to share with the audience about the similarities I see between playback theatre and clinical therapy. Some students may have appreciated learning more about playback theatre from a methodological lens. However, I was limited in the performance from knowing how much students enjoyed this integration.

Structural Limitations

As stated above, I was limited in my insight of students' overall experiences attending this event. Although students shared verbally and in the Zoom chat their positive reactions to the event, there may have been students who withheld constructive feedback or adverse reactions out of fear of offending or isolating themselves from the mostly cheerful group. This limitation is not uncommon in playback theatre performances. Sajnani and Johnson (2011) discuss how playback theatre performances can empower some teller's stories, while disempowering other people's stories because of "cultural, ethnic, national, [and] historical legacy" (p. 31). Not only that, but the conductor may lack skills in establishing "the frame of safety" for storytelling and playback theatre enacting, thus unintentionally making certain audience members more susceptible to feeling harmed (Sajnani & Johnson, 2011, p. 31). Although I hope that I would not intentionally marginalize and isolate certain audience members from the group and from sharing stories, and I have taken efforts to learn and practice generating more equitable spaces, I am aware that my

position as a White, cis-gender, able-bodied woman impacts my awareness of these concerns, and can influence my actions as a conductor in potentially causing harm, or allowing others to cause harm, in a playback theatre space. Playback theatre artists should continue to examine research on this topic, attend workshops and lectures led by knowledgeable playback theatre field members, and strengthen skills to create performance spaces that welcome stories by tellers who may feel marginalized otherwise.

Another aspect of the event that could have influenced students' comfortability sharing stories may be related to the participation of faculty in the event. Because four drama therapy professors were present, students may have felt reluctance to share any grievances or negative reactions to drama therapy or their current experience studying online. It was not until halfway through the performance that a third-year student shared about her impatience to graduate. This student may have been more willing to share this story because she was in her final year of study and well acquainted with the professors. Most of the students who attended were first year students and may have been concerned about over-disclosing while their professors were present. It may be beneficial if future research or playback theatre events examine if professors' participation in the event impacts students' willingness to share their stories.

Overcoming Personal Challenges

Within the playback theatre performance, I also experienced personal limitations beyond structural limitations. Because I was the sole director, facilitator, and conductor of the playback theatre practice troupe and the performance, I was unable to assess the event objectively. During the performance, I hoped that I would have been able to collect more participant data and reactions to the event. However, because I was facilitating the event, I could not take time to write detailed notes about my own reactions and analysis of the event. Additionally, because I

was one of the only previously trained playback theatre artists in the performance, I was not able to receive more nuanced and specific feedback from playback theatre peers to analyze and improve my craft as a conductor. On a personal level, I would have liked to have received more notes regarding my facilitation, and I would suggest to future playback theatre facilitators to enlist a troupe member or friend to take specific notes tailored towards the facilitators' goals, questions, and needs. Then the facilitator will be able to assess their own personal reflections *and* the objective notes after the performance.

However, after processing my own frustration about the lack of opportunity to receive feedback from others during and after the playback theatre performance, I accepted that I could self-provide feedback and congratulations to myself for the efforts I took to organize and orchestrate this event. I honored my efforts as facilitator and conductor of the practice troupe and performance, and I acknowledged the tremendous time and coordination that the process took to complete. I also examined my research question, and my curiosity about whether a playback theatre performance could engage graduate students studying online and build community. After reviewing the verbal responses from peers about the event and witnessing the smiles on actors and audience members' faces at the end of the event, I felt delighted by my own intuition to propose and create this event, with the hope of it helping peers connect.

And although this capstone project is complete, and my graduate career has ended, I leave this program with the gift of my stories. The stories of my studies. The stories that I can share over and over. And, some day, I will have the opportunity to open the portal to my memories as a graduate student and share at a playback theatre performance, watching it be mirrored back for me again.

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Appendix A.

A Taste of Playback Theatre Invitation

Hi DT students! This upcoming week, [Student A] and I will be holding an intro to Playback Theatre session! This is a wonderful opportunity to learn a bit about Playback and get to know peers in a student-led space. Please consider coming and inviting cohort friends! Email me with any additional questions at fdumar@lesley.edu.

Appendix B.

Interest in Continuing

Hello DT students interested in Playback Theatre!

We had a wonderful introductory workshop in which we learned Playback forms and connected with one another through storytelling. [Student A] and I were thoroughly impressed with students' skills and abilities to authentically and creatively play back stories on screen.

Thus, we formally invite you to join our Playback Theatre Practice Troupe that will meet bi-weekly on Thursday evenings from 8:00-9:30pm ET. You do not need to have Playback experience to join this troupe. Instead, we are welcoming everyone to this project in the hopes to help more friends learn Playback and help bring it to Lesley.

To join this troupe, you must be able to attend *some* rehearsals. If you cannot attend most sessions but would still like to be included in the performance, please reach out to me and we can arrange a way for you to still perform with us. For those who can commit to a full membership in this practice group, the expectation is that you are able to **make at least 3 of the 5 rehearsals, including the dress rehearsal and performance.** Below are the list of rehearsal and performance dates:

Thursday, October 14, 8:00-9:30pm ET (drop-ins welcome)
Thursday, October 28, 8:00-9:30pm ET
Thursday, November 11, 8:00-9:30pm ET
(Thanksgiving off)
Thursday, December 2, 8:00-9:30pm ET
Thursday, December 16, 8:00-9:30pm ET (mandatory dress rehearsal)
SHOW Thursday, December 23, 8:00-9:30pm ET

Please fill out this short survey (3-5 minutes): https://forms.gle/XrYwybznrBLZWtaA9 as soon as possible, so that we can keep track of members who are interested in continuing. **Even if you were unable to attend tonight, you can still attend a drop-in rehearsal on October 14th**. You can commit to joining the troupe after that session if you so choose.

Thank you again. I feel so grateful and energized by the interest in playback theatre within our program!

-Franci DuMar

Appendix C.

Playback Theatre Showcase Publicity

[12/6/2021, 3:52 PM] DuMar, Frances
End of the Semester Playback Theatre Showcase!

Dear Students,

      Are you interested in learning about Playback Theatre? Are you interested in meeting peers, sharing stories, and connecting with our wonderful Drama Therapy community? ...Then come to the playback theatre Showcase on December 16 from 7:30-8:45pm ET. Support your peers who are in the performance. The cast includes: [Student A], [Student B], [Student C], [Student D], [Student E]. & [Student F]! During the event you can share your stories of *what Drama Therapy means to me: The good, the bad, and the distance between.* You will get to witness and even be invited to learn Playback at the end of the event.

Register in advance here:
https://lesley.zoom.us/meeting/register/tJclcOuprDstGdRkqGKLk1pfascub835GX4X

Appendix D.

Playback Theatre Performance Agenda

Performance Agenda

6:30-7:00: Open Zoom room for actors

7:00-7:25: Cast warmup

7:28-7:33: Opening song– [Peace Train by Yusuf Islam/Cat Stevens](#)
  ● IN CHAT: Please join us for dancing and stretching! Mirror others and move with your own creative spin! There is no right or wrong way to join us.

7:33-7:40: Introduction by conductor and briefly describe tech support
  ● IN CHAT: Please change your name to follow this format Name (Pronouns) Year/Year in program OC or LR. For example, Franci (she, her) 3/3 OC.

7:40-7:45: Cast introductions

7:45-7:50: Opening Fluid/Pairs/Tableau

7:50-8:15: Playback Theatre
  ● Forms: Pairs, Fluid Sculpture, Chorus, & Perspectives

8:15-8:20: Breakout rooms to meet peers

8:25-8:35: More Playback Theatre
  ● Forms: Pairs, Fluid Sculpture, Chorus, & Perspectives

8:35-8:45: Closing Ritual
  ● Actors do Closing V and mirror lead actor
  ● Invite audience to participate in ritual

8:45-8:50: Semester celebration led by faculty

8:50-9:15: Actors private debrief of performance

Appendix E.

Performance Theme and Question Prompts

Performance Theme: Our experience of Drama Therapy. The good, the bad, and the "distance" between.

Conductor Prompts:
What drew you to the Drama Therapy field?
What challenges or conflicts have you encountered in relation to Drama Therapy?
What has this semester been like?
Has anyone been doing Drama Therapy online? What has that experience been like?
Share about an impactful or difficult moment using drama Therapy with a client?

Appendix F.

Descriptions of Playback Theatre Forms

Fluid Sculpture: Actors on-camera. When music begins, actors can come out in any order representing an emotion in the teller's story. Actors continue making sounds and gestures until all actors are performing. After 2-3 beats all together, group freezes and holds pose until, "thank you actors."

Pairs: Two actors are on screen and **two actors are offscreen waiting.** Each of the four actors is cast with either emotion A or emotion B. After "let's watch" the first pair begins performing. Either actor can activate and begin their sound and movement gesture. They repeat their phrase, and the second actor joins in showing the opposing emotion. The actors freeze and hold their pose and the second pair of actors come onscreen and perform the same process, showing the emotions in their own unique way. Actors freeze until they hear, "thank you actors."

Chorus: All actors on camera standing. When the music begins, actors begin mirroring each other following the three beats of the story. After one offer has been mirrored for 2-3 beats, actors can move to the second and third emotional beats. Actors freeze together and hold final pose until, "thank you actors."

Perspectives: Each actor casts themselves as one feeling in the story and portrays that emotion through a unique perspective. They may play an inanimate object, a part of the teller (heart, brain, feet, etc.), or another real person in the story. The goal is to show the teller's experience in a unique and enlightening way. When the music table begins, one actor activates. The actor gives a brief monologue from their perspective, making it explicit who they are and what emotion they are expressing. Actor freezes and the music table continues until all actors have completed their monologues.

Tableau: Actors are all onscreen. After hearing the teller's feelings, everyone activates at the same time and portrays what they heard the teller say in an embodied and expressive manner. Everyone freezes together after 2-3 beats.

Closing V: One actor is cast to be the teller's actor. All other actors mirror the main actor exactly. When the front actor freezes, all actors follow suit.

** Remember to listen to the music table. The music table acts as an additional player there to support the actors, and the story. Additionally, the music table may indicate through song or instrument that the acting should conclude. For example, if you hear a "ding" sound, that is a clear indication to freeze and end.

Author Acknowledgement

THESIS APPROVAL FORM

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In the judgment of the following signatory this thesis meets the academic standards that have been established for the above degree.

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