John Paul Lederach (2005), referencing Kenneth Yasuda on the Japanese Haiku, in his discussion of the art of social change, reflects that the haiku moment,

“...happens with the appearance of resonance. Something resonates deeply. It connects. What it connects is the eternity of truth with the immediacy of experience. He calls this “ah-ness,” which I might render in my experience as the “ah-hah” moment, the “I see exactly what you mean.” Lederach (2005, p.68)
In this second edition of the IPTN Journal there are a range of articles and gathering/conference reports that I hope resonate with you, the reader. It has been a privilege for me to read and support the writers of the contributions to this edition.

The articles covering the diverse experiences of Nepalese reconciliation (Anne Dirstorfer), in Norwegian schools (Audun & Børge Kristofferson) and in the South West of England with muslim women asylum seekers and refugees (Kate Glover & Annie Mitchell), yet again remind us of the importance of Playback within the world. The reports on gatherings in Brazil and Asia along with news on the networks in Germany and the USA and Canada, both inspire and warm the heart in equal measure.

There are several tools to help and inform us as playbackers. Assael Romanelli discusses his Three Dimensional Diamond model drawing upon a range of improvisation theory. In addition, there are reviews and notices of new books on Playback. José Marques writes an in-depth review of Clarice Siewert’s Nossas Historias Em Cena, published in Portuguese and there is endorsement for Elizaveta and Zoya Zagryazhskaya’s new collection of playback chapters which they have now edited in English as well as Russian, Playback Theatre Practice: Selected Articles.

I thank all of the contributors and translators to this edition who have been dedicated to Playback, patient with me, and inspirational in their work and their writing. Somewhere within this rich collection of articles, reviews, notices and reports, I sincerely hope you find many “ah-hah” moments.

The call for the next edition is below but a reminder that you are invited to contact me about possible articles and/or to develop pieces at any time. I will also continue to contact people myself to commission articles. The Journal serves as a conduit through which we can dialogue with each other and make ourselves more robust in our talking about Playback within the wider world.

Simon Floodgate


Note: This is the second edition of the IPTN Journal (Vol 2, no.1). It is numbered this way as it will be the first of two editions in 2016 (see the call for papers for the Summer 2016 edition below). Last year, saw the first IPTN Journal edition and there was only one for the year (Vol 1, no.1)
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**PLAYBACK THEATRE PRACTICE: SELECTED ARTICLES** is a new book about Playback Theatre recently published in English. This book is a new collection of articles about Playback Theatre. The book includes articles about applications of Playback Theatre in different spheres of life (business, society, education, psychotherapy and rehabilitation). The book discusses the main skills of Playback Theatre practitioners (conducting, acting, making music, performing) and proposes exercises to develop these skills.

The articles are written by authors from 18 countries (USA, Great Britain, Japan, Russia, Ukraine, Italy, Sweden, Denmark, Switzerland, Austria, Hungary, Greece, China, Singapore, Australia, Brazil, Israel, Portugal), who share their experience of Playback Theatre practice. This book is for Playback Theatre practitioners and for anyone interested in Playback Theatre, its work and application!

The price for one book is 28 USD or 26 EURO or equivalent in the money of your own country (shipping is included in this price).

To order the book please email Elizaveta at playbacker@mail.ru

**Karin Bettina Gisler**: “This book is a unique collection of articles from Playback Practitioners around the world. It holds their experiences as well as their thoughts about all aspects of this complex form of theatrical interaction. The reader will find practical tips as well as theoretical background. This book is valuable for the beginner as well as for the experienced playbacker.”

**Jo Salas**: “The new collection *Playback Theatre Practice: Selected Articles* is a very welcome addition to Playback Theatre resources. The editors, Elizaveta and Zoya Zagryazhskaya, have done a great job in gathering new writing from practitioners all over the world. As a contributor, I’m happy to find myself in the company of these good writers reporting on thoughtful and creative developments.”
"...and I felt as if I'm home you understand, with my people."

Women’s narratives of attending Playback Theatre for refugees and asylum seekers: towards new ways of seeing, feeling and being with others.

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Abstract

This research explored the stories of Arabic Muslim women who attended Playback Theatre (PT) sessions within a women’s community group in a service for asylum seekers and refugees. Eight semi-structured interviews were analysed using narrative methodology. Five themes were identified: ‘deciding whether to tell’, ‘sharing stories’, ‘empathy and understanding’, ‘emotional release’, and ‘personal growth’. The analysis focused on the ‘personal growth’ theme, which included reflections on cultural issues and comprised three sub-themes: new ways of seeing, feeling differently, new ways of being with others. We noted links between what happens in PT and what is thought to be effective in established therapies and argue that PT can make a positive contribution to asylum seeker and refugee women and their wider communities. For the women within the current research, it seemed that Playback enactments shifted the told story from an individual to a shared representational context which fostered personal growth and shared connections which were experienced as positive and beneficial. This highlighted the potential value of community interventions outside of clinical settings.

Key words: Playback Theatre, community psychology, refugees, asylum seekers, narrative research
**Introduction**

Playback Theatre (PT) is a form of community theatre which enacts audience stories through improvisation. Though not designed to be therapeutic it is frequently seen as such by professionals within PT. Community psychology and social inequalities approaches propose that interventions and prevention strategies for socially produced problems should extend beyond the therapy room and take place in the context in which they occur (Kagan, 2007). Community psychologists believe that communities generally have the expertise necessary to prevent or reduce mental health difficulties. Accordingly, they support local projects and encourage community links so as to empower communities to help those in distress. The community psychologist Carolyn Kagan (2010) suggested that community needs may be met through the arts, given clear links between the community, the arts, and health and wellbeing. The current research was undertaken within a community psychology framework of understanding, recognising cultural differences in processes of social support and social power. It explores the stories of women refugees and asylum seekers who attend community PT sessions.

A growing body of research supports the therapeutic effectiveness of the arts (Landy, 1997). This is not a new idea: the roots of theatre date back to preliterate societies where local knowledge and customs were passed on through stories in community gatherings which often featured healing rituals and shamanistic processes (Fox, 1986). Aristotle observed that the Greek tragedies were ‘cathartic’ for audiences and actors (Landy, 1997). Thus the alignment of theatre and healing is not a new development, but a return to older wisdom, a remembering that theatre’s origins are entwined with healing.

Current therapeutic uses of drama include Moreno’s psychodrama, where individuals act out scenes from their own lives, and Boal’s Theatre of the Oppressed, where the disenfranchised are helped to transform social oppressions through role play. In Fox and Salas’s PT, audience members contribute their own stories which are spontaneously replayed through the performers’ improvisational playback:

“(Audience) members are invited to the stage to tell a personal story or something that happened, something the teller did, or a dream. The company conductor listens to the story, encourages the teller, asks for details to help flesh out the scenario, and invites the teller to cast the story from the company of actors. Following a signal from the conductor, the actors enact the story for the benefit of the teller and the
larger audience, to the accompaniment of improvised music. After the enactment, the teller is acknowledged, asked to approve or correct, and thanked for sharing the story.” (Park-Fuller, 1997)

Most PT literature takes the form of reflective accounts in which PT professionals discuss their thoughts, observations and insights about PT. These include reflections around the audience feeling heard, processing difficult information, gaining insights and understandings, and feeling connected. Feeling heard “fully, respectfully, and without analysis or judgement” (Salas, 2000:293) is considered an important benefit of PT, particularly for those with marginalised voices (Dennis, 2007). Having others witness the story is thought to enhance the power of being heard (Fox, 1999a) with the audience’s empathic response being a validating feature (Salas, 2000) and enabling sharing and solidarity through discovering fellow feelings and shared sympathies.

PT performers describe how the form allows difficult experiences to be processed: the containing, ritualistic elements of PT create a safe environment where stories of difficult experiences can be told. The subsequent enactment then creates the space, or ‘aesthetic distance’, needed from intense emotions to process the experience (Rogers, 2006). PT is also hypothesised to help individuals achieve insights through the artistic representation of the story (Fox, 1999b) and the cohesive and extended narrative the enactment creates (Day, 1999).

Across the literature practitioners have spoken about how PT apparently increases people’s feelings of connection to each other and reduces feelings of isolation (e.g. Salas, 2000). Rowe (2007) believes the shared stories create a type of dialogue which Dennis (2007) sees as generating a normalising experience, giving audience members “relief from aloneness.” PT is also thought to have positive effects on the community by helping the audience hear, understand and respect the stories which differ from their own, whilst reflecting back and affirming the collective identity (Salas, 1983). Overall, PT practitioners have noticed various therapeutic benefits of PT and reflected on possible ways it may achieve these gains.

Psychological theories could provide a framework for understanding these potential therapeutic benefits. For example, narrative therapy suggests that we make meaning out of our lives through our stories. Rowe (2007: 39) claims that “effective playback loosens the ‘ties’ of the story, opens up other possible interpretations and reveals the means through which we make sense of our experience.” The telling and re-telling of these new stories before witnesses is believed to strengthen the narrative. Community
psychology, as described previously, considers inequalities a contributor to distress. PT can be seen as an appropriate intervention within this framework: through providing a place to hear marginalised voices it responds to the needs of local populations and challenges inequalities.

Although most of the literature explores PT through reflective accounts, few studies have investigated outcomes and audiences’ experiences of PT. Rousseau and colleagues’ various studies have found positive effects of a PT based creative workshop programme designed to facilitate the adjustment and integration of refugee and immigrant adolescents (e.g. Moneta & Rousseau, 2008). As PT privileges hearing silenced voices it is well positioned to work with such disempowered groups. More recently, Moran and Alon (2011) investigated the impact of a PT course for adults with ‘serious mental illness’. Positive trends were observed in measures of self-esteem and personal growth. A thematic analysis of qualitative survey responses indicated personal benefits of ‘fun and relaxation’, ‘creativity and self-expression’, ‘self-esteem’, and ‘self-knowledge’; and interpersonal gains of ‘connection with others’, ‘enhanced empathy’ and a ‘sense of being part of a group’.

Taken together the research and professional reflections within the literature base provide early indications of PT’s therapeutic impact. However, any real conclusions about therapeutic benefits are restricted by the limited research. Furthermore, contrary to PT values, the voice of the audience is generally absent from the research. Park-Fuller (2003) suggests this may be due to difficulties in measuring changes in the audiences’ social views or the impact on the community combined with the more privileged position of performers rendering them more accessible for exploration of their experiences.

This research aims to build on the evidence base of PT whilst emulating its underlying values of hearing marginalised voices. It explores the impact of PT on audience members from the perspective of women within a refugee and asylum seeker community. In line with PT’s aim to keep individual’s stories intact, this research takes a qualitative approach, employing a narrative methodology which aims to preserve the stories of the participants.

**Methodology**

I (KG) used a narrative research methodology to explore how individuals make sense of their experiences of PT. Narrative methodology and PT have mutual philosophical aims to preserve whole stories and hear the voices of those not represented by
dominant discourses. This approach assumes that, through narratives, we temporally sequence events in our lives to form a plot which links them together in a meaningful way (Murray, 2007). This process of storying acts to impose some kind of order on the disparate experiences within our lives. Reissman (2004) suggested that the narrator will tailor stories to the audience thereby giving narratives a performative element. In this sense, narratives are “doing” something such as remembering, justifying or entertaining. Therefore, as well as looking at what is said, the ‘how’ and ‘why’ (i.e. the structure and purpose of the story) are also explored in this narrative framework.

Within narrative methodology there are no claims of objectivity but an acknowledgement that ‘theoretical perspectives, interests, and modes of questioning’ (Reissman, 2004) will influence the findings. In an effort to reduce the impact of personal bias, I set up a mixed research team with a clinical psychologist supervisor with no experience of playback (JS), playback performers (AF, AB), and a clinical community psychologist (AM) who is a playback performer. I conducted ‘bracketing interviews’ (Ahern, 1999) with JS prior to, and following, data collection. Roll and Relf (2006) suggested that the interactive and dynamic use of ‘bracketing interviews’ renders implicit assumptions more open to conscious reflection. Ahern (1999) recommended using reflexivity to identify areas of potential bias and to bracket them to reduce their effect on the research.

I explored initial assumptions about what types of narratives might present; and how my personal and cultural values and beliefs might impact on the research. For example, I have approached the research from a community psychology perspective. From this position I am interested in exploring the role PT may take within communities and whether it can help to reflect upon, process and support the types of stories told within a clinical context. Perhaps due to my Trainee Clinical Psychologist role I viewed PT as a powerful way of telling stories that seemed to be of potential therapeutic value. My preliminary research questions included: What stories do others tell about PT, how do they tell them and are these stories therapeutic?

The context of the research: PT and Soft Creations

A sewing group, ‘Soft Creations’, was set up by a charity in the south west of England, START (Students and Refugees Together) for women in the refugee and asylum seeking community. START is a community project providing a range of support activities for and with local asylum seekers and refugees and those with temporary residential status. In 2010 a collaborative project was set up whereby members of a
women’s PT Company, Tarte Noire, gave 25 performances at Soft Creations sessions: sets of four to six weekly sessions, each of about an hour and a half. The PT performers (ranging from 2-5 across performances) were all white Western women. PT was adapted to try to ensure cultural sensitivity. For example, a shared language of English was used throughout with long pauses for informal translation between the women; the actors used fewer words and spoke clearly supplemented by gestures and body language; sometimes the actors gathered around a teller to hear requiring focussed concentration to listen to stories told in English as a second language. In addition, young children were welcomed, and although their sometimes noisy presence might have felt disruptive in some Playback contexts, here they seemed to contribute to an atmosphere of fun informality which seemed culturally natural.

Women came and went from the room taking phone calls or leaving to attend to family members. The collage form was often chosen and the actor who first took the role of the teller’s actor would remain in that role throughout the enactment.

Any women from the asylum seeker community were welcome to attend the performances.

Participants

Following ethical approval from Plymouth University, I attended several Soft Creations group sessions and approached group members to ascertain their interest in participating in the research. Interviews were arranged at a location convenient to participants, usually their homes or the university.

Eight women with refugee, asylum seeker or temporary residential status participated in the research. All were Muslim women, from Arabic speaking countries, aged 17 - 34 years old. All had attended at least one PT session. Five had attended for over a year, one had attended twice and two had attended once. All had told at least one story at PT. Seven of the women were married and six were mothers. Information was summarised, with pseudonyms, to protect participant identities.

Participants were given information about the research and confidentiality was discussed before informed written consent was given. The audio-recorded interviews lasted between 30 and 75 minutes and were conducted in English. While a translator may have overcome some issues around language barriers, we felt that introducing an unknown person could have created a formal dynamic within the interview, potentially inhibiting responses. Two participants chose to bring a family member with them to act as an interpreter at some points during the interview.
Data Collection

The interviews started with the following narrative inducing question that invited participants to tell their story of attending PT:

Tell me as much as you can about your experience of Playback Theatre. This might include what it’s like to tell a story here and what you get out of coming to the sessions. It may help to think about what it was like when you first came to Playback Theatre and what it's like now.

The interview continued with a semi-structured format used flexibly, adjusting to the flow of the narrative. Questions were devised collaboratively with PT performers (AF and AB) and designed to elicit narratives about attending PT sessions, telling stories and listening to other women’s stories.

Data Analysis

Data analysis was conducted in two phases. First, the interviews were transcribed verbatim by KG, read repeatedly to gain familiarity with the data and annotated with comments related to potential themes and metaphors (Murray, 2007). As a validity check, one transcript was reviewed by PT performers (AF and AB). Extracts linked to potential themes were selected for each participant. In collaboration with PT performers those extracts felt to be most closely related were grouped together. The groupings were reviewed, and some categories collapsed to form five recurring themes within the narratives. Triangulation, where narrative summaries were thematically analysed by JS, was used as a further credibility check.

Second, narrative features for each participant were considered. These included mapping out storylines through narrative summaries, looking at the overall genre and tone of the narrative, and considering the performative elements of the narrative (Riessman, 1993).

A member check with the participants who wished to partake further was used to verify that their stories were accurately represented. Participants were given a synopsis of the findings and extracts from their interview, with the accompanying analysis and were asked to provide feedback on the authenticity of the interpretations of their stories.
Results and analysis

Five themes were identified within the narratives. These fitted around the general story components of scene setting, plot and story resolution: the processes involved in becoming a teller (‘deciding to tell’); what happens as a story gets told (‘sharing’, ‘empathy and understanding’ and ‘emotional release’); and the impact of the sessions afterwards (‘personal growth’). The super-ordinate themes are briefly outlined before focusing on narratives about ‘personal growth’.

Becoming a teller

Most of the stories contained a sub-plot of becoming a teller. This storyline involved an initial period of ‘sussing out’ PT; establishing trust within the group; and building the confidence to tell a story. Some women framed telling as a dilemma: a desire to tell, so as to experience the associated ‘release’, but also a risk of shame through transgressing cultural boundaries around keeping personal stories private. The women assumed a position of agency in deciding where their personal boundaries lay and what may remain “secret”: they considered who the audience members were, what judgements the audience may make and how they may feel after telling. However, there were some stories where this was misjudged by tellers. Consequently, boundaries were either altered to avoid future regrets or maintained with the expectation that any regret would be short-lived.

Sharing

Sharing in front of other women served different functions within the narratives. Witnessing a story enabled others to connect to the experiences shared and opened up related discussions. One woman described how PT helped her to show her feelings and ‘let the others know what I want to say’. Another woman described how hearing that other people felt the same made her ‘feel normal’. Some women used the discussions and enactments as a way of getting advice or learning from others’ mistakes or experiences. For others it was to build ‘community with others’.

Empathy and understanding

Each narrative contained a thread about the quality of the acting. This was evaluated as important not only for the aesthetic value but to signify that the actors had understood the teller. The accurate portrayal helped share the story’s meaning with others: everyone could “understand it through the story”. One woman described gaining an understanding of what others had experienced: “You don’t know how it was
and how they are living until they say something”. Many accounts observed how the actors and audience members were moved by the story. For one woman the ensuing empathy and support fostered a sense of belonging. She said that after telling her story others came and hugged her, “and I felt as if I’m home you understand, with my people”. For others, sharing in each others’ emotions was a validating experience.

**Emotional release**

The narratives of those who became tellers had the common plot feature of experiencing an emotional change or ‘release’. There were different stories about this release. In each story, telling was the event which generated some metaphorical mechanism of release. Examples were ‘spitting out’, ‘a weight lifting’ or ‘putting on a plaster’. Other narratives related to the benefits of being in contact with painful feelings.

**Personal growth and change**

Each narrative had a storyline of change or personal growth. These narratives were characterised by a dynamic process of change for the teller leading to a transformation in their views of themselves and others, their feelings, and in their ways of being in the world. This theme is explored in greater detail.

**New ways of seeing**

The outcome of seeing things differently was attributed to PT’s function both as a reflective mirror and forum for sharing knowledge.

Soaad compared PT to a video camera which replayed events just as they occurred, and which then enabled her emotional expression and new understanding.

“And it’s strange; we don’t know how your life is, if you don’t watch it. It’s like you put a video camera into our house and we see the stories that we made and the life, our life, our normal life. And the first time I told them my story it was about gathering and seeing my parents and seeing my other sisters and you know the normal life in our country and they do it and they play it back and I felt so emotional. I saw how I feel by them... you don’t know how it was, the fact that you live, unless you have somebody play back to you like a video camera.”

Bushra similarly positioned PT as a mirror reflecting back the truth, assisting in processing of her experiences and providing space to evaluate her role within the
story. This function might enable tellers to decide how they want future stories to end, thus editing what may otherwise be a repetitive story within their lives.

“You see yourself like a mirror: exactly. Sometimes I see myself very happy, and sometimes no, sometimes busy with the children.... If they play the upset about the bad situation I feel I should be stronger and patient, not always I cry but in our language we say cry is our weapon, we haven’t got anything to do but sometimes I think my experience is wrong, because I need to be patient not more emotional... I try to choose the bad things and cut it away and just tell the good things... We see our self we didn’t see it before for me, yeah, cos I haven’t got mirror in everywhere in my house yeah, if I am mum at home I see myself and I think I’m was a good mum, very nice and it’s a good feeling.”

In Bushra’s story she suggested that by looking in the Playback mirror one can see things that were previously unnoticed thus moving the teller beyond reflections that could be made independently. She noted the encouraging quality of seeing oneself represented positively.

When Ryam looked into PT’s reflective surface she saw her story from “the other side”. This allowed an inner dialogue to begin where she could protest to herself about her actions and consider alternatives.

“And they, I don’t know something unusual when they are acting about story. You are like watching your story but in the opposite way or in the other side so you will see something, maybe you shouldn’t act like that you shouldn’t say that.”

Ryam’s story continued by suggesting that watching and reflecting on the enactment enabled her to rehearse, or ‘have more experience’ about new ways of being. Perhaps, like Bushra she was also trying to edit the way future stories in her life will play out.

Instead of positioning PT as reflecting back, other portrayals suggested it as a window through which to see other cultures. This led to different perceptions about, or adaptations to, another culture. For example, Soso set her story’s scene by describing her previous perspective about “the problems in Iraq” where she located the country’s difficulties within its people. In the extract below she identified watching the enacted stories of women from Iraq as a turning point for her shift in thinking:
“(PT) is change my mind. If no theatre no make this drama for me I not think Iraq good. I will feel the people is not OK in Iraq, the people is not good but this has changed my mind.”

Other narratives emphasise adjusting to English culture through sharing stories and talking with PT actors. In the extract below Bushra presents PT as filling a knowledge gap about local culture whilst providing an opportunity to practice English. The story creates a sense that there are barriers to learning from locals which disappear in PT.

“And that's another thing, you know about the culture and they ask [the PT actors] about the culture here and they told us more and this was very nice because you know we haven't got English friends here and we want sometimes to know about something and they told us about the culture ... so we know lots about the culture yeah, yeah and improve English, yeah, because we speak English....this very nice”

Bushra spoke with a collective identity using ‘we’ over ‘I’. This could relate to the idea that whilst westerners take an ego-centric view of the world non-westerners have a socio-centric perspective (Kessler et al 2014). However, another interpretation is that Bushra was emphasising the sense of community within the group, and the benefits which go beyond an individual to a group level. Perhaps PT is a place where Bushra's personal and social narratives overlapped as the group formed part of her evolving identity.

The thematic strands of practicing English, developing community, and learning about the local culture were also present in Nisoor's account:

“I am happy for this course to speak more English cos my English is little and community or women to teach and learning something for you, for me ...it's good to know another culture and to know how another is thinking so you can be with these people.”

PT was ascribed the role of tutor: facilitating adjustment to a new culture through language skills and insider knowledge.

**Feeling differently.**

Most of the personal growth narratives involved a transformation of feelings for both tellers and audience members. Some suggested telling resulted in feeling like “something heavy disappear from my shoulders”. Similarly hearing others’ stories about “the same problem” can also “really help” those who have not shared their story.
In the following narrative Soaad related how sharing stories can be normalising, reduce feelings of isolation and shame, and increase confidence.

“It is funny you feel like you’re alone with this problem or something like that but when you tell them and you see that all the ladies or girls agree with you, it happen to them also. Like me, I woke up in the morning and do this and do that and do that and do that and I feel like it’s my routine only, no other lady or family have the same as me. But when I say my story or tell my story and all the other ladies agree with me I feel that they have the same problem so I’m not alone in this situation. Yeah it made me feel normal... and it makes us feel confident because you’re telling your story, you’re telling your problem and you don’t feel shy or ashamed about it. You share it with everybody and you know how to share problems because when somebody doesn’t tell their problems and kept it inside they will feel like they are in prison or something like that if we tell we slightly open this door, you know, may get out and get people in.”

The analogy to a prison cell provides a powerful metaphor conjuring up ideas of isolation and hopelessness. In this narrative sharing took on a key function, or even functioned as a key to unlock the tight grip of problems. Through its sharing component PT was allocated the dual role of liberator and nurturer which facilitated personal growth through two routes: escape from the isolation of one’s problems and envisioning problems as normal and therefore diminished in strength.

In other narratives the emotional shift was one of renewed strength and hope. In the following extract Ritaj used empathy, understanding and support from others to validate her own experience and renew her hope for the future. There was a sense that the characters in this story shared strength and empowered Ritaj to face adversity with resilience.

“She said that they give her a power; and they push her to go on; and she has a big hope in her future. If she stop or have struggling in some way, she need to struggle to reach her aims or the goals; and they give her really push up to continue her life even when she have some difficulties. One day she will forget all these difficulties and they, just the difficulties, will be like a memory.”

For Lojain, this renewed feeling was in the form of her resolution to remain committed to a fight for change. Lojain spoke about watching the enactment of her home country’s revolution:
“Especially when they are shouting ”Yes! Change! Change! And change!” I feel the crowd of my people when they are going to the demonstration. I hear the people shouting “down down Hamad' everything will change, freedom to people just release all the prisoners from the jail.” When they say change, change, change sometimes from the drumming and clicking I feel like it's time to change and we will not stop until the really change happened.”

Lojain’s story told of feeling disconnected from her home country and removed from political action. In the story episode above she described feeling reconnected to the issues through the enactment and motivated to continue her fight for change and freedom.

**New ways of being with others.**

Several personal growth narratives focused on changes in ways of being with others. For some this was through developing skills of patience and confidence while for one woman PT fitted within her ongoing story of cultural change.

In Soso’s narrative of developing patience she recollected painful stories heard at PT, then made comparisons between her own life and other people’s. Soso discussed how her experience of PT enables her to put the demands of her own life in perspective:

“You know this theatre, this playback, I think it help us you know for other people, for a set of story maybe hard story, maybe you learn. And sometimes I'm tired, I have three kids but sometimes you hear a story and think “oh OK, I'm just tired.” When you hear people have big sad than you, you think “OK, I'm very fine”. I have patience now for any problem I think it is OK for me.”

In other narratives PT was situated as assisting the development of confidence in speaking publicly and also within personal relationships. Inas’s narrative began with a period of familiarising herself with PT before building up the courage to tell a story. She spoke about how this confidence has developed, now characterising herself as having agency, being able to speak her mind:

“I don’t have confidence before but now because of this thing I think maybe I can say in public, can stand in public and say what is in my mind, yeah cos I’ve never done that before”

Ryam provided two stories of increasing confidence: within her own relationship and the local community.
“Maybe we are now like more confident especially with our husbands we can talk to them, we can let them think about us, that we are important, that we are human beings, that we have feelings like they have. It makes me more confident to be honest. Because when I saw them acting about our stories like I have more experience about how I will act the next time, how I will say the next time, how I should be, like I should be more stronger; I should be more confident... I have to trust myself.”

Ryam spoke of seeing something different in her story through watching the enactment, as described in the ‘ways of seeing’ theme. She used these insights to consider how she could act differently and how she altered the dynamics of her relationship. As in Inas’s story she attributed increasing agency to herself. This was perhaps reflected in the way she told the story, moving from using a collective identity (we) to an individual identity through the use of ‘I’. In another story Ryam described her concern over how she might be judged by English women. She identified talking with PT actors as increasing her knowledge of English culture which impacted on her interactions within the local community:

“I feel like I’m confident and especially more confident with the women but more confident with the English women like that. So when I go to the market or any place I can talk with them and I can be friends with them after the theatre playback”

PT was also seen as a place where telling political stories became a political action.

“All the media are talking about the revolution except in Bahrain...and they just keep covering and saying nothing is happening in Bahrain and in reality it’s a very bad revolution and very bad situation in Bahrain dealing from very bad treating from the government to its people and I told that, I think that I am the voice of my country so it’s a little bit media but I can show the others how my people are suffering there and the situation there are not stable at all and really it’s very bad ...for me, I feel happy because I let the people  or the others know about our revolution so maybe they were blind or deaf somewhere, somehow I think that I remover their sunglasses and open their ears in some way so...I give something to my country.”

For Lojain, PT featured within a wider canvas of change. Her story described how she needed to feel connected with her country and participate in political actions like demonstrations. Telling of her country’s predicament through PT was an action within a pre-established change narrative. In this story Lojain not only situated herself as agentic but gives herself the role of liberating others so they can think for themselves too.
**Discussion**

The storylines presented PT as a process where the telling of stories promotes feelings of connection, trust, validation and empathy; thus reflecting Salas’s (2000) observation that an audience’s empathic response is validating for tellers and reduces feelings of isolation. The cultural differences between audience members and performers were framed positively; the audience members connected to each other through their shared experience but still valued the empathy of the Western actors and the opportunity to learn about English culture. Contained by this empathic context both painful and joyous stories could be told, with the former particularly associated with emotional release.

PT was identified as facilitating personal growth through changes in the way the women saw themselves and others, their feelings about an experience, or their way of being with others in the world. This supports Moran and Alon’s (2010) finding that personal growth is facilitated through PT and Fox’s (1999b) claim that PT enactments can help individuals gain personal insights.

In deciding whether to tell a story the gains of personal growth and emotional release were weighed up against the potential risks of shame and regret. The women carefully considered which story they would tell, who was in the audience, how those people might judge them and how they might feel after telling. Rowe (2007) noted the criticism that PT is ‘therapy without boundaries’. Contrary to this, the present research provides evidence that audience members made pro-active choices to enable their own safety within the PT structures.

**PT and psychological theory**

Psychological theories of change might offer frameworks for understanding the therapeutic potential of PT. Examples from psychodynamic, systemic narrative based models and community psychology perspectives are discussed.

The stories in this study contained the idea that watching one’s story enacted can lead to emotional release. This has previously been linked to the ‘aesthetic distance’: when the cognitive ‘over distance’ created from an observer role and the affective ‘under distance’ from the personal significance of the story become balanced (Landy, 1997). This notion relates to the concept of emotional regulation from attachment theory where oscillating between experiencing feelings and processing them via carer feedback helps create reflective meaning (Bateman & Fonagy, 2006). Similarly, Fink (1990) links the aesthetic distance in PT with psychodynamic approaches. She
suggested that they tap into the same therapeutic processes: the re-enactment or re-telling enables cognitions and affect of past events to be re-experienced and integrated, thus leading to recognition, acceptance and catharsis. Some of the stories in this study described recognition where watching the enactment helped ‘tellers’ see something new in their story.

Insight is also thought to play a role within narrative therapy. Gonçalve & Ribeiro (2012) suggested that innovative moments, similar to uncovering unique outcomes, characterise therapeutic change. Two of the five types of narrative change they described are ‘reflection’ and ‘performing change’. ‘Reflection’ refers to “new ways of thinking, feeling and new understandings about the implications of the problem in the client’s life that allow him or her to defy the demands of the problematic self-narrative.” This may correspond with some of the stories within the personal growth theme in the present research. Through watching their stories played back tellers can see, feel and think about their experiences in new ways.

The transformative narratives within ‘ways of being’ also overlap with Gonçalve & Ribeiro’s narrative of ‘performing change’: the ‘process of transforming in-therapy outcomes into extra-therapy changes’. PT could be a place where narratives of innovative moments are attended to and perhaps strengthened. PT has the potential to challenge inequalities by firstly allowing hidden stories of inequality to be heard and secondly by providing space for reflecting.

From a community psychology perspective PT maintains the preliterate theatre tradition of passing on cultural knowledge. Sharing stories led to learning from others’ experiences and wisdom, thereby making use of community resources and promoting social support (Orford, 2008). This approach is consistent with community psychology’s emphasis on working outside clinical settings in the context where life stories are created. Within PT there are no attempts to ‘treat’ those who tell stories, just to listen and enact: power for change is located within the community itself, not a clinical ‘expert’. For the women within the current research this was enough to foster personal growth which by any other name could be called therapeutic. Although the women talked about bringing their own problems to PT, their enactment shifted the told story from an individual to a shared representational context.

**Specificity of the research and clinical applications**

One woman in the study commented that attending psychotherapy is shameful in her culture and is to be avoided; instead, PT became her psychotherapy. This highlighted
the importance of having community interventions outside of clinical settings. The stories told in this study indicate that PT provides a place for personal stories to be heard, supported and reflected upon. This is especially important when making sense of disruptions to everyday lives. The participants in this study had not just experienced the disruption of moving country but also devastation within their country of origin. The research took place at a time of mass revolutions and uprisings in many of the women’s home countries, referred to as the Arab Spring or Arab Uprisings. PT may be a place where meaning can be attached to disjunctions and the subsequent difficulties of relocating to a new culture. Through the connection and support which all women described, PT could be viewed as taking a preventative role in the development of personal difficulties by creating a community capable of supporting those in distress to make meaningful changes within their lives.

This research was not designed to be generalised to all populations: the narratives are specific to the context of Arabic Muslim women, living in England, speaking to an English woman for research purposes. However, considering the idea that we draw on available cultural discourses when meaning-making, the findings may be relevant beyond this setting. The findings provide some preliminary evidence of the therapeutic effectiveness of PT for women who are often underrepresented and unheard and yet have experienced significant disruptions to, or traumas in, their lives.

A subjective and reflexive perspective on research limitations and improvements

Analysis of narratives is a subjective interpretation of the data. This version has been privileged by the power that accompanies researcher status and is just one way of representing the data. This research represents ‘Otherness’ (Kitzinger & Wilkinson, 1996) along many dimensions. My identity (KG) differs from those who participated in the research: I am White English, not married, have no children and consider myself a feminist. We (all authors and participants) have the commonality of being women but our experiences of this will be very different.

Though cross-cultural research has been criticised as presumptuous in assuming the voice of the Other, Livia (1996) suggests speaking only for ourselves acts to maintain the silence of less privileged voices whilst increasing the dominance of white Western academics. One way the research may have addressed concerns around interpreting Others’ stories through one’s own cultural frame of reference is through collaboration
with someone from a refugee or asylum seeker perspective during the analysis phase. However, there are arguments that this can be tokenistic since one person cannot claim to be representative of their social group. Therefore, bracketing interviews were adopted here together with member checking to minimise the impact of the researcher’s cultural background, assumptions and beliefs.

Further, participants involved in the member checking process agreed that the research gave a valid representation of their stories. One woman added that the identification of PT as confidence building was perhaps more significant than I had described. She told me that “Muslim women don’t describe themselves in this way usually” and therefore the finding that women describe PT as increasing their confidence is very important. Another woman found the theme of ‘becoming a teller’ particularly fitting to her experience and commented that the stories not told were usually those around their relationships with their husbands.

Overall, this study addressed the lack of research exploring audience experiences of PT and provides preliminary evidence for its benefits within a refugee and asylum seeker community. It provides some validation of PT performers’ reflections on what is effective within their practice. However, much more research is needed to explore how other groups of individuals understand their experiences of attending PT sessions in both clinical and non-clinical populations. Further research might explore the long term impact of PT. Some of the women in the current research spoke of the powerful impact of PT after just one or two performances; therefore, it would be interesting to explore audience perceptions of one-off performances as well as within ongoing groups, perhaps after six months or longer.

**Conclusion**

The themes identified in this analysis combine to create an overall story of PT as a community approach where the telling and hearing of stories takes place in a safe and supportive context thereby facilitating emotional release and an experience of personal growth and change. The stories told about PT mirror some aspects of formal therapies that have a proven evidence base. For example, the stories described an emotional release, the development of personal reflection and insight, and personal transformations such as becoming more confident or patient. These helpful aspects of PT can be understood within psychological frameworks such as psychodynamic and narrative therapy. However, unlike formal interventions, PT offers the continuity of friendships and support within a real community setting. This form of supporting
others is in line with community psychology perspectives which help mobilise resources within communities as a way of providing prevention and intervention strategies.

The women in this photo are part of a new group and not those who participated in the research for reasons of identity safety.

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(Spanish translation on P. 81, References follow Spanish translation on P. 98)

Mas aos poucos, a necessidade de conhecer uns ao outros foi aumentando. Já no final de 2007, logo após a Conferência, Rea Dennis voltou a São Paulo para unir os laços de quem fazia Playback na cidade. Em 2008, em seu processo de formação, a Dionisos Teatro, de Joinville, promoveu um curso também com a Rea e com a Magda Miranda, e nele, praticantes de Curitiba, Florianópolis e Joinville começaram a partilhar conhecimento. Outro passo na direção desse encontro foi a Conferência Internacional em Frankfurt, em 2011. Lá, o grupo Nhemia, de São Paulo, fez uma apresentação com um tempero bem brasileiro, unindo todos em volta de uma panela de brigadeiro, possibilitando que o doce típico, junto com as histórias pessoais, pudessem ser compartilhados com pessoas de outros 32 países. Aquele foi um momento de se olhar, e ver que os grupos estavam aumentando, assim como sua diversidade em termos estéticos e de campos de atuação.

Em 2014, com a vinda dos cursos do Centro de Playback para Curitiba, o caminho do Encontro foi finalmente traçado. No último dia do curso avançado, ministrado por Jonathan Fox, os participantes se olharam e viram que precisavam tomar as rédeas sobre os próximos passos do movimento de Teatro Playback no país.
Cada um expressou rapidamente as coisas que aprendeu e vivenciou naqueles dias. Toda essa energia gerada culminou num grupo de pessoas que decidiram botar a mão na massa. Em 2015, na Conferência em Montreal, esse movimento foi consolidado internacionalmente, visto que os representantes brasileiros neste encontro se uniram para fazer uma apresentação com uma “cara” brasileira, marcando simbolicamente este momento vivido pelos praticantes do país.

O comitê organizador do Encontro foi formado voluntariamente e, durante quase um ano, Victor, Bernardo, Daniele (de Curitiba); Sheila (de São Paulo); Clarice (de Joinville) e Rodolfo (de Belo Horizonte) se reuniram semanalmente para botar as ideias de pé. Visando realizar um Encontro da forma mais democrática possível, a “eleição” da cidade sede foi feita online, onde os playbackers brasileiros puderam assinalar sua preferência, após pesquisa prévia das possibilidades.

Dessa forma, Joinville foi escolhida para sediar o 1º Encontro Brasileiro de Teatro Playback. A oferta do local de realização veio do grupo Abismo, que tem sua sede na AMORABI – Associação dos Moradores e Amigos do Bairro Itinga. Trata-se de um local comunitário,
localizado num bairro afastado do centro da cidade de Joinville, onde existe um CEI – Centro de Educação Infantil e um Espaço Cultural, onde acontecem apresentações culturais e aulas de teatro e artesanato (entre outras coisas) para a comunidade.

Assumindo um caráter comunitário e colaborativo, de forma a garantir a acessibilidade e representatividade, o Encontro teve como taxa de inscrição um valor simbólico de R$ 20,00, e opções gratuitas de acomodação (estilo acampamento ou hospedagem solidária). O Encontro também contou com doações que foram utilizadas como ajuda de custo para a passagem aérea de playbackers de muito longe. Assim, Joinville recebeu na AMORABI 51 playbackers de 14 grupos diferentes dos Estados de Santa Catarina, Paraná, São Paulo, Minas Gerais, Paraíba e Distrito Federal.

E o Encontro aconteceu debaixo de uma chuva constante, entre os dias 09 e 12 de outubro de 2015. Jonathan Fox estava na abertura, através de um vídeo gentilmente gravado. O dia começava com um aquecimento de integração. As oficinas foram ministradas por participantes que se inscreveram antecipadamente, e abordaram temas como: interpretação, música, jogos de improviso, condução, a escuta do ator, semiótica, teatro espontâneo e meditação. A plenária aconteceu abordando os temas: Playback nas Universidades, na Comunidade, nas Empresas e através de Editais Públicos. Jo Salas também compareceu em uma videoconferência, falando e respondendo perguntas dos playbackers brasileiros. Aconteceram também as “Jam sessions”, espaço livre para fazer playback com as mais variadas pessoas. E teve festa também, com muita música e abraços apertados.

Como não poderia faltar, também aconteceram as apresentações. Foram 5 grupos se apresentando: Grupo Abismo, Libração (formado por atores surdos) e Cheios de Graça (formado por clowns) de Joinville, Caras de Palco de Florianópolis e uma apresentação especial dos playbackers mais antigos, que fechou o evento com chave de ouro. E era nesse momento sagrado das histórias que o Encontro acontecia. Encontro entre os playbackers e a comunidade local, entre surdos e ouvintes, entre pessoas de diferentes cidades e vivências.

O Encontro que iniciou sendo organizado por algumas pessoas, terminou como responsabilidade de todos. As “cucas”, gentilmente oferecidas pela comunidade da AMORABI, foram divididas; na hora do intervalo, várias pessoas se responsabilizaram pelo café; todos cuidaram da carona dos que não
tinham carros; e a comunicação e integração entre surdos e ouvintes foi aumentando.

O Teatro Playback no Brasil tem números desafios pela frente. Como o próprio país, precisa lidar com um crescimento que respeite a diversidade. Assim como no microcosmo de um grupo, precisa saber quais valores precisam ser cultivados e quais posições estéticas, éticas e políticas tomar. A forma como se organiza e se realiza um Encontro reflete também os rumos que se quer para a prática. O 1º Encontro Brasileiro de Teatro Playback foi cheio de empoderamento, ternura e aconchego. Que venham os próximos!

*Clarice é atriz da Dionisos Teatro (Joinville), praticante de Teatro Playback desde 2008 e autora do livro “Nossas Histórias em Cena: um Encontro com o Teatro Playback”. Contato: dioteatro@gmail.com / www.dionisosteatro.com.br

Site do 1º Encontro Brasileiro de Teatro Playback: http://encontroplayback.wix.com/2015

(English translation on P. 76)
(Spanish translation on P.78)
Conflict at conferences

A letter to the IPTN community

Jonathan Fox

Dear colleagues and playback theatre conference organizers,

The last European Playback Theatre conference, which took place in Amsterdam, began with a fantastic mix of national melodies enabling participants from over 30 countries to stand and identify themselves. It was a joyous moment, as groups danced exuberantly to their national music, embodying the excitement we always feel when we hold international playback meetings.

The organizers also asked Jo Salas and me to conduct a half-hour segment of playback theatre focusing on the conference theme—active citizenship. This playback segment turned out to be surprisingly contentious. What shot to the surface were a series of emotional-laden moments pointing to inter- and intra-national conflicts. Afterwards, many people, both those who had told, but not had time to tell fully, and those who were not given a chance to tell, felt dissatisfied.

I've been thinking about that opening ever since. Playback theatre’s reach is now so broad, extending fingers throughout the globe, that we may hold very different narratives about each other. The differences can lead to hard feelings.

The Amsterdam conference is just an example. Lately many of our gatherings have been shaken by eruptions of conflict. In my view we are often unprepared for them. In fact, I would say that in general playback performers and conductors are not well trained to handle contentious stories.

The purpose of this letter is to offer some suggestions for dealing with this issue. It will not be easy, but I see it as an opportunity to become clear on how we can manage conflict in playback theatre and thus deepen its overall usefulness and power.

**Suggestion #1.** Recognize that performing PT at a conference, especially at the opening, is a special kind of charged moment, with overlapping objectives, such as introducing conference members to one another and to the conference theme, helping participants settle in, and making diplomatic gestures. The time frame is always short and performers may not be practiced with one another, which leaves them vulnerable...
to mistakes. At the same time, it is an international forum and a tremendous opportunity to have one’s story heard. We should expect that any narrative might include issues of conflict, or trigger counternarratives from others; we can expect that as well as feelings of excitement and conviviality, feelings of anger or upset might arise.

Conductors and actors should be mindful and ready. They should have some knowledge of the cultural backgrounds of conference participants. They should have thought through beforehand the potential for possibly unsettling stories. Performers should examine their own composition in relation to these potential stories. They should be sure to plan for sufficient time afterwards to debrief as a performing group.

Should the conductor be sure to give the “other side” a voice when a contentious narrative emerges? Not necessarily. This is a very complex question. While it is true that we want to promote fairness as well as respect, a number of factors enter the picture. I will mention just two.

First are the time and purpose factors already mentioned. There is not time at an opening adequately to hear from both sides in what may be a highly complex, generations-old conflict. The opening has other purposes.

Furthermore, we must also honor our commitment to hearing from the voice with less access, less traditional power. Justice may demand hearing from those tellers, where acceding to a demand for equal time will only perpetuate the presence of the dominant voice.

There is no magic formula here. The important thing is for conductor and performers to be informed, personally aware, and strategic in their choices on the stage.

**Suggestion #2.** Create a standing home group expressly to deal with stories of conflict. What stories come up will depend on who signs up. But the existence of this home group will serve a number of purposes. It will make it clear to the playback community that including stories of conflict are an essential part of our practice. It will teach skills in dealing with them. And it will allow a longer time frame for working through issues that may arise at the conference.

**Suggestion #3.** No matter how well-run a conference is, there will always be rough edges. We should always make space towards the end of the conference expressly for people to express unhappy or uncomfortable feelings and see them enacted. It may be advantageous to use another method in conjunction with playback theatre, such as
Theatre of the Oppressed or Worldwork. This session should be facilitated by a leader skilled in managing conflicting viewpoints.

**Suggestion #4.** This suggestion concerns the tellers—that is, every conference participant. In the sometimes intimidating presence of colleagues, in the crush to be seen, in the face of strange and unfamiliar cultural behavior, even in the proximity of my traditional enemy, can I maintain my authenticity? Can I be spontaneous, fitting my need to the appropriateness of the moment? Can I let others have the stage as well as myself? As colleagues who are also potential playback tellers, we all have responsibility. I imagine that we as a community can come up with guidelines for behavior at conferences that will be helpful to new and old participants observe a policy of good will and consideration for each other.

**Suggestion #5.** This suggestion is vague and uncertain, but I wonder if we can take advantage of modern technology to set up long-term vehicles for dealing with issues of conflict that arise at conferences. It might be a Facebook group, a Skype group, or some other means of enabling a small group to continue in dialogue with each other. Such an ongoing group would not be the same as doing playback theatre together, but it would allow what could be meaningful sharing that might build bridges for future gatherings.

Our playback gatherings are a time for joyful dancing, and also an opportunity to confront some of the difficulties of working together on the international stage. Let’s find a constructive way to expect, even welcome the disruptive stories. Let’s make time for them. And in the process let’s expand our skills in playback theatre.

Jonathan Fox, co-founder, playback theatre
Who Can Listen to My Story?

Playback Theatre on wartime experiences in Nepal

Anne Dirnstofer

Working with Playback in Nepal has been in my mind for more than ten years, since I first took a Playback Theatre training with Kirstine Due from Denmark in 2004. This was during the time of armed conflict in Nepal, when the Maoist People’s Liberation Army (PLA) was fighting their armed struggle against monarchy, social exclusion and discrimination (1996-2006). The vast majority of Nepalis living in rural areas found themselves torn between threats from either side, the Maoist or the Nepali Army. There was an atmosphere of fear and mistrust and the media was widely censored. During that time, Nepali theatre activists couldn’t imagine Playback Theatre to work in their communities. They assumed people would not dare to speak up. Telling personal stories would expose individuals too much and maybe also be generally inappropriate in their collectivistic culture.

In 2006, a Comprehensive Peace Agreement was finally reached which eventually led to the abolition of monarchy and paved the way for democratic elections. When the peace process started, the atmosphere slowly changed. Debates became more open and the media also reported more on the time of conflict. Nevertheless, the root causes of the armed conflict (such as structural discrimination, poverty, exclusion and marginalization) did not get much attention even after the Maoists won the elections in 2008. Further, the legal prosecution of atrocities committed during the conflict by state actors as well as by the Maoist People’s Liberation Army remained a social and political taboo. For many years it seemed that the only common agreement all political parties in power shared, was not to touch the past. Victims’ organizations claimed the inadequate responses of the government(s) when it came to compensation payments or acknowledgment of past wrongdoings. Most of the times the victims’ voices were unheard.

In 2014, more than seven years after it had been agreed upon in the Peace Agreement, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission Nepal was formed. Provisions that would have allowed blank amnesty to war time crimes were ruled out. However, the hopes that the commission in its current setup can satisfy the claims for justice raised by the civil society are small. The gap between the interests of national
level political parties and the needs at community level seems just too big.

My idea to design a Playback Theatre project for working on reconciliation in Nepal had been on my mind for a long time, but it had needed to ripen. I did not want to lead one-time workshops for people who might then not use the approach. I wanted to design a comprehensive peacebuilding project that would give space for long-term change. I felt that Playback is quite complex to learn for actors, and also challenging for them when the stories carry a lot of traumatic weight. So the project had to address different needs.

How would I guarantee a proper set up?
How would I make sure that the actors were able to enact the stories with the right dignity and respect?
How could we avoid potential spoilers to hinder us from addressing the violent past?
How would I guarantee that there was a supportive framework that would avoid re-traumatization or secondary trauma?

All these questions were shaping my thoughts. My vision was that locally initiated Playback Theatre dialogues would contribute to the social cohesion at community level. A bottom-up reconciliation process based on personal sharing and acknowledging could start from the grassroots level and would support the communities even when the national-level truth-finding process remained unsatisfying. It would address the need to reconnect in the community.

From my experience in Nepal I learned that theatre has always played an important role in historic change processes. Nepalis from all different backgrounds (gender, caste/ethnicity, hill/plains, class, age) love to watch theatre and theatre, dance and songs work as a strong social connector in each community. The street drama movement in the 1980s used theatre as a relatively accepted way to express political opinions and formed an important force in the democracy movement back then. Methods of the Theatre of the Oppressed, like Forum Theatre, were started from 2002 and were widely spread to address topics of discrimination and exclusion.

I had done research on Forum Theatre in 2004 and was living in Nepal from 2009 to 2014 working as a trainer in Conflict Transformation and Theatre. For most of that time the past seemed to be too delicate to touch upon and people preferred to focus on present conflicts in the communities, mainly in the field of domestic violence and caste discrimination. Theatre of the Oppressed provided the perfect tools to reflect on social patterns as well as to
open up spaces for discussing potential for change. I trained groups in different parts of the country and encouraged them to work together and also to find ways to access local funding. The experience was overwhelmingly rich. Tremendous personal development happened for the actors and actresses through their theatre activism. Young women, especially, boosted their self-esteem by exploring the physical expressions around the topic of oppression. The actors suddenly seemed to perceive their own community life in a different way and learned ways to speak up for more justice.

However, while I was seeing many changes on the individual level I realized how difficult it was to see community-level change happening through theatre activism. It takes a lot of time and energy to properly observe how audiences get affected through theatre activities. Obviously, there is a need to work in the same community with continuity and strong locally grounded commitment on certain topics.

How to make sure that the trained artists are performing regularly after the training is over?

How to maintain the transformative quality of the theatre activism instead of letting it slip away into pure entertainment?

The Project: “EnActing Dialogue”

My belief was that a Nepali Playback programme had to be locally rooted in the communities with high needs for reconciliation. So I decided to focus on villages where high numbers of Maoist ex-combatants have settled over the last years. My assumption was that these communities were especially challenged regarding their social cohesion. Former community members often perceived the ex-combatants as potential actors of violence. The ex-combatants on the other hand see themselves as the ones who struggled for social justice and change and who mostly did not get the merits for their achievements. They are frustrated to see their new communities being full of discriminatory patterns that they had risked their lives to change. There is mutual distrust as well as feelings of fear, guilt and shame. At the same time people are meeting every day and there is an obvious need to cooperate for the development of the community.

But how can Playback Theatre activities contribute to the social cohesion of such communities?

What is the Theory of Change behind my assumption?

Will people be willing to share their stories?
Does sharing stories and seeing them enacted in Playback by itself bring people together?

Would we do harm for actors or audiences?

What will happen after the performances?

In my vision the project had to have an artistic and at the same time a sociopolitical focus. We needed to work closely with Nepali artists, as Playback Theatre had to be translated into a “Nepali way” of doing Playback Theatre rather than a copy-paste version of something done in the West or elsewhere in the world. However, I felt that theatre artists from Kathmandu would not be the ones who would help the project to be strongly locally rooted in the communities. When performing in the communities, they perform as “actors” but not as people with a shared knowledge of direct experiences from the war. As professional artists they are outsiders in the communities which is an advantage and disadvantage at the same time. At first it seems easier for them to open up delicate issues like the armed conflict and to invite painful memories on stage. Later on, audiences might feel distance as the actors do not stay close to them for long and they do not live with them after starting the dialogue processes.

Keeping sustainability and long-term change in mind, it was crucial to train people from the very communities to whom we wished to perform; people who could regularly perform Playback in their villages. People who shared the experiences of the audience, people with similar caste backgrounds and people who shared the same languages.[1] So, we started a partnership with Pro Public, a Nepali NGO that had already trained local dialogue facilitators in the target communities. Half of the people they trained were ex-combatants, the other half were members from the communities. They had worked in small dialogue groups for more than a year, sharing their own stories face-to-face, and experiencing – many for the first time – the relief of talking about what had happened to them during the armed conflict. With the idea to extend these small dialogue efforts, we decided to train these dialogue facilitators in Playback Theatre.
The Process: Chautari Theatre in Nepali Communities

As a first step we formed a group of twelve professional Nepali actors based on their skills in improvisation, music, physical expression but also on their general attitude and capacities for empathy. We conducted a short workshop session for the selection of actors, where they had to present to each other and where we could already see their capacities for active listening and empathizing with others. The final selection was also based on a criteria of inclusion, so that we had a mix of male/female, low caste/high caste and different ethnic backgrounds presented on stage. These criteria of inclusion were challenging, as many of the professional Nepali theatre artists are male and high caste. However, I had to insist that it did matter as the inclusive representation on stage would define our credibility in the communities and also our capacities to really create an artistic resonance for their stories.

Together with our Partner Organization, Pro Public and my colleague Christoph Werthmann, we started the project by organizing a joint “Playback Theatre Laboratory” with these twelve actors. Besides teaching Playback skills we jointly developed the Nepali terminology for the Playback approach and chose the forms we thought to be suitable for the Nepali context. The name “Chautari Natak” (=Chautari Theatre) came up in order to connect Playback Theatre to the Nepali tradition of having social gatherings under a Bar and Pipal tree (called “Chautari” in Nepali).[2]

During the artist’s laboratory we organized a small first performance, by inviting the people from a village next to our training place. It was a nearby community in the Kathmandu Valley, a region that was not particularly affected by the war. The actors were excited as most of them still thought that Chautari Theatre might not work that well in Nepal. However, to everybody’s surprise, the stories popped up easily. The villagers came to the teller’s chair and without asking for it, stories from the armed conflict emerged. Some people even said that they had shared stories for the very first time. You could see the relief in their faces and they expressed gratitude while having tea afterwards. You could feel the need for spaces of empathic listening and acknowledgment. Spaces that do not exist anymore in most communities, maybe because of the fear, divide and mistrust that the war has created.

After the laboratory we split the actors into two Chautari ensembles and traveled in two teams to Eastern and Western Nepal (our target communities were located in six different districts in
the Nepali Terai region). The teams were each accompanied by one staff member of our Nepali Partner Organization, one by my colleague and one by me. At first, we organized performances for each community, so that they would see Playback for the first time. Then only would it be possible for the dialogue facilitators from the communities to imagine what Playback work is all about. Only then would they be able to decide whether they were interested to take part in our training process. So, after every performance we had an interaction with the dialogue facilitators, asking for comments and also offering them the chance to be part of our programme. They were impressed by the method but also a bit shy: will we be able to do what the professional artists from Kathmandu just showed us?

We had to encourage them to trust that Playback can be learned by anyone who is ready to open his or her heart to others. Based on their interest, their former dialogue experience, their general stable personality and the mentioned criteria of inclusion, we formed dialogue facilitator’s Chautari Teams of eight people in each district.[3] The artists managed to motivate the dialogue facilitators and by the time of the first training their fear started to slowly disappear. We trained forty-eight dialogue facilitators in different training groups and in two rounds (basic & advanced training), each time working in tandem with some of the professional Nepali actors. During the advanced trainings the dialogue facilitators had their first “own” performance in their own community. They did not think it would work, but the experiences were just like the artists’: the stories popped up easily and the audience was happy and relieved after the performances.

Afterwards, the dialogue facilitators organized their own performances individually. The project staff of Pro Public and some of the artists came to visit them from time to time, in order to give them feedback and a space to reflect on their own learning process. Towards the end of the year, they felt really comfortable with the method and are now eager to learn more and spread their performances.
Our Learning: Insights and Responsibilities of the Process

We learned to fully trust the Playback process. Wanting to contribute to reconciliation and healing from the armed conflict, we did not have to give any theme to our dialogue events. The issues emerged through the atmosphere we created and the kind of audiences we invited. The audience was mainly composed from former combatants of the Maoist PLA, so-called conflict victims, local politicians and security personnel. Gaining trust in the Playback ritual, they started to share their stories from the war or stories from the present which most of the times were somehow linked to the root causes of the war. Some audience members were surprised, as witnessing a Playback performance suddenly evoked an urge to share their story. There was a woman of a village in Banke district who came to me and some of the actors after the performance, telling that she also had a story, but that it was too heavy to speak about it. We had tea and biscuits together and I told her, that it is totally okay not to share, if she feels the time is not ripe. However, while having tea, somehow she went into her story and started telling the “untellable”. In the end it was easier than she had thought. She cried and thanked us for coming. When we returned to the same village about two months later with the group of local dialogue facilitators having become the actors, she was again in the audience. She happened to be the first one to go on stage. But when sitting down on the teller’s chair, she decided to tell a different story, one that was a bit “easier” and had fewer feelings of guilt and helplessness connected to it. However, as the performance moved on and three or four other stories had come up, she kindly asked the conductor, whether it was okay to come and tell a second story. The conductor agreed and she told “the” story; the one that just two months before she felt could never be told. Afterwards she was proud and seemingly relieved of a lot of emotional weight. For the first time she had found a space where her story could be listened to.

Performance in Dang: former combatant facilitating dialogue in the community

Heavy stories were also shared during the training process itself as we encouraged all participants to be the teller at least once. One day, when we
were about to practice the free story form for the first time, a dialogue facilitator told a crucial war experience. He was a jolly fellow, the best dancer in our group, and behind his big smiling face one would have never imagined what he then revealed. He had been a child soldier and when joining the PLA, almost the same day he was handed a gun and taken into a major combat. He was extremely afraid and felt completely lost in the crossfire situation. In the middle of the invasion he got shot in the leg and lost his consciousness. Somehow he was rescued and they were able to save his leg, which eventually healed well.

While telling he was sweating and trembling and struggling to keep up his smiling face at the same time knowing that his story had a “happy end” (as our joint dancing, jumping and acting had proved to everyone in the room). When he finished, there was a short moment when I felt the impulse to stop the actors. I thought they were not “ready” enough to enact such a heavy story in an adequate way. It was their first free story improvisation and it happened to be a story of trauma, a story that needed to be represented with special care. The dialogue facilitators on stage were all new to Playback and new to acting, so I was worried that they would do injustice to the story. At the same time I had a sense that this jolly dancer badly wanted to see his experience on stage. He consciously picked his time to tell and he knew who was there on stage to present.

So, I let it happen, thinking that it might be superficially improvised and would leave him unsatisfied. However, I totally underestimated the fact that two men and one woman on stage were themselves ex-combatants, possibly with similar stories. So, when the moment of the cross firing happened, the musician, of ex-combatant background, went wild with the drums and the actors made guns out of cloth and pointed at each other. Their physical expression on stage created an unbelievable intensity.

**Bardiya:** Dialogue and change of perspective “within” the Training process; ex-combatant is enacting the story of one of the lead artists, when she had to hide under the school table during crossfire between PLA and Nepali Army in 2004.
The teller was sweating and sweating, his hands were shivering and tears dropped from his eyes. He was overwhelmed with emotions and unable to speak for a long while. It was obvious that we could not go on with the workshop’s rehearsal. It was already late afternoon, the room was full of emotions and due to a regional heat wave, the temperature was almost forty degrees. So, we had a physical ritual to jointly step out of the roles. We had some cold drinks to cool down the emotions and then started to share our feelings on what had just happened. The other ex-combatants said that they were happy to have the trust and the task to perform this horrible situation for him. The non-combatants on stage felt much more insecure about how to show it and were afraid of making mistakes. Towards the end the teller expressed his gratitude of being able to see his story on stage. He felt like he was now more part of the group than before.

The next day of the workshop we introduced the topic of self-care, an important part of our advanced trainings. As the dialogue facilitators would go on to continue the performances on their own and would only get our support from time to time, it was crucial that they knew how to protect themselves from getting negatively affected by the stories. We talked about personal boundaries and ways to communicate them. Are there stories I cannot enact and what will I do if they emerge? Where do I feel it in my body if that happens?

We practiced deep breathing and personal positions of strength in order not to be “drawn” into someone’s story. We also encouraged them to use eye contact and sign language to switch to the music or go off stage when they feel they will not be able to act. So, far it has not happened often, but there have been incidents when they switched place to protect themselves. They managed to do so without the audience noticing it. We also highlighted the importance of regular rehearsals to prepare for the performances and joint exercises to step out of the roles afterwards. We encouraged them to regularly share their feelings in the group so that they do not take the burden of the enacted stories home. However, we feel that it remains crucial to accompany the Chautari ensembles, so that they have a regular opportunity to process their experiences.

**Conclusion & vision: Continuing the Process**

Our experiences have shown us that Playback Theatre has tremendous potential in Nepal. Sharing personal stories with the support of theatre art seems to be widely accepted. We did not face any situation where people wanted
to stop the Playback ritual.[4] The possibility to receive the empathy of the actors through their enactment is creating relief for the audience. At the same time I feel that the actors carry a lot of responsibility to keep up the quality of the performances and also to stay emotionally stable. Regular training inputs as well as feedback and coaching are important for them to continue their work without being distressed. It is desirable that the support of professional artists for the grassroots dialogue facilitators can continue as they can be strong role models and sources of inspiration.

With more than eighty performances we managed to initiate grassroots dialogue on the past in the selected communities throughout 2015. On many occasions, stories from opposing sides (ex-combatants, community members, army personnel) were shared and enacted in one room. Being touched by everyone’s story, an atmosphere of mutual respect and empathy has been strengthened in the communities. In order to connect these bottom-level reconciliation efforts with the national level, we have produced a short documentary that was screened in the capital in November 2015.[5] We invited selected dialogue facilitators from all districts to share their experiences with members of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and the national level peace worker community.

The goal was to raise an awareness that reconciliation has to be worked for at all levels (grassroots and national level) and that truth seeking also needs to include personal healing and the integration of traumatic experiences.
At the government level people were touched by our Playback Theatre work and expressed their general support for its continuation.

Seeing the good impact of the Chautari performances, the professional artists also took over the ownership of the approach and included it in other projects. A few weeks after we initiated our first training process, Nepal got struck by two major earthquakes that killed more than eight thousand people and destroyed whole villages. The artists have started to perform Playback for earthquake survivors in these places. Also there, people appreciate to have a space where they can share their feelings and experiences connected to their losses. In the present humanitarian crisis Playback has proven to be an approach that can support healing and reconciliation in the Nepali communities. A growing number of Nepali artists are working with it and hopefully will continue to spread Playback Theatre in the near future.

Performance in Dang: Actors performing the story of a local political leader describing his feelings during a bomb blast in the police station near his house.

Audience in Dang watching our performance that was organized in a tent in the open space.
More than 120 languages are spoken in Nepal.

Chautari is a community place where the Bar and Pipal tree are planted together (traditionally a Hindu marriage ceremony is organized for the two trees). It exists in almost every Nepali village and many of the trees are of impressive size. Here, people can strip-off their heavy load, take rest in the shadow and interact with each other. Traditionally, the Chautari is also the place in public where conflicts are being settled by village elders.

The groups consisted of four male/four female, four ex-combatants/four community members and members of different castes and ethnic groups. Some of the members also had disabilities that were mostly linked to war time injuries. Even though most of them had worked together in the previous project, a big effort was needed to build trust between them.

Given the fact that open dialogue and war time atrocities are still a taboo and something that shall only be done by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, it is impressive that through theatre we can create a space for personal narratives. Although we sometimes hear stories of army or police torture and extrajudicial killings, our Playback performances have not been perceived as politically charged and thus have been accepted by all sides.

Link to the documentary “EnActing Dialogue – Storytelling for Reconciliation and Healing”: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NeLF-nr7FSA

German-speaking Network, PTN e.V., celebrates 10th Birthday with a Newsletter

Many will know that the German-language playback world is well-networked and that its connections reach far beyond its region. From small beginnings in Switzerland in the 1980s, to the annual regional gatherings which began in the 1990s - Stuttgart, Dusseldorf, Zurich, Vienna - strong bonds to the (then) School of PT in the US inspired practitioners to set up the German-speaking Schule für Playback Theater, in 2004. Then in 2005, a registered association was set up, to give the school its needed legal framework and provide a network for playback groups and practitioners in the region. The Playback-Theater-Netzwerk e.V. has since supported the growth and development of the school, provided continuity for the annual gatherings and was the organising body for the 2011 IPTN conference in Frankfurt.

(to be continued on P. 75)
"Best Friends? Not Quite"

Playback Theatre in elementary school [1]

Børge Kristoffersen and Audun Mollan Kristoffersen

Introduction

Mariam was in the fourth grade and was the only one of the twenty students who wore a hijab. Now she talked about her dream day. A Playback Theatre (PT) company with actors and musician stood on the playing space in the classroom, a rack of silk cloth in all colours to use in the play were also there and Mariam sat on her chair and had a dialogue with the conductor. The theme of the performance was *No one left on the outside*, a programme initiated by *Save the Children* that builds on children's rights around participation and solidarity, a topic that is in the fourth grade curriculum. The programme seeks to encourage an inclusive school environment and seeks to increase solidarity with children from other countries. In one of the *No one left on the outside* booklets this is about being involved, to be seen, heard and respected, and not to be left out in friendship and play (Redd Barna, 2006). In advance for the performance, the class had worked with the student manual: *No one left on the outside games*. The booklet shows games that are being played by children from different parts of the world. One of the games described is called *Dream Play-Day*. It begins with the following: "Imagine if you could get a dream play-day! A day where you can do whatever you want, with whomever you want! What would you do then?" Now it was Mariam who found herself in the teller’s chair telling about her dream day.

In this article we describe how PT is an aesthetic and symbolic medium - and how it can contribute to creating knowledge in a didactic room. The theatre company employed here was *Teater Momentum* who had seven members with broad pedagogical and art backgrounds. The company have specialised in performances in connection with building networks, school development and within organisations (Østern, 2008). Different connections were necessary before the PT performance could engage with the school’s and the students’ reality: There was a meeting with the head teacher, the coordinator for the fourth graders and the teachers. Contact was established with the students and observation in the classroom, research into their time schedule and their curriculum, and at last research of the programme *No one left on the outside*. There were forty three students and among them sixteen had a background identifying them as immigrants. Before the performance a conductor-plan
was made and an interview guide for after the performance, and *Teater Momentum* had a series of rehearsals that were dedicated to this theme.

In this context PT is a theatre form that, in an embodied way, strives to build the students’ cultural reading competencies by relating to the general part of the Norwegian curriculum *Kunnskapssloftet*, a part that contained the formation of social and cultural based knowledge (Kunnskapsdepartementet, 2006, P. 3-35).

Jonathan Fox and Jo Salas (1999) formed PT in the 1970s as an inclusive and improvisation based community theatre form. The audience is invited to tell about memories of their experiences spun around a theme, and the stories are played back by a musician and actors in a condensed and aesthetic form. Woven into this theatre’s values and cultural expression is that people need to tell stories to know who they are as individuals and as part of a community. Through the stories we tell, about ourselves and our world, we crystallize and we communicate our social and personal self-understanding. Beside the stories, the rituals are important fundaments in this theatre form. (Salas, 1996, p. 97).

**Research question and analysis**

This article seeks to inform people within schools, about what playback is and what it could do within the school curriculum. This is therefore the research question we seek to answer: How is Playback Theatre created, received and understood within the framework of "No one left on the outside" with fourth graders in a school located within an area with a large immigrant population?

Our pre-understanding in the analysis in this article is that to tell, to be listened to and to see the stories being enacted creates openness, trust, and promotes cooperation. In this article we have chosen one of a total of fifteen stories that was told in one of the two performances. By following one story we have found it easier to create a limited entry to the analysis. As a basis for analysis, we use new theories of the effect narrative has in learning processes. Data was collected by video observations and after conversations with ten of the children and from drawings from twenty students that were audience in this performance.

**The dream day is to "Go to the grocery shop"**

Mariam's story was developed together with the conductor. The conductor is the one who directs the performance in PT, and before Mariam came up to the teller’s chair, twelve different shorter and longer stories were told. The performance had lasted for
half an hour when the conductor asked what their dream day looked like? A day they could do whatever they desired, what did they want to do then? Many hands came up and two of the boys responded: "Playing football all day." One of the girls said: "Playing handball". Since both football and handball had been a topic for discussion earlier it was natural to follow up when Mariam said: "Go to the grocery shop."

Asked whether she wanted to talk about her dream day Mariam answered “yes”, and consequently she developed her story along with the conductor. First she would be at school, and afterwards go to a grocery shop with Elise. There they would buy different candies, especially chocolate, which Mariam liked best. In each other’s company they would share these candies. After that they would play, become best friends and be together all day. When she got home that night she would tell her mother what she had experienced during her dream day. Whilst telling her story she chose two actors to play her and her friend Elise.

**About children’s stories**

Recent research on children shows that children learn from telling stories (narratives) about themselves and their world. To be able to translate stories into a coherent structure, as one does by telling, is learning (Gjems, 2007).

With Mariam the story in the teller's chair was developed in collaboration, and in dialogue, with an adult. It was through collaborating on developing a story, another way of saying it, that it became constructed knowledge. Within sociocultural theory this kind of learning is called *appropriation* (Gjems, 2007, p.9) - which means learning through experience and participation. Children are newcomers in many arenas in life and through active participation and dialogue they appropriate concepts, perspectives-taking and skills. When Mariam told of her dream day, she took part in the community with their linguistic experience and competences. The knowledge that the community possesses being applied to her own through the linguistic act. A guiding participant must therefore know about the importance of inviting children to share, and to be listened to. PT here can be seen as a form of interaction that supports children in appropriating the environment’s knowledge, and this time it was *No one left on the outside* which was the theme of the knowledge formation.

That this is a long and slow process is underlined by Bruner’s (1984) and Goodson’s (1992, 1996) theory about their understanding about how stories (narratives) develop -
and how it turns into learning (Moen, 2004, p. 34). They break this process into four parts: life as lived, life as experienced, life as told and life as retold.

Life as lived refers to what really happened. The incident as it actually is. Every moment we go through while we are in our lives. Life as experienced is always after the event life as lived. Life as experienced consists of a mixture of beliefs, emotions, perceptions, desires, dreams, thoughts and opinions; in short, a way to store, to categorize, some of the events for life as lived that have had some effects on us in some way. Often experiences could poetically be understood as an jagget mosaic of our internal world, they are often not clear before they are expressed in an external form.

Life as told is the story as it comes into the world, to a listener (listeners) in a social context. Here comes the linguistic action, a narrative structure - a narrative to someone in the world. We must be able to imagine that there is a close relationship between these three; life as lived, life as experienced and life as told in a learning process. Often the narratives in life as told could change in time and change according to whom one is telling the story. It could change because through telling one can see new things in life as experienced, and maybe through that recognize forgotten aspects in life as lived. It is when this narrative process changes that the fourth dimension occurs, life as retold. Life as retold refers to when you draw some knowledge out of the stories in life as told, when one is creating an interpersonal understanding and meaning from the story that is told. In our case it was the conductor, as guided participant, who helped so that Mariam could create a story about her dream day, thus making her desire to narrate a story, to life as told. It is often the fourth dimension, life as retold, that PT adds when a story is converted and played back in an aesthetic and symbolic form. Through that, PT becomes a possible art encounter for the teller.

"Best Friends? Not quite "- the aesthetic transformation

The conductor turns to the actors and musicians after Mariam told her story:

"Let us see Mariam’s dream day: It starts with her at school –she goes to the store together with Elise, buys sweets which she shares with her friend, when she gets home she tells us about her dream day to her mother.

Let's watch! "

A fundamental shift occurs when a story is transferred from the telling to the actors and musician. The actors have heard the story as it was told by Mariam. They have also received a re-telling through the conductor with some guided frames. The ritual
statement: "Let's watch!" marks a move away from the telling and over to the actors and musicians. Now the story is made into theatre and played for an audience where it also must have a general interest. The task in PT is to transform the story scenically as an aesthetic and symbolic medium. Theatrical transformation in PT heightens the narrative. In this way the story becomes everyone's story, not just Mariam's. A central idea here is that human experience and dreams can find new meaning when they are communicated in aesthetic form, as is experienced here.

An example is when Mariam in her story, a little hesitant, says that she wished she and Elise could be best friends, but they were not that, yet, “not quite”. The phrase “not quite” has ambiguous meaning that is not being amplified in the story, but which however can be used in a dramatic production. On stage, the issue with two friends ensues as follows:

Music plays and the actors turn the chairs into swings. They move them back and forth with the music. Miriam and her friend are moving at the same pace, swinging ahead and back intact, a kind of dance. The friends are sharing sweets and chocolate, while the chairs rock.

Mariam (from the swing): "Should we be best friends?"

Elise: "Do I want to be your friend?"

Mariam: "Yes?"

Elise: "Yes, I will be very happy."

(They get off the swing, the music stops, they approach each other, watching each other and shake hands).

Elise: "Then we're best friends then."

Mariam: "Yes!"

In fiction Mariam's desire to become best friends with Elise is shown. Throughout the play, the movements, the music, the words and action are different aspects interwoven in a new way. Mariam's story was retold in a form that created new meaning, valid also for others. On stage it was shown how friendship can be formed. The aesthetic and symbolic shape widens the room when stories are retold as theatre, the theatrical actions transforming the story. In the final scene, when Mariam came home to her mother, another layer of this transformation is experienced:
Mom: "Hey! How have you been today?"

Mariam: "I've had my day dreaming. I have eaten chocolate, me and my friend, Elise, bought chocolates at the grocery shop. And she will be my best friend!"

Mom: "You know what! I can see that on you, I can see that you look so happy. I see that you've had a fine day"

Mariam: "Yes, that is not strange, because I have had my dream day!"

(Music plays. The mother hugs her daughter. Both stand facing the audience, smiling. The music stops, the actors freeze. The actors turn their eyes towards Mariam in the teller's chair, they are now standing in neutral. Applause).

In the encounter with her mother, Mariam could say what she had experienced on her dream day. She was met with acknowledgment and recognition, which reinforced the importance of establishing Elise as her best friend. In this scene Mariam was seen by her mother, and she got the last word. She could say that it was certainly not so strange that she was happy, she had, after all, got a best friend, and had a dream day! Through being affirmed she had the opportunity to answer her mother, and through that making clear for themselves that they carry a newly established friendship.

Afterwards, the story is sent back from actors and musicians to the teller through a ritual form.

**Ritualistic moves in playback**

Rituals in PT are formal-modified phrases (e.g. "Let's watch"). During the play the actors have their glance directed towards the audience, the teller could, in that way, experience a distance from the story. But when the story comes to an end the actors freeze their movements and look toward the teller. This ritual gesture is a language in playback, it says: "We have heard your story and we've played it as best we could. Now we give it back to you". The conductor can then investigate if Mariam could relate to some of what had been shown? What she recognized? In the conversation between the conductor and Mariam the story is anchored in a new way through the question: What did you notice in particular? To which Mariam answered: "When we went to the grocery store." After a brief conversation the teller went back to the audience. Mariam
could put herself back among her classmates, where she came from. And after her another teller was invited up.

"Theatre is not quite exact – but one could recognize ones story"

The day after the performance the students were given a task to draw a memory from the performance. Miriam drew the picture below:

There were four actors, two women and two men who played back her story. She probably drew aspects of her own story as she saw it retold by the four on stage. In the drawing we see four actors. We see the grocery store to the left, with sweets in different colours. The actors are surrounded by different colours; red, yellow, pink and blue. Another who was in the audience during performances drew this:

It is Mariam and Elise drawn here. It is likely that it is after they had become best friends. The one who played Mariam wore a turquoise jacket, while the one who played Elise in the story had red hair. Miriam is holding candy in her hand, and next to her there are more sweets in different colours. The drawing says something about the two on stage that have become best friends, and not Mariam who, in reality, was wearing a hijab. This is interesting from the perspective of aesthetic transformation and learning processes. Miriam was the only one wearing a hijab. She wanted to be best friends with Elise.
On stage we get a generalization of the theme in the story and the one who drew saw the two actors become best friends.

**Listening to a story**

To listen to a story is also to hear what is not being said. There are both direct and indirect aspects within one story, something being said and simultaneously, something that cannot be said, but which nonetheless is present in the *story*. Mariam's story was created in a context where the theme was that no one should be on the outside, and students were invited to talk about their dream day. In that way the story was also about existence and about what one wishes for, about otherness and the desire to be part of a community. In Mariam's story a number of perspectives could be sensed, for example, about ethnicity, about being a cultural minority, to be differently dressed, about the possibility of being isolated because of religious affiliation, and last, but not least, how to become friends with someone. All this is part of Mariam's story, they are indirect aspects of it and they were not articulated directly. PT as a symbolic medium can draw this out without identifying and exposing the teller. The aesthetic and symbolic form of expression can provide the theme of the narratives, and thus highlight themes beyond the obvious. That way, the story is given dignity and can be made universal. Mariam's subjective desire to be friends with Elise was made public, and that, as the public, we all could take part in the beauty of the two becoming friends. The second drawing says something in general about the theme in Mariam’s story (Figure 2). The girl that drew this drawing had identified herself with what she saw on the stage, and not Mariam wearing a hijab.

Bruner figuratively refers to this phenomenon as ‘islands of consciousness’. An island of consciousness relates to other islands so that experiences and events relate to each other in new ways. This is the basis for social learning, says Bruner. In our context, it is also about the formation of social and cultural basic knowledge in a didactic room at a school in an area with a large immigrant population. In this article it is described as an additional language called aesthetic transformation. He called this language "metaphoric transformation of the ordinary". It is through this language that stories can be raised and made generally applicable - which is central in PT, but also in the theory of narrative significance for learning. According to Bruner (1986: p.4) in *Actual Minds, Possible Worlds*, narratives creates a of world of opportunity. Throughout the narrative, other realities open up, constructing possible new ways of seeing the world, and with Playback aesthetic and symbolic expression can be involved in creating these possible worlds. Personal stories in PT can have beauty for others, even strangers, and
theatrical aesthetic and symbolic language can say a lot more than what is said in words. Listening in PT is also about expressing the indirect sides of a story.

**Mariam's experience?**

How Mariam experienced seeing her story played back in the PT form we do not know so much about. She confirmed to the conductor after the play, that she recognised her story in the play. She also said that it was fun to see that she and Elise went to the grocery shop together. Her body language, the smile and the glitter in her eyes also expressed something which might be assumed to be joy and pride. More than that we do not know from her, but in general, we know that an aesthetic experience touches the senses. Experience relates to the senses - hearing, touch, smell and sight - expands perception and is part of what resides in PT as a form. Feelings have their natural place when stories are translated into theatre. A story that is re-told within PT can therefore also build identity. What is played back could show something that has not been clearly thought through nor expressed in words before; it may surprise the teller and give a new experience. The story that is re-told through PT can show something new about oneself and for the teller who experiences this can be of great personal significance. The transformative here can lie in getting out of one's narrative about oneself and into another one. It is at least possible to think this about Mariam's story, through her smile and the light in her eyes when she went back to her seat after telling her story. But first and foremost it is possible for the teller to experience their story from a distance, in a kind of protective distance. She can absorb what she wants and let the rest be - until later. In PT the teller can live through her story with a protected distance. The theatre's symbolic language and the goal of aesthetic transformation permit that.

**Playback theatre in the “No one left on the outside” - programme**

Human contact that occurs through personal narratives is the opposite of isolation and alienation, it is hypothesized in this theatre form. On the other hand, inadequate involvement has isolation and alienation as one of its consequences. PT is based on the stories as they are expressed in given contexts, here through the anti-bullying programme, *No one left on the outside*, in a school in an area with a large immigrant population. Solidarity, inclusiveness and participation are central in the programme and the same values for PT as a form. To understand what PT can contribute in such a programme, we must address again the concept of transformation, as used earlier in the article. In this transformation is linked to exceedance, realization, the formation
and development of personality (Galtung 2003; Gadamer 1999; Vygotsky 1978). It is a key concept in both the social and cultural field, as well as in aesthetic practice. We will still use the example about Mariam to give the concept of transformation further substance.

Mariam’s goal, her desire, was to have a best friend. Having an ability and courage to express a desire is the first step that one must take to realize goals. To be met with an empathic attitude enables a chance to express desire. Secondly, the desire needs a form to be expressed through, in this context the desire or story was enabled through PT as a theatrical form. PT, as an aesthetic transformative form, gave the possibility for the audience to witness how a close friendship could be formed through stage actions. Everyone could see how Mariam and Elise became best friends, and afterwards how she was met by her mother. Through this, stage action could give the audience a new script. Bruner (1987) and Goodson (1992) use the term ‘script’ about storytelling in the learning processes. ‘Script’ is the interpretation template we use to understand our stories. Depending on our experiences we create our own interpretation templates and ideas about what it is like to be with others, also called relational-script. Such scripts are inherited early on and have individual, social, and cultural structures in them. Through aesthetic transformation, Mariam could see a new script for how she could become best friends with Elise. And this did not only count for her, in conversation after the performance another student said, "I have learned about Mariam's dream day, and I will never forget it".

Through this example of an encounter with art, we have pointed out how art as an aesthetic form could create a way for a more inclusive school and with a better understanding of children who come from other countries. In multicultural Norway attitudes, actions and aesthetic transformations like PT, could be a contribution to create a more inclusive school.

"Are you coming tomorrow?"

The statement: "Not quite," in response to Mariam being best friends with Elise, was the first impulse in this article to show how PT as a form could be used in a programme like No one left on the outside. That no one should be on the outside is a measure of the formation of knowledge about solidarity, inclusion and participation in the school, and PT has here been a designer of that. To tell, to be listened to and watching stories played back promotes openness, confidence building and cooperation. The ways in which it can be received and subsequently how it can be
understood in the formation of social and cultural basic knowledge in schools within a given programme. Other stories could also have served as examples, because in an overarching plan, stories from students are not just about learning. They are learning in itself. They are authentic voices, experiences that come from within. They have the right to be heard as part of the curriculum, if the school actually seeks to take the students voices seriously, as it is claimed in the Norwegian Official Report *To belong*, a report whose aim is to try to decrease bullying within the Norwegian school (NOU 2015). Lars Løvlie borrows Day Østerberg’s concepts of external and internal texts, when he describes the necessity of internal texts in school if this ideal is to be achieved. The Norwegian curriculum provides answers to *what*, but not *who* the individual is. To understand who the individual might be requires a different category type of text than the external text that the curriculum is currently written in. This requires knowledge of how to meet, form and extend internal texts, and here PT was an excellent tool for that.

Children's stories are internal texts, and as we have seen from Bruner they form the premise for learning— they are learning. That the children themselves wanted a larger space for internal texts in the school was expressed by their immediate and direct manner after the performance. When the after-performance conversation came to an end, they were going back to their class and work, and we were going on our way. Before we separated one of the boys asked: "Are you coming back tomorrow?" We had to answer truthfully, "No". As we headed for the door we asked: "Do you wish that we would come back tomorrow?" "Yes," he replied and went down the corridor.

References


Call for online volunteer translators

We are looking for online volunteers to translate/proofread IPTN Journal articles from English into Spanish for our new Facebook fan page called “Teatro Playback en español” (Playback Theatre in Spanish). If you master those two languages and are interested in supporting IPTN network as an online volunteer translator/proofreader, we would like to hear from you!

Send us an email indicating your mother tongue, languages spoken (including language combinations you are working with and level of proficiency) as well as your availability (hours per week/month).

Communication and coordination with the page administrator, Rasia Friedler, will be done via email to iptnenespanol@gmail.com

We highly value volunteers’ work and commitment to support our Playback Theatre network, and would be happy to establish long-term contacts with volunteer translators/proofreaders interested in gaining insight into the dynamics of an international movement active on five continents.
Asia Pacific Playback Theatre Conference in Hong Kong
25 November to 1 December 2015
Inspiring developments in Playback Theatre by our colleagues in Asia.

The recent Asia Pacific Playback Theatre Conference was hosted by the Boys & Girls Clubs Association in Hong Kong (a major social and youth work NGO) from 25 Nov to 1 Dec, 2015 in Hong Kong. Eddie Yu, with his Encounter Playback Theatre group, led the team which created APPTC 2015 with the support of the Boys & Girls Clubs Association in Hong Kong. (BGCA)

Playbackers from Australia, China, Japan, Korea, New Zealand, Philippines, Singapore, Taiwan, UK & USA, joined the Hong Kong playback theatre community for two-days of pre- & post-conference trainings, plus the intense three day weekend of the conference itself.

Agnes Law and Veronica Needa were special guests, delivering pre- and post-conference trainings and the keynote at the opening.

Social and youth workers, in particular, are embracing Playback Theatre in Hong Kong more and more.

One afternoon was devoted to bringing participants into different places in Hong Kong to be welcomed by a variety of playbackers in the community, performing for them or workshopping with them.
These included social clubs for the elderly, visits to people with autism, with physical and intellectual differences, with youth-at-risk, gifted students, in schools and family centres....

**Some history...**

Veronica introduced Playback Theatre to Hong Kong, her original home, in 1996, with first performances at the HK Arts Centre in July 1997. She continues teaching and training in Asia (just recently back from Shanghai and Beijing).

Agnes introduced Playback Theatre to Singapore (her first Playback teachers were New Zealand's Bev Hosking and Christian Penny) and hosted the first Asian PT Gathering in 2005 there. She came to live in London shortly afterwards.

When Veronica and Wing Hong Li created London's True Heart Theatre in 2006, Agnes was one of the first members.

Eddie Yu was a member of True Heart when he was studying in London, returning to HK to create Encounter PT. His work with the BGCA - a major NGO working with young people and families - is modelling ways of integrating Playback Theatre into the social service sector of Hong Kong.
True Heart has been a London home for many folks from Hong Kong, Singapore, Taiwan, and mainland China who were studying or working here in the UK for periods of time. It was lovely to meet many of them again in Hong Kong at the APPTC 2015!

Looking forward...

True Heart Theatre continues to practice and perform in London.

We welcome people to come and play with us, especially those of you with a connection to East Asia, or can speak some Cantonese or Mandarin.

We welcome your invitations for us to perform for you at any special occasion or event.

We welcome your interest in us working with your community on any special topic or theme.
The Three Dimensional Model for Scenes in Playback Theater

Assael Romanelli

Intro

In the Playback Theater (PT) training community, there are certain techniques and guidelines to teach short forms. Yet, when approaching Scenes (Lubrani Rolnik, 2009; Salas, 1999), open long-form enactments in PT, clear guidelines are lacking and a deeper structure for teaching and enacting this important element of the PT ritual could be beneficial.

This paper presents a model of the long-form PT Scene. It begins with a general typology of stories that can assist in deciding which PT form best suits which story. Then The Three Dimensional Diamond (3DD) Model for Scenes will be presented.

Typologies of stories

Aviva Apel (Personal conversation, 2014) categorizes three archetypes of stories that can be told in PT gatherings. The first archetype is Aristotelian structure with a clear beginning, middle and end where the protagonist undergoes an emotional transformation. The second archetype, Brechtian story, is episodic, non-linear, associative story, or a sequential story without much internal change to the protagonist. The last archetype is the Monodrama, which is a story with a strong internal focus without necessarily strong external change. This categorization echoes the typology of stories that McKee (1997) describes: Archplot, Miniplot and Antiplot.

Archplot (McKee, 1997), also called classical design, refers to a story of a single, active protagonist who struggles against primarily external forces of antagonism to pursue her desire, through continuous time, within a consistent and causally connected reality to a closed ending of absolute irreversible change. Actions are connected through a series of cause and effects, expressing the interconnectedness of reality. This is the popular design of story we see in movies and in theaters. This design is also called the Hero’s journey, an archetypal process described in many myths around the world (Campbell, 1949). Archplot is the classic model of the Aristotle tragedy, which emphasizes a story with a clear beginning, middle and end (McManus, 1999). An important Aristotelian element that is relevant for the 3DD Model is that of Reversal,
Peripeteia (Lucas, 1962), which relates to a situation seemingly developing in one direction, and then "reverses" toward the end.

Miniplot (McKee, 1997), a form of minimalism of the Archplot, shrinks the elements of the Classic design. A Miniplot usually focuses on an externally passive protagonist who is actively pursuing an inward desire while experiencing an internal conflict. Usually Miniplots have more of an open ending.

Antiplot (McKee, 1997) is a type of story led nonlinear time, skipping through time or blurring temporal continuity. It is usually led by coincidence, and less by causality. It could include multiple realities, contradictions and divergent directions.

Another subtype of story is Nonplot (McKee, 1997), which is a story describing a feeling, situation or place, without advancement of action.

Most classic short forms (such as the fluid sculpture and chorus) can fit all types of stories due to their minimalistic, symbolic, archetypal nature. That said, there is a place to explore a more “specialized” form selection for different types of stories.

Therefore, below (figure 1) is a visual diagram of Mckee’s (1997) triangle typology together with Apel’s (2014) terminology along with the author’s suggested PT forms for each type of story. This diagram represents a range where each story can be situated on a continuum between the three types of stories. Obviously, these are just recommendations and ensembles can choose to playback any story in any form.
The Three Dimensional Diamond Model for a PT Scene

The PT Scene can be appreciated as a long-form improvisation (Hauck, 2013) based on and guided by a teller’s story. As such, it could be aided by using the same features, traditions and guidelines. The Three Dimensional Diamond (3DD) Model for a PT Scene has three dimensions: content, emotion and the intention. Each dimension has a different focus that enriches the other two. The three dimensions together create a 3D effect of depth and breadth in the PT Scene.

To demonstrate this model, we will use an example archplot story: A woman, let’s call her Ray, worked in a job she hated. She was treated horribly by her perfectionist boss and wanted to switch jobs desperately. Depressed, she waited a few years, too scared to leave the security of her job, quietly hoping to find a new job. Until one day an opportunity appeared when her friend told her they were looking for a professional with experience in computers. Ray wasn’t sure that she was qualified enough for that job. Moreover, she was pregnant and was scared of making major professional changes during her pregnancy. In a moment of courage, she applied anyway. She ended up getting the new job. Her story ends a few months after the birth, in her new job feeling challenged, stretched and appreciated by her new boss.

1. The content dimension

An efficient model for generating content in long-form improvisation is The Diamond Model[1] (See figure 2). The diamond is not even-sided. The typical Scene will sometimes spend more time setting up the problem less on the actual resolution. Therefore, the first/lower part of the diamond is longer than the second/top part.

The first part of the diamond is based on a process of Ideation, generating ideas through intuitive thinking, within and outside the circle of expectations. In our example, this part will show Ray’s hard times at work, with different offers being generated such as: a horrible boss, a cold colleague, a malfunctioning computer, no working pens at her desk, the song “nine to five” playing loudly on the radio and more.

The turning point of the diamond is the point of no return, the point in the story where an event happens that makes going back impossible. This can be called the climax of the story (McKee, 1997), an event that is absolute and irreversible. This
echoes the crossing of the threshold in the Hero's journey, the point of the story where the hero cannot return to her original reality, thereby bringing upon the emergence of guardians and antagonists (Campbell, 1949). From this point on, the protagonist is changed and the eventual end of the story is seemingly unavoidable.

In our example, applying for the job could be seen as the point of no return, since at that point Ray’s feeling and opinion changed. Another possible point of no return could be her acceptance into the new job, as irreversible change in her story.

The end of the climax marks the beginning of the second segment of the improvisation. In this part of the diamond, ensemble mostly reincorporates previously generated material, which ideally should tie up all the story lines and not introduce new material.

The teller’s actor, together with the ninja actors who are not chosen for a specific role in a Scene (Romanelli, 2013), would then start generating ideas through intuitive thinking until the climax is reached. Ideally, throughout the Scene, the teller’s actor is more reactive, allowing herself to be in the here and now, while leaning on the ninja actors to guide the Scene.

Ideation could include a movement or sound theme that can later be revisited. The richer the ideation, the more options the ensemble will have to reincorporate later. The climax could be a clear emotional decision, not necessarily an external action.

Reincorporation, the process of incorporating ideas in the second part of the Scene that were originally generated in the first part of the Scene, rests at the core of the Diamond Model. Long-form improv trainers have always stressed the importance of reincorporation of previously generated material (Johnston, 2004; Johnstone, 1989, 1999). Zaporah (1995) describes the classic metaphor for the long-form improvisation: “Improvising is like walking backwards. You can see where you’ve been, but you can’t see where you’re going. But what you see does affect where you’re going” (Zaporah, 1995, p. 54).

Reincorporation can be done without words, solely through movement, physicality or sounds of previously generated ideas. Earlier generated ideas could also be reincorporated as symbols, For example, if an apple was generated intuitively in the first part of the Scene, then the idea of apple as the tree of knowledge, or “fruit of our labors” could be later reincorporated satisfyingly for the audience. Reincorporation can include only a few main ideas from the first half in order to be effective.

In our example, the reincorporation part of the diamond would show Ray in her new work place, happy and challenged. Ideally early offers would be incorporated one way or another such as: a new boss, an open and funny colleague, a friendly computer, a stack of pens given to Ray, and perhaps Ray is humming the song “nine to five” and more.

This first dimension is the road map for the ensemble to know which content to generate and contribute to the Scene.
2. The emotional dimension

The second dimension to the 3DD Model consists of the emotional journey of the Protagonist (See figure 3 below). As described before, Archplot stories require the protagonist to undergo change. Aviva Apel (2014) emphasizes the emotional transformation of the protagonist as the heart of the archplot enactment. Thus in PT it is essential that the teller’s actor (undergo and) perform an emotional transformation from one feeling to a different one throughout the Scene.

Therefore, the conductor in her interview must be clear what the teller’s feelings were before and after the climax. Usually there is one major emotional transformation in stories, even when tellers describe several emotions during their story.

Consequently, through the emotional dimension, the first part of the diamond is “highlighted” by the first feeling of the teller. The teller’s actor along with the ninja actors, are generating offers that intensify that feeling (for example a feeling of helplessness).

The point of no return now includes the moment or incident that sparks the emotional transformation of the teller (for example, from helplessness to confidence). It is the teller’s actor alone who can actually make the transformation, but the Ninja actors can create the atmosphere by putting emotional and physical pressure that can help her transform organically to the next feeling. It is important that the transformation happen organically and naturally onstage. Physical movement and touch with the ninja actors can help the teller’s actor to embody the feeling and then the transformation.

The reincorporation part of the diamond is now highlighted by the second (major) feeling of the teller’s actor, with the ninja actors assisting her in deepening her embodiment of that feeling.

Combining the content and emotion dimensions delivers a deep and rich enactment. Yet by adding the third dimension of intent, we can better braid the red thread (Hoesch, 1999), the unconscious group process that connects different stories in a PT ritual, and ensure a deepening of the group process.
3. The intent dimension

This dimension of the 3DD model was built in cooperation with the scriptwriter Kate Stayman-London and further developed by Gigi Romanelli. The intent of the teller carries the archetypal theme that is at the core of the red thread (Hoesch, 1999), and which can spark the imagination and curiosity of the next teller in the PT ritual. The heart of this dimension revolves around the pursuits of the external and internal goals of the teller (See figure 4 below for a visual representation of this dimension).

The external goal is the Want, the conscious desire or goal (McKee, 1999) the protagonist wants in the story. The external goal can change throughout the story. The internal goal is the Need: the archetypal, universal need of the protagonist. It is more often than not unconscious and does not change throughout the story. The internal goal is sometimes connected to the flaw or blind spot of the protagonist, and drives the external Want of the protagonist. Usually the teller clearly states the external goal, but rarely does she explicitly state her internal goal.

In our example it is possible that Ray’s conscious, external goal was to change a job. Her internal goal could be to be appreciated, to feel fulfilled or to find expression of her (professional) potential.

In most stories, there is a discrepancy (or even conflict) between the protagonist’s external and internal goals (McKee, 1997). In Ray’s story, even though Ray consciously wants to be somewhere else, she internally wants to be validated, regardless of where she is.

In the 3DD Model, the first part of the diamond focuses on the pursuit of the external goal. In this act (composed of one or several scenes) the teller’s actor deals with antagonism and conflict in relation to her external goal. This act ends with achieving or not achieving her external goal.

The climax is now characterized as the point of reversal in the story. This is analogous to the Aristotelian concept of Peripeteia (reversal) that must include a high moment of
joy, from which there is the eminent fall to the tragic end (or a low moment from which there is a dramatic rise to joy in the end).

In our story, the reversal could begin with Ray deflated, sad and too scared to quit. The Peripeteia could be when Ray is devastated from another harsh criticism from her boss with no other job is in sight. She is depressed and helpless without any hope.

The second part of the 3DD Model in the intention dimension is the reincorporation of previously generated ideas with a focus on the internal goal of the teller’s actor. The Scene ends with a certain realization of the internal goal.

In our story, the 2nd part of the Scene includes reincorporated offers (as described above) while the teller’s actor relates to the internal goal of feeling fulfilled. She may give a soliloquy on her current feelings of confidence, becoming the woman she wanted to be as a child.

The way the teller’s actor relates to the internal goal usually colors the emotional meaning of the end of the story. Stayman-London (2014) recommends ending with engaging the internal need, since the internal need is a universal, archetypal need that echoes throughout the audience and thickens the red thread (Hoesch, 1999).

If the teller’s actor achieves her internal goal and external goal, then the story will have a “happy end” feeling. If the teller’s actor achieves her internal goal but not her external goal, the audience might still be satisfied and the story could still be a “feel-good” story. A tragedy could thus be defined as the teller’s actor not realizing, not achieving, or achieving too late her internal goal, regardless of the achievement of the external goal.

Before enacting the Scene, the PT ensemble could have a shared sense of the ending, especially in relation to the external and internal goals. Obviously there is no time to discuss the ending beforehand and the differences between individual actors’ perceptions will be negotiated throughout the Scene, sometimes adding frisson to the Scene (Veronica Needa, personal communication, 2014). That being said, ninja actors with a clear sense of the ending can help navigate the teller’s actor to the conclusion of the story, mostly in relation to the internal goal, since the ending in relation to the external goal was just heard by the whole audience.

**Conclusion**

The 3DD Model has three dimensions: content, emotion and intent. All three dimensions are synergistic and collude organically. They also incorporate the dramatic, emotional and cognitive components of the story. Together, they can create the “3D effect” to the Scene, adding depth and meaning. See figure 5 below for a visual representation of the full 3DD Model.

The first part of the full 3DD Model uses ideation to generate offers in relation to the external goal, influenced by the first feeling. The climax of the Scene is the point of
irreversible change as well as the moment of emotional transformation. The emotional transformation usually occurs organically in reaction to a clear moment of change in the story.

The last part of the 3DD Model focuses on the internal goal, through the prism of the second feeling, using the process of reincorporation of earlier offers. The end of the Scene is in relation to the internal goal of the teller.

Initially, the 3DD Model could be quite difficult for the actors to grasp, with different dimensions and instructions. Through practice, the basic structure of the 3DD Model not only enables clarity and a shared understanding within the ensemble, but also produces a more satisfying Scene for the teller and audience.

There are many questions and areas still in need of further research, definition and experiment. The art of PT, like improvisation, is ‘easy to learn, difficult to master’. Some might say that, contrary to short forms, Scenes should be more open and less rigid. A possible reply to this is found in McKee’s (1997) principle of Creative Limitation: “The principle of Creative Limitation calls for freedom within a circle of obstacles.”
Talent is like a muscle: without something to push against it, it atrophies. So we deliberately put rocks in our path, barriers that inspire. We discipline ourselves as to what to do, while we are boundless as to how to do it.” (p. 91). Perhaps a model for Scenes, can provide not only a common language for the PT ensemble, but also be an “inspiring barrier” that can enrich the enactment.

Bibliography


[1] Several improv teachers including Alan Marriott, Dylan Emery, Mark Phoenix and Chris Johnston have taught the improvisational Diamond model. This article emphasizes an original application of this model to PT.

The Story of Building a Playback Network

(1) why and how we started,

(2) what we’ve been learning and,

(3) how you might benefit.

Dear Playback Theatre friends around the world,

Backstory

In our (mostly happy) bubble: So easy to focus on just what’s in front of us. Sure, those of us in our local troupe knew of the Playback community -- several of us had gone to Playback Centre trainings or an IPTN gathering. But we were busy in our lives and engrossed in our local work (both the ups and downs). Hard to think to connect with Playback colleagues.

But we kept bumping into limitations in how to meet our company’s desires or needs, like:

- Can our work have bigger impact?
- How to make a more beautiful and effective website? How to develop stronger promo materials?
- How could we bring in more income? Present what we do effectively to higher paying clients? How to write a kickass fundraising proposal?

Wondering, how can we avoid reinventing the wheel? Where might we find

- Inspiration and helpful role models?
- Good ideas for how to save precious time?
- Sample promo and business materials we can use?

Happily, two of us, founding members of our company, have travelled a fair amount for our other work. Wherever we go we look to see if there is a Playback group to visit. So lovely to rehearse with over two dozen companies and exchange artistic practices, and then compare notes about business and company development. Sometimes we brought a few companies together in the same area. They told us they rarely saw each other... The force of those bubbles!
Would other companies and practitioners enjoy the benefits of exchange of ideas (like we had) if it were more convenient?

**Building a network**

- **Who’s there?** In 2010 we mapped everyone we could find doing Playback in the U.S. and Canada (sorry if we missed you!). Spoke to someone from 75 companies about their history and needs.

- **Leaders talk:** We invited Playback folks in the U.S. and Canada to come together for two leaders gatherings (in D.C. and in Seattle). We decided, yes let’s create a network!

**What we’ve done since**

- **Promo video:** We created a [short video](#) in 2011 about some Playback applications in North America.

- **Conferences:** In 2011, a North America Playback Theatre weekend gathering in Boston, and in 2012 a second one in DC.

- **Easy talks:** Since late 2012, we have hosted 47 teleconferences, first for Playback musicians, then for conductors, and then over time for all Playback lovers on many different questions and themes. Despite the challenge (especially for Playback people) of being disembodied on a call, we’ve felt surprisingly connected and many have gotten fresh useful ideas to try at home. Many different people have moderated.

**Challenges**

- We have limited time to work on organizing this network. What do we focus on?

- How do we not get fried organizing events?

- When we communicate how do we get busy people to respond to us?

**Plans (for the next two years)**

- **Toolkit** (see blurb below)

- **Continued teleconferences,** especially on Playback applications (youth, elderly, at conferences, universities, racial dialogue, Restorative Justice, etc.)

- **Probably another North American conference,** summer of 2017. Some ideas:
  - Lots of performances and debrief sessions to learn from what we saw.
○ Planning high social impact projects (including fundraising and project assessment).

○ Business development, leadership development and company development.

○ An “Open Space” day where participants make offerings of sessions in the moment.

**Invitations**

- Share with us experiences about developing a Playback network (whether you have one or want to organize one), and get in touch to Skype sometime.

- If you’d like to learn more about the reference guide: “A Playback Theatre Toolkit: through one company’s perspective,” go to the toolkit page on PNA’s website.

- If you do Playback in the U.S. or Canada join Playback North America. Whether you are an individual or a company, you will get a membership at the same time in IPTN.

Wishing you the best,

Christopher and Anne Ellinger, Amber Espar, and Tonia Pinheiro for PNA

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**About Playback North America (PNA)**

PNA is a regional network for Playback Theatre companies, performers, and fans in the U.S. and Canada. Its purpose is to facilitate peer exchange to build community and share best practices. PNA is in partnership with the International Playback Theatre Network and with the Centre for Playback Theatre.

See: www.PlaybackNorthAmerica.net

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**Testimonials**

*The Centre for Playback Theatre supports collaborations that support global connections. We are encouraged by this new joint membership between IPTN and PNA, and look forward to exploring its full potential in our global Playback community.*

Warmly, Jennie Kristel, Board member for Centre For Playback Theatre
The International Playback Theatre Network (IPTN) and Playback North America (PNA) have agreed to offer you a combined membership. We want to make it as easy as possible to be part of the international Playback Theatre community. We would be excited to have you join both IPTN and PNA!

Best regards, Juergen Schoo, former IPTN President

I’ve been going through the Playback toolkit from PNA. It is incredible work, and I believe it will definitely help playbackers who buy it.

Best regards, Jori Pitkänen


Through PNA’s teleconferences my Playback practice has been strengthened; the support I receive keeps my head above water when Playback seas get rough."

Dana Rungay, Director, Red Threads of Peace: Playback Theatre in Winnipeg

A Playback Theatre Toolkit: through the lens of one company’s experience

will be available soon!

It is a new reference guide on artistic, business, and company development for Playback companies and teachers. The Artistic section (about 150 pages) will be sent electronically to all 2015 PNA Members. The compiled artistic, business, and company sections (about 300 pages) will be available for PNA Members and international Playback Friends, by mid 2016 in several formats: as a PDF, an e-book, and paperback book. For more info, look on the PlaybackNorthAmerica.net website. Email us if you’d like to be put on the invitation list when it comes out: info@PlaybackNorthAmerica.net

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www.iptn.info
Book Review: 'Nossas Historias Em Cena' by C.S. Siewert

Reviewer: José Marques

According to Siewert, this book followed from her research into Playback Theatre (PT), carried out as part of her Masters in Theatre at the University of the State of Santa Catarina. Her supervisor, Professor Marcia Nogueira, states in the preface that at that time, PT was little known in Brazil and that this was a reason for writing the text. And in her introduction, the author says that she wrote the book in response to a growing demand in Brazil for knowledge about PT.

That being the aim of the author, I would say that the book is a most welcome addition to the PT literature available in the Portuguese language. As far as I am aware, the only other comprehensive text available in this language is a translation of Jo Salas’ Improvising Real Life first published in 1993 (Editora Agora, 2000). In particular, Siewert’s book makes accessible, to the Portuguese language reader, some the most significant literature written about PT, with substantial references made to Salas’s text as well as to Jonathan Fox’s Acts of Service (Tusitala, 2003) and Nick Rowe’s Playing the Other (Jessica Kingsley Publishers, 2007). She also appropriately draws on other literature where necessary.

The question then arises whether this book contributes anything new to the literature already available in the English language.

As a whole, the text acts mainly as an interesting digest of existing literature, with references also made to the author’s experience with PT in the DionisosTeatro company during 2008 and 2009. However, it does also draw out some aspects of PT theory that may not have been previously dealt with in so much detail. I refer in particular to section two of Chapter Two which discusses the influences that lead to the creation of PT.

The book consists of four chapters. Chapter One describes PT performance structure and forms and includes a discussion of what is ‘good playback’. Chapter Two discusses historical aspects and influences. Chapter Three covers the community aspect of PT and its application in the areas of education, business, therapy and the theatre arts. And Chapter Four talks about the roles and skills exercised by the PT performer.
In Chapter One, the author seems more familiar with the short forms of PT that were then practiced by the Dionisos company, with appropriate inclusion of photos from company performances. This is followed by short descriptions of additional forms, but these are very brief and may not be so helpful to PT newcomers. Also, the description of the form ‘chorus’ appears somewhat out of date, as it essentially summarises Salas’s description of the form (in 1993). Here perhaps reference could have been made to the current tendency for this form to be used with stories that lean towards non-narrative content.

I also felt that at the end of this section (short forms) more emphasis could have been given to the ritual of the actors acknowledging the teller following the performance of the story, as this is such an important part of the PT ritual.

In contrast, the significant aspects of performing the story (long form), including structuring questions by the conductor, balancing real and symbolic aspects, addressing a seeming lack of satisfaction by the teller with the performance, as well as the red thread were all well covered. One aspect that may have deserved more attention is the question of whether PT performances should invite audience members to participate as actors.

In the last section of this chapter, ‘what is good playback?’, it was interesting to be reminded of Rowe’s ideas about open stories and open performances, which rely on the actor responding to his own subjectivity (Rowe, p. 37) rather than to some perceived notion of what is the essence of the story, as defended by Salas and others. It may have been interesting to hear the author’s view on this apparent contradiction of approaches.

In Chapter Two, Siewert draws out in some detail, the influences that lead to the creation of this unique form of theatre. The aspects covered include the experimental theatre of the time (with particular attention given to Beck and Malina’s Living Theatre), psychodrama, the oral tradition of storytelling, and Paulo Freire’s theory of dialogue.

Of particular interest were references to a non-elitist theatre, to theatre as a rehearsal for life, to psychodrama as useful training for PT actors, to the restorative function of theatre, to the elevation of the individual’s status, to the trance aspects of the oral tradition, and to aspects of narrative theory. Occasionally, I felt that the discussion could have developed beyond the references to the authoritative texts. For example, the redressive aspect of PT seems to have become a very significant one, particularly in areas where armed conflicts are occurring or have occurred, and in situations of natural disaster. PT has made an important contribution in places such as Afghanistan, the Middle-East, Sri Lanka, and New Orleans, to name but a few.

Of particular interest also was the discussion on Paulo Freire’s ideas, which have been indirectly mentioned by authors such as Fox, but not generally expanded on in PT texts. As explained by Siewert, Freire brought us the idea that dialogue is not theory but action (praxis) and that with love, humility, faith and critical thinking, this dialogue can leads us to the experience of
freedom. It seems that the dialogue we engage in through PT (the dialogue between actors and tellers as well as the dialogue between the stories) can create a raising of awareness that (perhaps charged with the humanness or energy of the performance) can lead to transformative action by the individual and the community.

In Chapter Three, the author highlights the community building aspect of PT. She also provides a fairly comprehensive coverage of the application of PT in different areas. She says that in education, PT is often used as a tool for developing individual as well as group skills and values. In the business context, Siewert interestingly mentions ethical issues, where PT practitioners must confront tensions between furthering the profit motive and the democratic participation of workers. In the mental health context, she describes how PT can be used along with psychodrama and other therapy tools, to assist the healing of patients. Reference is also made to PT being used as ‘psychological debriefing’ in natural disaster situations.

In the section on the application of PT in the theatre arts, the author reminds us of the challenge of building community in open performances where audience members may not know each other. One can draw the conclusion, from this chapter, that the community building aspect of PT is at the very heart of its existence.

In the last and fourth chapter, Siewert explains the roles of the actor, musician and conductor. She reminds us of Fox’s exhortation that the theatre must be ‘good’ for the actor, and not just for the audience. We are also reminded that PT actors must be self-aware and emotionally mature. In this regard, I note that Salas wrote recently that PT is not for everyone (Salas, 2011).[1]

The author then refers to Fox’s reflection that a PT company is like a family, where presumably tools such as psychodrama can be used to resolve difficulties or tensions, as has recently been suggested to me by some international colleagues. However, I believe that this takes us into the murky issue of whether what we are doing is theatre or therapy. Correctly, I think, Siewert questions whether a PT company should be considered a family because ordinarily, its members do not meet outside rehearsals and performances.

This chapter includes an interesting discussion on spontaneity, based mainly on Fox’s ideas (2003). In particular, I appreciated revisiting his ideas on the dichotomies of the PT work: not thinking/thinking, surrender/control, fiction/reality, logical/relational, etc. Attention was also drawn to the complexity of the work carried out by the actor, as he first senses the story, briefly evaluates the choices, and then takes action. This discussion was effectively conducted with reference to the three keys texts already mentioned, although I felt that more contributions from the author’s experience could have been useful.

Siewert also refers to the issue of whether the actor should reveal (in the performance) what was intuited by her but not clearly stated by the teller. I would have been interested in the
author’s opinion or experience of this issue, as I am aware that it sometimes preoccupies PT actors, particularly when the sensitivity of the teller or story is in issue.

As to the musician, the author usefully points out that he is like an actor on the stage and can assist with creating emotion and ambience, as well as provide punctuation in the performance. It is a pity, however, that the author does not go beyond the references to Salas’s text. I note that a number of articles on music in PT were published in the IPTN Newsletter of June 2013 but I assume this was after the time of Siewert’s writing.

As to the conductor, the author draws mainly on Salas and Fox, to describe this important and complex role. Significantly, attention is given to the task of ‘holding’ the performance, in other words, in providing the safety and structure that allows both audience and actors to share their stories and interpretations.

In her final comments, Siewert asks the important question: why should we put the story on the stage, when we can imagine it in our heads, as we listen to its telling? And here, the author draws us back to the social interaction, community building aspects of PT. We need to put the story on the stage because by doing so, by giving it to the actors, it takes on other meanings, and those other meanings lead to other stories. And this, I believe, is one of the most satisfying aspects of PT, for both practitioners and audiences.


IPTN Online Conversation Hub

Building on the vision of the IPTN, we want to strengthen our community of practice by encouraging an exchange of experience and thinking about our playback theatre work. We are keen that we can continue to learn from each other through a process of telling, listening and responding. Several times a year we are going to propose a subject area that we can explore together. We are not looking to find definitive answers to a question, or to find a solution to a problem, rather, the intention is to engage with each other and to listen to different ideas so that we can extend our understanding of this work that we are all involved with. In this way we may be stimulated to find some new pathways forward in our own practice.

Save your dates for the next hub:

Jun 3 - Jun 20, 2016
Co-facilitators:
Jonathan Fox & Nisha
Details: www.iptn.info
(continue of Report of the German Speaking Network, PTN e.V.)

To celebrate the 10th birthday of the PTN e.V. president Marlies Arping has masterminded a special newsletter issue (in German) paying tribute to the story and achievements of the PTN e.V. and its members, informing of current or recent projects around the regions and internationally, as well as notice of upcoming events and resources.  

http://www.playbacktheaternetzwerk.de/newsletter.html

Playbackers everywhere will be interested in the reports of work being done - with refugees and asylum seekers (Hamburg, Bremen, Berlin, Switzerland), dementia (Austria and Switzerland) or life story work (Frankfurt – transcultural), Kassel (schools).

Those reporting include:

Katharina Witte, Bremen, work with refugees since 2014 in Bremen).  
witte@fehrfeld.de

Dorothea Erl and Ulrike Krogmann, workshops in Hamburg "Escape and Asylum", "Flucht und Asyl" with refugees.  They have been awarded a prize of 10,000 Euros for their work.  info@kaleidoskop-hamburg.de

Wolfgang Wendlandt works with playbackers from three groups on a “Theatre with Refugees” project (Playback Theater Berlin, the “Tumorists” playbacktheater prisma) kontakt@wolfgangwendlandt.de

Ariane Ehinger, Playback Theater Berlin, reports on inviting young asylum seekers to participate in her group's practice evenings, and also the group's openness to international visitors.

Daniel Feldhendler is working on a project called “Mobility, Migration and Transcultural Biography”, spanning 2015 and 2016, in Frankfurt and in international networks.  feldhendler@gmail.com

In Switzerland, Josefine Krumm's group, Playback Theater Gehdicht, performs regularly in the community, with her "touch base with someone" programme.  Contact Josefine for more information: josefine@krumm.ch

Fra Zeller’s group PT Bumerang performs in rest homes and with Alzheimers’ groups, fraz@playbacktheater-bumerang.ch

In Vienna, Margarete Meixner has run a six-month school project (children and grandparents).  Margarete.Meixner@gmx.at

Links:

German-speaking playback theatre school (courses in summer): http://schule.playbacktheaternetzwerk.de/playbacktheatertraining.html

PTN e.V.:
http://www.playbacktheaternetzwerk.de/

PTN e.V. Anniversary newsletter: http://www.facebook.com/
playbacktheaternetzwerk,

Janet Salas (translator)
Playback Theatre in Brazil: a path towards the Gathering

A Report of the 1st Brazilian Playback Theatre Gathering

Clarice Steil Siewert* (with the support of many participants of the Gathering)

Translated by Sheila Donio

Playback Theatre was brought to Brazil in 1998 and the pioneer company was São Paulo Playback Theatre. It was also in São Paulo that the 2007 International Conference took place. By then there were few active companies in the country (located in São Paulo, Curitiba, and Brasília), and the Conference did not mark a gathering between the Brazilian playbackers themselves.

But little by little the need to meet one another increased. At the end of 2007, right after the Conference, Rea Dennis went back to São Paulo to strengthen the connections of local playbackers in the big city. In 2008, during its training process, Dionisos Teatro from Joinville organized a class also with Rea, and with Magda Miranda. In that class, practitioners from Curitiba, Florianópolis, and Joinville started to share their knowledge. Another step towards this Gathering was the International Conference in Frankfurt, in 2011. There, the company Nhemaria, from São Paulo, did a performance full of Brazilian seasoning, gathering everyone around a pot of Brigadeiro so this typical chocolate dessert, as well as the personal stories, could be shared with people from the other 32 countries. That was a moment to look at each other and notice that the number of groups was increasing, just as their aesthetic diversity and applications.

In 2014, with the classes that the Centre for Playback Theatre took to Curitiba, the path towards the Gathering was finally clear. On the last day of the last class, taught by Jonathan Fox, the students looked at each other and saw that they needed to take hold of the next steps of the Playback Theatre movement in the country.

Each one briefly expressed what they had learned and lived throughout those days. All the energy created resulted in a group of people coming together to take action. In 2015 at the Conference in Montreal, this movement was reinforced internationally, seeing that the Brazilian participants in the event got together to perform in “the Brazilian way,” symbolically representing the moment that the country’s practitioners were living.

The organizing committee of the Brazilian Gathering was created voluntarily: Victor, Bernardo, and Daniele from Curitiba; Sheila from São Paulo; Clarice from Joinville; and Rodolfo from Belo Horizonte met for almost one year to put their ideas together and make the event happen. Focusing on a Gathering in the most democratic form possible, the host city was elected online, where Brazilian playbackers could vote on their preference, after all the possibilities had been researched and shared.
Through this method, Joinville was chosen to be the host city of the 1st Brazilian Playback Theatre Gathering. The location was offered by the company Abismo (Abyss), located at AMORABI – Association of Residents and Friends of Itinga Neighbourhood. It is a community space in a neighbourhood distant from downtown Joinville. It has a pre-school and a cultural space where performances, theater classes, craftwork, among other activities, take place for the community.

Taking on a community and collaborative nature, focused on being financially accessible and assuring a diverse representation, the Gathering had a registration fee of R$ 20,00 (approximately US$ 5.00). It also offered free options of accommodation (camping style or solidary housing). The Gathering also collected donations used to purchase plane tickets for playbackers coming from further distances. This way, Joinville hosted in AMORABI, 51 playbackers from 14 different companies, coming from the states of Santa Catarina, Paraná, São Paulo, Minas Gerais, Paraíba, and the Federal District.

The Gathering happened under constant rain from October 9 to 12, 2015. Jonathan Fox showed up in the opening, via a video kindly recorded previously. The days would start with an integration warm-up. The workshops were facilitated by participants that had registered previously, and addressed themes like: acting, music, improv games, conducting, actor's listening, semiotics, spontaneous theater, and meditation. The plenary session was focused on Playback in Universities, in the Community, in Corporations, and through grants. Jo Salas also participated in the event through a live videoconference, lecturing and answering questions from the Brazilian playbackers. There were also the “Playback Jam Sessions,” a free space to do Playback with a variety of people. And there was also a party, with lots of music and tight hugs!

And, of course, there were the performances. Five groups performed. From Joinville there were Grupo Abismo, Libração (a group of deaf playbackers), and Cheios de Graça (a group of clowns). From Florianópolis there was Caras de Palco. And there was also a special performance by some of the most experienced playbackers, closing the event on a high note. It was in those sacred moments of stories that the Gathering really happened. A gathering between the playbackers and the local community, between deaf and hearing, between people of different cities and different backgrounds.

The Gathering that started by being organized by a few people, ended up being everyone’s responsibility. The “cucas” (a typical cake from the South of Brazil), kindly offered by the community of AMORABI, was shared. Many people took the responsibility of setting up the coffee breaks. Everyone took care of finding rides for those who did not have a car. And the communication and integration between the deaf and the hearing continued to develop.
Playback Theatre in Brazil has a lot of challenges ahead. Just like the country itself, it needs to deal with a kind of growth that respects diversity. As in the microcosm of a group, it needs to understand which values must be cultivated and which aesthetic, ethical, and political stances can be taken. The way a Gathering is organized and conducted also reflects the directions wished for the work. The 1st Brazilian Playback Theatre Gathering was full of empowerment, tenderness and warmth. Let the next ones come!

*Clarice is an actress of Dionisos Teatro (Joinville), a Playback practitioner since 2008 and the author of the book “Nossas Histórias em Cena: um Encontro com o Teatro Playback” (Our Stories Onstage: an Encounter with Playback Theatre). Contact: dioteatro@gmail.com / www.dionisosteatro.com.br


(Spanish Translation of “Relato do 1º Encontro Brasileiro de Teatro Playback”)

Teatro Playback en Brasil: un camino al Encuentro

Un reporte del primer Encuentro brasileño de Teatro Playback

Clarice Steil Siewert*

(con el aporte de muchos participantes del Encuentro)

Traducido por Nadia Gómez Espinoza

El Teatro Playback llegó a Brasil en 1998 y la compañía pionera fue Sao Paulo Playback Theatre. Fue también en São Paulo que la Conferencia Internacional del año 2007, se llevó a cabo. Para entonces, habían pocas compañías en el país (localizadas en Sao Paulo, Curitiba y Brasilia), y la Conferencia no marcó un encuentro entre las compañías brasileñas en sí.

Pero poco a poco la necesidad de encontrarse con otros creció. Para finales de 2007, justo después de la Conferencia, Rea Dennis volvió a Sao Paulo, a fortalecer las conexiones de los practicantes de playback locales en la gran ciudad. En el 2008, como parte de su proceso de training, Dionisos Teatro de Joinville, organizó una clase con Rea Dennis y Magda Miranda. En esa clase, practicantes de Curitiba, Florianópolis y Joinville comenzaron a compartir su conocimiento. Otro paso hacia el Encuentro fue la Conferencia Internacional de Frankfurt, en el 2011. Ahí, la compañía Nhemaria, de Sao Paulo, realizó una función llena de condimentos brasileños, reuniendo a todos alrededor de una olla de Brigadeiro, el chocolate típico del postre, así como también de historias personales, que pudieron ser compartidas por personas de otros 32 países. Ese fue el momento de mirarnos unos a otros y ver que el número iba creciendo, tal como las diversas estéticas y aplicaciones.
En el año 2014, con las clases que el Centre for Playback Theatre llevó a Curitiba, el camino hacia el Encuentro estuvo claro finalmente. El último día, de la última clase hecha por Jonathan Fox, los estudiantes se miraron unos a otros y vieron que ellos necesitaban tener un contenedor de los próximos pasos del movimiento del Teatro Playback en el país.

Cada uno expresó brevemente lo que había aprendido y vivido durante esos días. Toda esa energía creada resultó en un grupo de personas que se juntó para llevar a cabo la acción. En el 2015, en la Conferencia de Montreal, este movimiento se había reforzado internacionalmente, al ver que los participantes brasileños en el evento, se reunieron para realizar una función a “la manera brasileña”, representando simbólicamente el momento que los practicantes de ese país estaban viviendo.

El comité organizador del Encuentro Brasileño fue creado voluntariamente. Víctor, Bernardo y Daniel de Curitiba; Sheila de Sao Paulo; Clarice de Joinville; y Rodolfo de Belo Horizonte se reunieron por casi un año para juntar sus ideas y hacer que ocurriera el evento. Concentrándose en un Encuentro lo más democrático posible, la ciudad anfitriona fue elegida online, los practicantes de Playback brasileños pudieron votar por su preferencia, después de que todas las posibilidades habían sido investigadas y compartidas.

De esta forma, Joinville fue elegida para ser la anfitriona del primer Encuentro de Teatro Playback Brasileño. La locación fue ofrecida por la compañía Abismo, ubicada en AMORABI, Asociación de Residentes y Amigos del Vecindario de Itinga. Es un espacio comunitario en un vecindario lejano del centro de Joinville. Tiene un espacio cultural y preescolar donde las funciones, clases de teatro, artesanía, entre otras actividades, se realizan para la comunidad.

Haciéndose cargo de la comunidad y en una naturaleza colaborativa, enfocado en ser accesible financieramente y asegurar una participación diversa, el Encuentro tuvo una cuota de inscripción de $20 reales (aproximadamente $5 dólares americanos). También se ofreció opciones de alojamiento gratis (en camping u hospedaje solidario). El Encuentro también recolectó donaciones, usadas para pagar los pasajes aéreos de participantes que venían de distancias más lejanas. De esta forma, Joinville alojó en AMORABI 51 participantes de 14 compañías diferentes, que venían de los estados de Santa Catarina, Paraná, Sao Paulo, Minas Gerais, Paraíba y el Distrito Federal.

El Encuentro tuvo lugar bajo una constante lluvia, del 9 al 12 de Octubre de 2015. Jonathan Fox estuvo en la apertura, en un video que amablemente había grabado antes. Los días comenzarían con un caldeamiento de integración. Los talleres fueron realizados por participantes que se habían registrado previamente, y se abordaron temas como: actuación, música, juegos de improvisación, conducción, la escucha del actor, semiótica, teatro espontáneo y meditación. La sesión plenaria se enfocó en el Playback en Universidades, en la Comunidad, en Corporaciones y por medio de subvenciones. Jo Salas también participó del evento a través de una video conferencia, conversando y respondiendo las preguntas de los practicantes de Playback brasileños.
También hubo “Sesiones improvisadas de Playback”, un espacio libre para hacer Playback con distintas personas. Y también hubo una fiesta, con mucha música y fuertes abrazos.

Y por supuesto hubo funciones. 5 grupos actuaron. De Joinville estuvieron el Grupo Abismo, Libração (un grupo de personas sordas que hacen Playback) y Cheios de Graça (un grupo de clown). De Florianópolis estuvo Caras de Palco. Y también hubo una función especial con algunos de los más experimentados practicantes de Playback, cerrando el evento con una nota muy alta. Fue en esos momentos sagrados de historias que el Encuentro sucedió. Un encuentro entre los practicantes de Playback y la comunidad local, entre personas sordas y oyentes, entre personas de diferentes ciudades y diferentes orígenes.

El Encuentro que empezó siendo organizado por unas pocas personas, terminó siendo la responsabilidad de todos. Las “cucas” (un pastel típico del sur de Brasil), ofrecido amablemente por la comunidad de AMORABI, fueron compartidos. Muchas personas tomaron la responsabilidad de preparar los coffe breaks. Cada uno se preocupó de encontrar la forma de llevar a quienes no tenían auto. Y la comunicación entre personas sordas y oyentes fue increscendo.

El Teatro Playback en Brasil tiene muchos desafíos por delante. Tal como el mismo país, es necesario lidiar con un tipo de crecimiento que respete la diversidad. Así como en el microcosmos de un grupo se necesita entender qué valores deben ser cultivados y qué estética, ética y posiciones políticas se deben tomar. La forma en que un Encuentro es organizado y conducido también refleja las direcciones deseadas para el trabajo. El primer Encuentro Brasileño de Teatro Playback estuvo lleno de empoderamiento, sensibilidad y calidez. ¡Que vengan los próximos!

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Narraciones de mujeres que asisten a Teatro Playback para refugiadas y solicitantes de asilo: hacia una nueva forma de ver, sentir y estar con otras personas.

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Resumen

Esta investigación explora las historias de mujeres árabes musulmanas que asistieron a sesiones de Teatro Playback (TP) en el contexto de un grupo comunitario de mujeres en un servicio para solicitantes de asilo y refugiados. Se analizaron ocho entrevistas semi-estructuradas con la metodología narrativa. Se identificaron cinco temas: ‘decidir si contar o no’, ‘compartir historias’, ‘empatía y comprensión’, ‘liberación emocional’ y ‘crecimiento personal’. El análisis se enfocó en el tema del ‘crecimiento personal’, el cual incluyó reflexiones acerca de temas culturales y comprendió tres sub-temas: nuevas formas de ver, sentir de manera diferente y nuevas formas de estar con los/las demás. Notamos que existe una relación entre lo que sucede en el TP y lo que se piensa que es efectivo en terapias establecidas y creemos que el TP puede hacer un aporte positivo a las mujeres refugiadas y que solicitan asilo y a sus comunidades más amplias. Para las mujeres participantes en esta investigación parece ser que las representaciones en Teatro Playback sacaban la historia de un contexto representativo individual y la pasaban a un contexto compartido, el cual fomentó el crecimiento personal y las conexiones compartidas, que se experimentaron como positivas y beneficiosas. Esto destacó el valor potencial de las intervenciones comunitarias por fuera de los escenarios clínicos.

Palabras clave: Teatro Playback, psicología comunitaria, refugiados, solicitantes de asilo, investigación narrativa

Introducción

El Teatro Playback (TP) es una forma de teatro comunitario en el cual se representan las historias del público por medio de la improvisación. A pesar de que no se diseñó para ser terapéutico, con frecuencia se lo considera así por parte de las personas que se...
dedican al TP. Los enfoques de la psicología comunitaria y de las desigualdades sociales proponen que las estrategias de prevención e intervención dirigidas a los problemas de origen social se extiendan más allá de la sala de terapia y se lleven a cabo en el contexto en que ocurren (Kagan, 2007). Los psicólogos comunitarios creen que las comunidades en general poseen la experticia necesaria para prevenir o reducir las dificultades de salud mental. De acuerdo con esto, apoyan proyectos locales y animan los vínculos comunitarios con el fin de empoderar a las comunidades para que ayuden a las personas angustiadas. La psicóloga comunitaria Carolyn Kagan (2010) sugirió que las necesidades de la comunidad pueden ser cubiertas por medio del arte, dado que existen claros vínculos entre la comunidad, el arte, la salud y el bienestar. La presente investigación se emprendió con un marco de referencia de la psicología comunitaria, reconociendo las diferencias culturales en procesos de apoyo social y de poder social. Ella explora las historias de mujeres refugiadas y solicitantes de asilo que asisten a sesiones comunitarias de TP.

Existe un cúmulo cada vez mayor de investigaciones que apoyan la efectividad terapéutica del arte (Landy, 1997). Esta no es una idea nueva: las raíces del teatro provienen de las sociedades preliterarias donde el conocimiento y las costumbres locales eran transmitidas por medio de historias en reuniones comunitarias que a menudo incluían rituales de sanación y procesos chamanísticos (Fox, 1986). Aristóteles observó que las tragedias griegas eran ‘catárticas’ para el público y los actores (Landy, 1997). De modo que la convergencia entre el teatro y la sanación no es un desarrollo nuevo, sino un retorno a una antigua sabiduría; es un recordatorio de que los orígenes del teatro están entrelazados con la sanación.

Entre los usos terapéuticos actuales del drama se encuentran el psicodrama de Moreno, donde los individuos representan escenas de su propia vida, y el Teatro del Oprimido de Boal, donde se ayuda a las personas marginadas a transformar la opresión social por medio del juego de roles. En el TP de Fox y Salas, miembros del público aportan sus propias historias que son representadas espontáneamente y devueltas al narrador o narradora por parte de actores y actrices que improvisan:

Se invita a miembros de la audiencia al escenario a contar una historia personal o algo que sucedió, algo que el narrador o la narradora hizo, o un sueño. El conductor o la conductora de la compañía escucha la historia, anima al narrador/a, pregunta detalles para aclarar el escenario, e invita al narrador/a a que escoja los personajes de entre la compañía de actores. A la señal del conductor, los actores y actrices, acompañados por música improvisada, representan la historia para el narrador/a y para la audiencia completa. Luego de la representación, se saluda al narrador o narradora, se le pide que apruebe o corrija, y se le agradece por haber compartido la historia. (Park-Fuller, 1997)

La mayor parte de la literatura relacionada con TP la constituyen recuentos reflexivos en los que los profesionales del TP discuten sus pensamientos, observaciones y comprensiones acerca del TP. Estos incluyen reflexiones acerca de si el público se
siente escuchado, del procesamiento de información difícil, del logro de nuevas
compreensiones, y del sentirse conectado. Sentirse escuchado “de manera completa y
respetuosa, sin análisis ni juicios de valor” (Salas, 2000:293) se considera un beneficio
importante del TP, en especial para aquellos cuya voz ha sido marginada (Dennis,
2007). Se piensa que el hecho que otras personas sean testigos de la historia realza el
poder de ser escuchado (Fox, 1999a), siendo la respuesta empática de la audiencia
una forma de reconocimiento (Salas, 2000), y posibilita la confianza y la solidaridad por
medio del descubrimiento de sentimientos similares y simpatías compartidas.

Actores y actrices de TP describen cómo la forma permite que experiencias difíciles
sean procesadas: los elementos rituales y de contención del TP crean un ambiente
seguro donde se pueden contar historias de experiencias difíciles. La representación
que sigue crea entonces el espacio, o la ‘distancia estética’, que necesitan las
emociones intensas para procesar la experiencia (Rogers, 2006). Existe además la
hipótesis de que el TP ayuda a que los individuos logren nuevas percepciones a través
de la representación artística de la historia (Fox, 1999b) y de la narración cohesiva y
extendida que se crea con la representación (Day, 1999).

En toda la literatura, las personas que practican el TP han mencionado cómo éste
parece aumentar los sentimientos de conexión entre las personas y reducir los
sentimientos de aislamiento (por ejemplo, Salas, 2000). Rowe (2007) cree que las
historias compartidas crean un tipo de diálogo considerado por Dennis (2007) como
generador de una experiencia normalizadora, que da a los miembros de la audiencia
“alivio frente a la soledad.” Se piensa, además, que el TP tiene efectos positivos en la
comunidad, al ayudarles a escuchar, comprender y respetar historias que difieren de
las suyas, al tiempo que se reflexiona y se afirma la identidad colectiva (Salas, 1983).
En general, las personas que practican TP han notado varios beneficios terapéuticos y
han reflexionado acerca de las maneras en que el TP pueda lograr estas ganancias.

Las teorías psicológicas podrían aportar un marco de referencia para comprender
estos beneficios terapéuticos potenciales. Por ejemplo, la terapia narrativa sugiere que
construimos el significado de nuestras vidas a través de nuestras historias. Rowe (2007:
39) plantea que “el Playback efectivo suelta las “ataduras” de la historia, abre otras
posibilidades de interpretación y revela los medios que usamos para dar sentido a
nuestra experiencia.” Se cree que contar y volver a contar estas historias delante de
testigos fortalece la narración. La psicología comunitaria, como se describió
anteriormente, considera las desigualdades como un causante de angustia. El TP
puede verse como una intervención apropiada dentro de este marco de referencia: al
proporcionar un lugar para escuchar las voces marginadas, el TP responde a las
necesidades de la población local y desafía las desigualdades.

A pesar de que la mayor parte de la literatura explora el TP por medio de recuentos
reflexivos, pocos estudios han investigado los resultados y las experiencias del público
del TP. Los estudios de Rousseau y sus colegas han encontrado efectos positivos de un
programa de talleres creativos basados en TP, diseñado para facilitar la adaptación e
integración de adolescentes refugiados e inmigrantes (por ejemplo, Moneta y Rousseau, 2008). Como el TP privilegia a las voces silenciadas, se presta bien para trabajar con este tipo de grupos desprovistos de poder. Más recientemente, Moran y Alon (2011) investigaron el impacto de un curso de TP para adultos con ‘enfermedad mental grave’. Se observó una tendencia positiva en las medidas de autoestima y crecimiento personal. El análisis temático de las respuestas cualitativas a una encuesta indicaron beneficios personales como ‘diversión y relajación’, ‘creatividad y autoexpresión’, ‘autoestima’, y ‘autoconocimiento’; y ganancias interpersonales como ‘conexión con los demás’, ‘mayor empatía’ y ‘sentirse parte de un grupo’.

El conjunto de investigaciones y reflexiones profesionales dentro de la literatura proveen indicaciones preliminares del impacto terapéutico del TP. Sin embargo, cualquier conclusión acerca de los beneficios terapéuticos está restringida por lo limitado de las investigaciones. Además, en contravía con los valores del TP, la voz del público en general está ausente en las investigaciones. Park-Fuller (2003) sugiere que esto se puede deber a las dificultades para medir cambios en las visiones sociales del público o el impacto en la comunidad, combinado con la posición privilegiada de los actores y actrices, que hace que sus experiencias sean más accesibles a la exploración.

Esta investigación apunta a aportar evidencia sobre el TP al tiempo que emula su valor fundamental de escuchar a las voces marginadas. Explora el impacto del TP sobre las personas del público desde la perspectiva de las mujeres en una comunidad de refugiadas y solicitantes de asilo. Siguiendo el objetivo del TP de mantener intactas las historias de las personas, esta investigación adopta un enfoque cualitativo, que emplea una metodología narrativa que busca preservar las historias de las participantes.

**Metodología**

Utilicé (KG) una metodología de investigación narrativa para explorar cómo las personas construyen el sentido de sus experiencias con el TP. La metodología narrativa y el TP tienen objetivos filosóficos mutuos en el sentido de preservar las historias completas y escuchar las voces de aquellos que no están representados en los discursos dominantes. Este enfoque asume que, a través de la narración, damos una secuencia temporal a los eventos de nuestras vidas creando una trama que los relaciona de una manera significativa (Murray, 2007). Este proceso de historiar actúa imponiendo algún tipo de orden en las experiencias absurdas de nuestras vidas. Reissman (2004) ha sugerido que el narrador o narradora acomoda las historias a la audiencia, otorgando a la narración un elemento performativo. En este sentido, la narración “hace” algo, por ejemplo, recuerda, justifica o entretiene. Por lo tanto, además de examinar lo que se dice, en este marco de referencia narrativo también se exploran el ‘cómo’ y el ‘por qué’ (es decir, la estructura y el propósito de la historia).

En la metodología narrativa no hay pretensión de objetividad, sino un reconocimiento de que ‘las perspectivas teóricas, los intereses y los modos de preguntar´ (Reissman,
2004) influirán en los hallazgos. En un esfuerzo por reducir el impacto de los prejuicios personales, conformé un equipo de investigación mixto con un supervisor psicólogo clínico sin ninguna experiencia en Playback (JS), dos actrices de Playback (AF y AB) y una psicóloga comunitaria clínica (AM) que también es actriz de Playback. Llevé a cabo ‘entrevistas horquilladas’ (Ahern, 1999) con JS antes y después de la recopilación de datos. Roll y Relf (2006) han sugerido que el uso interactivo y dinámico de las ‘entrevistas horquilladas’ permite reflexionar de manera más consciente y más abierta sobre los supuestos implícitos. Ahern (1999) ha recomendado utilizar la reflexividad para identificar áreas de prejuicios potenciales y de ponerlos entre paréntesis para reducir su efecto en la investigación.

Exploré los supuestos iniciales acerca de qué tipos de narraciones se podrían presentar, y cómo mis valores y creencias personales y culturales podrían impactar la investigación. Por ejemplo, he enfocado la investigación desde una perspectiva de la psicología comunitaria. Desde esta posición, estoy interesada en explorar el papel que el TP puede asumir en las comunidades y si puede contribuir a reflexionar, procesar y apoyar los tipos de historias que se cuentan en un contexto clínico. Tal vez por mi papel como Aprendiz de Psicóloga Clínica veía el TP como una manera poderosa de contar historias que parecían tener un valor terapéutico potencial. Mis preguntas de investigación preliminares fueron: ¿Qué historias cuentan las otras personas acerca del TP? ¿Cómo las cuentan? y ¿Son terapéuticas estas historias?

El contexto de la investigación: El TP y Creaciones Suaves

Una organización de caridad organizó un grupo de costura, ‘Creaciones Suaves’, en el suroeste de Inglaterra, Estudiantes y Refugiados Juntos (START por su nombre en inglés) para mujeres de la comunidad de refugiados y solicitantes de asilo. START es un proyecto comunitario que proporciona una variedad de actividades de apoyo para las personas solicitan tes de asilo y refugiadas y las que tienen residencia temporal en donde ellas mismas participan. En 2010 se creó un proyecto por medio del cual algunas mujeres miembros del grupo de TP, Tarte Noire, realizaron 25 funciones en las sesiones de Creaciones Suaves: cuatro a seis sesiones por semana, cada una de una hora y media aproximadamente. Las actrices (entre 2 y 5 en cada función) eran todas mujeres occidentales blancas. El TP se adaptó tratando de asegurar una sensibilidad cultural. Por ejemplo, se utilizó el inglés como lengua compartida durante todas las sesiones, con pausas largas para que las mujeres se tradujeran informalmente entre ellas; las actrices usaron pocas palabras y hablaban de manera muy clara, complementando con gestos y expresión corporal; a veces las actrices se acercaban a la narradora para poder oír, pues se necesitaba mucha concentración para escuchar historias contadas en inglés como segunda lengua. Además, se acogió a niños pequeños y, aunque a veces el ruido que hacían podría haberse sentido como molesto en ciertos contextos de Playback, aquí parecía que contribuía a una atmósfera de informalidad divertida que parecía natural a esa cultura. Las mujeres entraban y salían de la habitación para responder llamadas telefónicas o se retiraban para atender asuntos familiares. A menudo se utilizó la forma de collage y la actriz que asumía en...
primera instancia el papel de la narradora se quedaba en ese papel durante toda la representación.

Todas las mujeres de la comunidad de solicitantes de asilo estaban invitadas a asistir a las funciones.

Participantes

Luego de recibir la aprobación ética de la Universidad de Plymouth, asistí a varias sesiones grupales de Creaciones Suaves y me acerqué a personas del grupo para comprobar su interés en participar en la investigación. Las entrevistas se organizaron en un lugar que fuera conveniente para las participantes, generalmente su casa o la universidad.

En la investigación participaron ocho mujeres con estatus de refugiadas, solicitantes de asilo y residente temporal. Todas eran mujeres musulmanas de países donde se habla el árabe, de entre 17 y 34 años. Todas habían asistido por lo menos a una sesión de TP. Cinco habían asistido durante más de un año, una había asistido dos veces y dos sólo una vez. Todas habían contado por lo menos una historia en TP. Siete mujeres eran casadas y seis eran madres. La información se resumió, con pseudónimos, para proteger la identidad de las participantes.

A las participantes se les dio información acerca de la investigación y se discutió sobre la confidencialidad antes de que se les pidiera firmar el consentimiento informado. Las entrevistas, que duraron entre 30 y 75 minutos se realizaron en inglés y fueron grabadas en audio. Aunque se hubieran podido superar algunas barreras lingüísticas utilizando a un traductor, nos pareció que se habría creado una dinámica formal dentro de la entrevista si hubiéramos introducido a una persona desconocida y se podría haber inhibido las respuestas. Dos participantes decidieron pedirle a una persona de la familia que hiciera de intérprete en algunos momentos de la entrevista.

Recopilación de datos

Para inducir la narración, las entrevistas comenzaron con la siguiente pregunta que las invitaba a contar su historia de asistir al TP:

Cuéntame lo más que pueda acerca de su experiencia con el Teatro Playback. Esto puede incluir qué le parece contar una historia aquí y qué le reporta a usted venir a las sesiones. Le puede ayudar si piensa cómo era cuando empezó a ver Teatro Playback y cómo es ahora.

La entrevista continuaba con un formato semiestructurado que se utilizaba de manera flexible, adaptándose al flujo de la narración. Las preguntas se pensaron de manera colaborativa con las actrices (AF y AB) y se diseñaron con el fin de obtener narraciones acerca de la asistencia a las sesiones de TP, de relatar historias y de escuchar las historias de otras mujeres.
Análisis de datos

El análisis de los datos se llevó a cabo en dos fases. Primero, KG transcribió las entrevistas palabra por palabra, las leyó varias veces para familiarizarse con los datos y anotó comentarios relacionados con temas potenciales y metáforas (Murray, 2007). Para comprobar la validez, las actrices de TP (AF y AB) revisaron una entrevista transcrita. Para cada participante se seleccionaron extractos relacionados con temas potenciales. Junto con las actrices de TP, se agruparon los extractos que parecían estar más estrechamente relacionados. Se revisaron los agrupamientos y se juntaron algunas categorías formando cinco temas recurrentes en las narraciones. Se usó la triangulación, donde los resúmenes narrativos fueron analizados temáticamente por JS, como otra forma de comprobar la credibilidad.

En segundo lugar, se consideraron los rasgos narrativos de cada participante. Estos incluyeron el mapeo de la trama por medio de resúmenes narrativos, el examen global del género y del tono de la narración, y los elementos performativos de la narración (Riessman, 1993).

Con aquellas participantes que quisieron participar más, se verificó si sus historias estaban representadas con precisión. A las participantes de les dio una sinopsis de los hallazgos y extractos de su entrevista, junto con el análisis correspondiente, y se les pidió retroalimentación acerca de la autenticidad de las interpretaciones de sus historias.

Resultados y análisis

Se identificaron cinco temas en las narraciones. Estos entran dentro de los componentes generales de una historia, a saber, preparar la escena, la trama y la resolución de la historia: los procesos involucrados en convertirse en narrador/a (‘decidirse a contar’); qué pasa cuando se cuenta una historia (‘compartir’, ‘empatía y comprensión’ y ‘liberación emocional’); y el impacto de las sesiones más tarde (‘crecimiento personal’). Primero se explican brevemente los temas superordinados para enfocarnos luego en las narraciones acerca de ‘crecimiento personal’.

Convertirse en narradora

La mayoría de las historias contenían una subtrama sobre convertirse en narradora. Esta incluía un periodo inicial para darse cuenta de qué es el TP, establecer confianza entre el grupo y ganar la seguridad para contar una historia. Para algunas mujeres contar una historia constituía un dilema: un deseo de contar, para experimentar la ‘liberación’ asociada, pero también un riesgo de avergonzarse al trasgredir los límites culturales que exigen que las historias personales queden en privado. Las mujeres asumían una posición de agencia al decidir dónde estaban sus límites personales y qué podía permanecer “secreto”: ellas consideraban quiénes eran las personas entre el público, qué juicios podrían emitir y cómo se podrían sentir después de contar. Sin embargo, hubo algunas historias donde esto no fue estimado correctamente por parte
de las narradoras. En consecuencia, se alteraron los límites para evitar futuros arrepentimientos o se mantuvieron con la expectativa de que el arrepentimiento no duraría mucho.

**Compartir**

Compartir frente a otras mujeres cumplía diferentes funciones dentro de las narraciones. Ser testigo de una historia permitía que otras se conectaran con las experiencias compartidas y abría temas de discusión relacionados. Una mujer describió cómo el TP le ayudó a mostrar sus sentimientos y a ‘hacerles saber a las demás lo que quiero decir’. Otra mujer describió cómo el oír que otras personas sentían lo mismo la hizo ‘sentir normal’. Algunas mujeres usaron las discusiones y las representaciones como una manera de obtener consejos o de aprender de los errores y las experiencias de las otras. Para otras, se trataba de construir ‘comunidad con las otras’.

**Empatía y comprensión**

Cada narración contenía un hilo acerca de la calidad de la actuación. Esta era considerada importante no sólo por su valor estético sino porque significaba que las actrices habían comprendido a la narradora. La representación precisa ayudaba a compartir el significado de la historia con las otras: cada una podía “comprenderlo a través de la historia”. Una mujer describió cómo mejoró su comprensión de lo que las otras habían experimentado: “Una no sabe cómo fue y cómo viven hasta que dicen algo”. Muchos recuentos mencionan cómo las actrices y las personas del público se conmovieron con la historia. Para una mujer, la empatía y el apoyo que trajo consigo contar una historia alimentaron el sentimiento de pertenencia. Dijo que después de haberla contado, otras mujeres se acercaron y la abrazaron, “y sentí como si estuviera en casa, ¿me entiende? Con mi gente”. Para otras, compartir las emociones de otras fue una experiencia de reconocimiento.

**Liberación emocional**

Todas las narraciones de aquellas que se convirtieron en narradoras tenían un rasgo de la trama en común: la experiencia de un cambio o ‘liberación’ emocional. Hubo diferentes historias acerca de esta liberación. En cada una, contar la historia constituía el evento que generaba un mecanismo metafórico de liberación. Como ejemplos tenemos ‘escupir’, ‘sacarse un peso de encima’ o ‘ponerse una curita’. Otras narraciones mencionaban los beneficios de estar en contacto con sentimientos dolorosos.

**Crecimiento personal y cambio**

Cada narración tenía una trama relacionada con cambio o crecimiento personal. Estas narraciones se caracterizaban por un proceso dinámico de cambio en la narradora que la llevaba a una transformación en la forma de verse a sí misma y a los demás, en sus
sentimientos y en su manera de ser en el mundo. Este tema se explorará con mayor detalle.

**Nuevas formas de ver.** El resultado de ver las cosas de manera diferente se le asignó a la función del TP de ser tanto un espejo que refleja como un foro para compartir conocimientos.

Soaad comparó el TP con una cámara de video que volvía a mostrar los eventos tal como habían ocurrido y que luego le permitía una expresión emocional y una nueva comprensión.

“Y es extraño; no sabemos cómo es la vida de una, si una no la observa. Es como instalar una cámara de video en tu casa y vemos las historias que contamos y la vida, nuestra vida, nuestra vida normal. Y la primera vez que les conté mi historia se trataba de reunirnos y ver a mis padres y ver a mis otras hermanas y, ya sabes, la vida normal en nuestro país y ellas la representan, nos la devuelven y me conmoví tanto. Vi como me siento con ellos... no sabes cómo era, lo que vives, a menos que alguien te lo vuelva a mostrar como una cámara de video.”

De manera similar, Bushra consideró el TP como un espejo que le reflejaba la verdad, que le ayudaba a procesar sus experiencias y le proporcionaba espacio para evaluar su papel en la historia. Esta función podría permitir que las narradoras decidan cómo quisiéran que terminaran sus futuras historias, corrigiendo así lo que de otra manera podría ser una historia repetitiva en sus vidas.

“Una se ve en un espejo: exactamente. A veces me veo muy feliz, y a veces no, a veces ocupada con los niños... Si me representan molesta por la mala situación, siento que debería ser más fuerte y más paciente, no siempre llorar, pero en nuestra lengua decimos que llorar es nuestra arma, no tenemos nada que hacer, pero a veces pienso que mi experiencia es equivocada, porque necesito ser más paciente y no más emotiva... Trato de escoger las cosas malas y recortarlas y contar solo las cosas buenas... Vemos nuestro ser, no lo vi delante de mí antes, sí, porque no tengo espejos por todas partes en mi casa, sí. Si soy una mamá en casa y me veo a mi misma y pienso que era una buena mamá, muy simpática y es un sentimiento bueno.”

En la historia de Bushra ella da a entender que mirándose en el espejo del Playback una puede ver cosas que antes no había notado, permitiendo que la narradora vaya más allá de las reflexiones que podría hacer de manera independiente. También notó la cualidad alentadora de verse representada de manera positiva.

Cuando Ryam se miró en la superficie reflectante del TP, vio su historia desde “el otro lado”. Esto le permitió comenzar un diálogo interior en el cual ella podía quejarse ante sí misma por sus acciones y considerar otras alternativas.
“Y ellas, no sé, algo inusual cuando están representando la historia. Es como que estás observando tu historia pero de la manera opuesta o al otro lado, de manera que vas a ver algo, tal vez no deberías actuar así, no deberías decir eso.”

La continuación de la historia de Ryam sugiere que observar y reflexionar sobre la representación le permitía ensayar, o ‘tener más experiencia’ acerca de nuevas formas de ser. Tal vez, como Bushra, ella también estaba tratando de corregir la manera como transcurrirían las futuras historias en su vida.

En vez de ver al TP como la devolución de un reflejo, otras descripciones sugerían que era como una ventana a través de la cual se ven otras culturas. De ahí surgían percepciones diferentes de la otra cultura o adaptaciones a ella. Por ejemplo, Soso comenzó la escenificación de su historia describiendo su anterior perspectiva acerca del “problema en Irak”, en donde atribuía las dificultades del país a la gente de allá. En el fragmento que sigue ella identifica como el observar la representación de las historias de las mujeres de Irak constituyó un punto de quiebre para cambiar su forma de pensar:

“(El TP) cambia mi forma de pensar. Si ningún teatro no hace este drama para mí, yo no pienso que Irak es bueno. Voy a sentir que la gente no está bien en Irak, la gente no es buena, pero esto ha cambiado mi manera de pensar.”

Otras narraciones enfatizan la adaptación a la cultura inglesa compartiendo historias y hablando con las actrices de TP. En el fragmento que sigue, Bushra muestra como el TP llena un vacío de conocimiento acerca de la cultura local, a la vez que da una oportunidad para practicar el inglés. La historia da la sensación de que existen barreras para aprender de la gente local, pero éstas desaparecen en el TP.

“Y esa es otra cosa ¿sabe? acerca de la cultura y les preguntan [a las actrices de TP] acerca de la cultura de acá y ellas nos contaron más y esto era muy simpático porque ¿sabe? no tenemos amistades inglesas aquí, y a veces queremos saber algo y ellas nos contaron acerca de la cultura... así que sabemos harto sobre la cultura, sí, sí, y mejoramos el inglés, sí, porque hablamos inglés... esto es muy simpático”.

Bushra usaba una identidad colectiva cuando hablaba en plural (‘nosotras’ en vez de ‘yo’). Esto puede estar relacionado con la idea de que los occidentales tienen una visión egocéntrica del mundo, en cambio los que no son occidentales tienen una visión sociocéntrica (Kessler et al 2014). Sin embargo, otra interpretación es que Bushra estaba enfatizando el sentido de comunidad dentro del grupo, y los beneficios que van más allá del nivel individual para alcanzar al grupo. Tal vez el TP sea un lugar en donde las narraciones personales y sociales de Bushra se solapan, ya que el grupo formaba parte de su identidad en evolución.

Estos aspectos temáticos de practicar inglés, desarrollar comunidad y aprender acerca de la cultura local también estaban presentes en el relato de Nisoor:
“Estoy contenta por este curso hablar más inglés porque mi inglés es escaso y la comunidad o las mujeres enseñar y aprender algo para ti, para mi... es bueno conocer otra cultura y saber cómo está pensando otro para poder estar con esta gente.”

Al TP se le asignó el papel de mentor: facilitar la adaptación a una nueva cultura a través de las habilidades lingüísticas y el conocimiento de alguien de esa misma cultura.

Sentirse de otra manera. La mayoría de las narraciones acerca del crecimiento personal implicaban la transformación de los sentimientos tanto de las narradoras como de los miembros de la audiencia. Algunas insinuaban que después de narrar se sentían como que “algo pesado había desaparecido de mis hombros”. Asimismo, oír las historias de otras acerca del “mismo problema” puede “ayudar realmente” a aquellas que no han compartido su historia. En la narración siguiente, Soaad contó cómo compartir historias puede ser normalizador, reducir los sentimientos de aislamiento y vergüenza, y aumentar la seguridad en sí misma.

“Es divertido, una cree que está sola con este problema o algo así, pero cuando les cuenta y una ve que todas las señoritas y las chicas están de acuerdo con una, les pasa a ellas también. Por ejemplo, me desperté por la mañana y hago esto y hago esto otro y esto otro y estoy y siento que es mi rutina solamente, que ninguna otra señorita o familia tiene la misma que yo. Pero cuando digo mi historia o cuento mi historia y todas las otras señoritas están de acuerdo conmigo, siento que ellas tienen el mismo problema, entonces no estoy sola en esta situación. Sí, me hizo sentir normal... y nos hace sentir más seguras porque una está contando su historia, una está contando su problema y una no se siente tímida ni siente vergüenza por eso. Una la comparte con todo el mundo y una sabe cómo compartir problemas, porque cuando alguien no cuenta sus problemas y lo guardó adentro, se van a sentir como si estuvieran en prisión o algo así, si contamos abrimos un poquito la puerta, ¿sabe? Puede salir y la gente puede entrar.

La analogía a la celda en una prisión constituye una metáfora potente para conjurar las ideas de aislamiento y desesperanza. En esta narración, compartir cumplía una función clave, incluso funcionaba como una llave para soltar las apretadas amarras de los problemas. Gracias al componente ‘compartir’, se le asignó al TP el papel dual de liberar y apoyar, lo que facilitaba el crecimiento personal a través de dos rutas: se escapa del aislamiento de los problemas propios, y se ven los problemas como algo normal y, por lo tanto, menos potentes.

En otras narraciones el cambio consistió en una renovada fortaleza y esperanza. En el siguiente fragmento, Ritaj usó la empatía, la comprensión y el apoyo de otras para validar su propia experiencia y renovar su esperanza en el futuro. Se sentía que los personajes en esta historia compartían la fortaleza y empoderaban a Ritaj para enfrentar la adversidad con resiliencia.
“Ella dijo que le dan un poder; y la empujan a seguir; y tiene una gran esperanza en su futuro. Si ella se detiene o tiene que luchar de alguna manera, necesita luchar para lograr sus objetivos o las metas; y le dan de verdad empuje para continuar su vida incluso cuando tiene algunas dificultades. Un día ella va a olvidar todas estas dificultades y ellas, las dificultades, sólo van a ser como un recuerdo.”

Para Lojain, este sentimiento renovado tomó la forma de una resolución de seguir con el compromiso de luchar por un cambio. Lojain habló acerca de cómo observó la representación de la revolución en su patria:

“Especially when ellas están gritando “¡Sí! ¡Cambio! ¡Cambio! ¡Y cambio!” Siento las multitudes de mi pueblo cuando están yendo a una manifestación. Oigo a la gente gritando “Abajo, abajo Hamad, todo va a cambiar, libertad para la gente, liberen todos los prisioneros de la cárcel.” Cuando dicen cambio, cambio, cambio, a veces de los tambores y los tintineos, siento como que es la hora de cambiar y no vamos a detenernos hasta que el verdadero cambio ocurra.”

Lojain narró la historia sobre lo que se siente estando desconectada de su patria y alejada de la acción política. En el episodio de la historia en el fragmento anterior, ella describía como se sentía reconectada a los problemas a través de la representación y motivada a continuar su lucha por el cambio y la libertad.

**Nuevas maneras de estar con los otros.** Varias narraciones acerca del crecimiento personal se enfocaron en los cambios en la manera de estar con los otros. Para algunas, era a través del desarrollo de la paciencia y la seguridad en sí mismas, mientras que para una mujer el TP se ajustaba a la historia de cambio cultural que estaba viviendo.

En la narración de Soso acerca del desarrollo de la paciencia, recordó historias dolorosas que escuchó en TP, luego hizo comparaciones entre su propia vida y la de las demás. Soso comentó cómo su experiencia en TP le permite poner en perspectiva las demandas de su propia vida:

“Usted sabe, este teatro, este Playback, creo que nos ayuda, ¿sabe? A otra gente, por un conjunto de historias, tal vez una historia dura, tal vez una aprende. Y a veces estoy cansada, tengo tres hijos, pero a veces una escucha una historia y piensa “Ah, listo, sólo estoy cansada.” Cuando una oye gente tiene grande triste que una, una piensa: “OK, estoy muy bien”. Ahora tengo paciencia para cualquier problema, pienso que está OK para mí.”

En otras narraciones se consideró al TP como una ayuda para el desarrollo de la seguridad para hablar en público y también dentro de las relaciones personales. La narración de Inas comenzó con un periodo en que se estuvo familiarizando con el TP antes de acumular la valentía para contar una historia. Habló de cómo se ha desarrollado esta seguridad; ahora se caracteriza a sí misma como una persona con agencia, que es capaz de decir lo que piensa:
“No tengo seguridad antes, pero ahora por esta cosa, pienso que tal vez puedo decir en público, me puedo parar ante un público y decir lo que pienso. Sí, porque nunca he hecho eso antes.”

Ryam contó dos historias acerca del aumento de seguridad: en su propia relación y en la comunidad local.

“Tal vez ahora tenemos mayor seguridad, especialmente con nuestros esposos, podemos hablar con ellos, los podemos dejar pensar sobre nosotras, que somos importantes, que somos seres humanos, que tenemos sentimientos, lo mismo que ellos. Me da más seguridad ser honesta. Porque cuando las vi representando nuestras historias, es como que tuviera más experiencia sobre cómo voy a actuar la próxima vez, cómo voy a decir la próxima vez, cómo debería ser, debería ser más fuerte; debería ser más segura… tengo que confiar en mí misma.”

Ryam habló de que vio algo diferente en su historia cuando observaba la representación, como se describió en el tema ‘nuevas formas de ver’. Utilizó esta nueva percepción para pensar cómo podría actuar de manera diferente y cómo alteró la dinámica de su relación. Como en la historia de Inas, se atribuyó a sí misma más agencia. Esto tal vez se reflejó en la manera cómo contó la historia, donde se movía de una identidad colectiva (nosotras) a una identidad individual, por medio del uso de ‘yo’. En otra historia, Ryam describió su preocupación sobre cómo la podrían juzgar las mujeres inglesas. Identificó la conversación con las actrices de TP con su mayor conocimiento de la cultura inglesa, lo que impactó en sus interacciones con la comunidad local:

“Me siento segura y especialmente más segura con las mujeres, pero más segura con las mujeres inglesas. De modo que cuando voy al mercado o a cualquier lugar, puedo conversar con ellas y puedo ser amiga de ellas, después del teatro Playback.”

También vieron el TP como un lugar donde las historias políticas se convertían en acción política.

“Todos los medios hablan de la revolución, menos en Bahrain... y siguen tapando todo y diciendo que no pasa nada en Bahrain y en realidad hay una revolución muy mala y una situación muy mala en Bahrain, que tiene que ver con un muy maltrato de parte del gobierno a su pueblo y yo conté eso. Creo que soy la voz de mi país, así que es un poquito como los medios, pero puedo contar a los demás cómo sufre la gente allá y la situación allá, no es estable para nada y en realidad es muy mala... para mí, me siento feliz porque doy a conocer a la gente o a los otros acerca de nuestra revolución, así que tal vez eran ciegos o sordos, de alguna manera pienso que les quité las gafas de sol y les destapé los oídos de alguna manera... Le doy algo a mi país.”

Para Lojain, el TP es parte de un escenario de cambio más amplio. Su historia describió cómo ella necesitaba sentirse conectada con su país y participar en acciones políticas como manifestaciones. Contar los dilemas de su país a través del TP constituyó una
acción dentro de una narración de cambio preestablecida. En esta historia Lojain no sólo se situó como agente, sino que se asignó el papel de liberar a otros de manera que también puedan pensar de manera independiente.

Discusión

Las tramas presentaron al TP como un proceso en el cual la narración de historias promueve sentimientos de conexión, confianza, reconocimiento y empatía; de manera que reflejaron la observación de Salas (2000) en el sentido de que la respuesta empática del público reconoce a las personas que narran y reduce su sentimiento de aislamiento. Las diferencias culturales entre las personas del público y las actrices se plantearon de manera positiva; las personas del público se conectaron entre ellas a través de su experiencia compartida, pero valoraron además la empatía de las actrices occidentales y la oportunidad de aprender acerca de la cultura inglesa. Contenidas por este contexto empático, se pudieron contar historias tanto dolorosas como alegres, las primeras relacionadas en particular con la liberación emocional.

Se identificó al TP con la facilitación del crecimiento personal a través de cambios en la manera en que las mujeres se veían a sí mismas y a los demás, en los sentimientos acerca de una experiencia en su modo de estar con los demás y con el mundo. Esto apoya el hallazgo de Moran y Alon (2010) en el sentido de que el TP facilita el crecimiento personal y la aseveración de Fox (1999b) en el sentido de que las representaciones pueden contribuir a que los individuos logren nuevas comprensiones personales.

Al decidir si contar una historia o no, se sopesaban las ganancias en crecimiento personal y la liberación emocional, por un lado, y el riesgo potencial de la vergüenza y el arrepentimiento, por el otro. Las mujeres consideraban con cuidado qué historias contarian, quién estaba entre el público, cómo las podrían juzgar esas personas y cómo se podrían sentir luego de haberlas contado. Rowe (2007) apunta de manera crítica que el TP es ‘terapia sin fronteras’. Por el contrario, esta investigación provee evidencia de que las personas del público hicieron elecciones proactivas con el fin de posibilitar su propia seguridad dentro de las estructuras del TP.

El TP y la teoría psicológica

Las teorías psicológicas sobre el cambio podrían proporcionar un marco de referencia para comprender el potencial terapéutico del TP. A continuación se discutirán ejemplos de modelos basados en narrativa sistémica psicodinámica y perspectivas de la psicología comunitaria.

Las historias en este estudio contenían la idea de que observar la representación de la historia de uno mismo puede llevar a la liberación emocional. Esto se ha relacionado previamente con la ‘distancia estética’: el equilibrio entre la ‘demasiada distancia’ cognitiva creada desde el papel de observador y la ‘escasa distancia’ afectiva desde el significado personal de la historia (Landy, 1997). Esta noción se relaciona con el
concepto de regulación emocional proveniente de la teoría del apego, donde la oscilación entre experimentar los sentimientos y procesarlos por medio de la retroalimentación del cuidador o cuidadora ayuda a crear un significado reflexivo (Bateman y Fonagy, 2006). De modo similar, Fink (1990) relaciona la distancia estética en TP con enfoques psicodinámicos. Ella sugiere que recurren a los mismos procesos terapéuticos: volver a representar o volver a narrar permite volver a experimentar e integrar los aspectos cognitivos y afectivos de eventos pasados, dando como resultado el reconocimiento, la aceptación y la catarsis. Algunas de las historias en este estudio describieron el reconocimiento: ver la representación ayudaba a las ‘narradoras’ a ver algo nuevo en su historia.

La comprensión también juega un papel importante en la terapia narrativa. Gonçalve y Ribeiro (2012) sugieren que los momentos innovadores, que se parecen al descubrimiento de resultados únicos, caracterizan al cambio terapéutico. Dos de los cinco tipos de cambio narrativo que ellos describen son la ‘reflexión’ y ‘llevar a cabo un cambio’. ‘Reflexión’ se refiere a “nuevas maneras de pensar y sentir y nuevas comprensiones acerca de las implicaciones del problema en la vida del cliente, que le permiten a él o a ella resistir a las demandas de la auto-narración problemática.” Esto puede corresponder con algunas de las historias mencionadas bajo el tema del crecimiento personal en la presente investigación. Las narradoras observan cómo les devuelven sus historias por medio de una representación y por este medio logran sentir y pensar acerca de sus experiencias de nuevas maneras.

Las narraciones transformadoras incluidas en ‘maneras de ser’ también se solapan con la narrativa de Gonçalve y Ribeiro acerca de ‘llevar a cabo un cambio’: el ‘proceso de transformar los resultados dentro de la terapia en cambios fuera de ella’. El TP podría ser un lugar en el cual se presta atención y se fortalecen las narraciones sobre momentos innovadores. El TP tiene el potencial de desafiar las desigualdades, en primer lugar, porque permite oír historias escondidas de desigualdad y, en segundo lugar, porque proporciona un espacio para reflexionar.

Desde la perspectiva de la psicología comunitaria, el TP mantiene la tradición preliteraria del teatro de transmitir el conocimiento cultural. Compartir historias llevó a aprender de las experiencias y la sabiduría de las otras personas, es decir, haciendo uso de los recursos comunitarios y promoviendo el apoyo social (Orford, 2008). Este enfoque es consistente con el énfasis de la psicología comunitaria en el trabajo fuera de los escenarios clínicos, en el contexto en que las historias fueron creadas. Dentro del TP no hay ningún intento de ‘tratar’ a las personas que cuentan historias sólo para escucharlas y representarlas: el poder de cambio se localiza dentro de la comunidad misma, no en el ‘experto’ clínico. Para las mujeres participantes en esta investigación era suficiente fomentar el crecimiento personal, el cual, si le queremos poner otro nombre, podría llamarse terapéutico. Aunque las mujeres hablaron de traer sus propios problemas al TP, su representación sacaba la historia de un contexto representativo individual y lo pasaba a un contexto compartido.
Especificidades de la investigación y aplicaciones clínicas

Una de las mujeres participantes en el estudio comentó que en su cultura asistir a psicoterapia es algo vergonzoso y debe ser evitado; como alternativa, el TP llegó a ser su psicoterapia. Esto resaltó la importancia de tener intervenciones comunitarias por fuera del escenario clínico. Las historias contadas en este estudio indican que el TP provee un espacio personal para escuchar historias, apoyarlas y reflexionar acerca de ellas. Esto es de especial importancia cuando tratamos de comprender los trastornos de la vida cotidiana. Las participantes en este estudio no sólo acababan de experimentar el trastorno de cambiarse de país, sino la devastación en sus países de origen. La investigación se llevó a cabo en una época de revoluciones y levantamientos masivos en muchos de los países natales de estas mujeres, la que se dio en llamar la Primavera Árabe o los Levantamientos Árabes. El TP puede ser un lugar en el cual se puede atribuir un significado a las disyuntivas y a las dificultades posteriores de reubicarse en una nueva cultura. En la conexión y el apoyo descrito por todas las mujeres, podría verse el papel preventivo que asume el TP en la evolución de las dificultades personales, al crear una comunidad capaz de apoyar a las personas en problemas para que lleven a cabo cambios significativos en sus vidas.

Esta investigación no se diseñó para ser generalizada a todas las poblaciones: las narraciones son específicas para el contexto de mujeres árabes musulmanas, que viven en Inglaterra y que hablan con una mujer inglesa que tiene el propósito de hacer una investigación. Sin embargo, si tomamos en consideración la idea de que nos apoyamos en los discursos culturales disponibles cuando tratamos de dar sentido a algo, estos hallazgos pueden ser relevantes en otros escenarios diferentes. Los hallazgos constituyen una evidencia preliminar de la efectividad terapéutica del TP para mujeres que a menudo no son escuchadas, tienen escasa representación y, sin embargo, han experimentado trastornos o traumas importantes en sus vidas.

Una perspectiva subjetiva y reflexiva acerca de las limitaciones y mejoras de la investigación

El análisis de las narraciones es una interpretación subjetiva de los datos. Esta versión ha sido privilegiada por el poder que acompaña al estatus de investigador y constituye sólo una manera de representar los datos. Esta investigación representa a la ‘otredad’ (Kitzinger y Wilkinson, 1996) en muchas dimensiones. Mi identidad (KG) difiere de las que participaron en la investigación: soy blanca, inglesa, soltera, sin hijos y me considero feminista. Tenemos (todas las autoras y participantes) en común el ser mujeres, pero nuestras experiencias como mujeres son muy diferentes.

A pesar de que se ha criticado como atrevida la investigación intercultural por querer asumir la voz del Otro, Livia (1996) sugiere que hablar sólo por nosotros implica que las voces menos privilegiadas guarden silencio mientras aumenta la dominación de los académicos blancos occidentales. Una forma en que la investigación podría haber abordado la preocupación acerca de interpretar las historias de los Otros con el marco...
de referencia cultural propio es la colaboración con alguien que tuviera la perspectiva de refugiada o de solicitante de asilo durante la fase de análisis. Sin embargo, existen discusiones en el sentido de que esto puede ser una cortina de humo, ya que una sola persona no puede decirse representativa de su grupo social. Por esta razón, se optó por las entrevistas horquilladas junto con la verificación por parte de las participantes con el fin de minimizar el impacto del bagaje cultural, las presunciones y las creencias de la investigadora.

Además, las mujeres implicadas en el proceso de verificación estuvieron de acuerdo en que la investigación presentaba una representación válida de sus historias. Una mujer agregó que identificar el TP con el aumento de seguridad en sí misma era tal vez más importante de lo que yo había descrito. Me dijo que “las mujeres musulmanas no se describen así normalmente” y que por eso el hallazgo de que las mujeres describen al TP como algo que aumenta la seguridad es muy importante. Otra mujer encontró que el tema ‘convertirse en narradora’ se adecuaba especialmente a su experiencia y comentó que las historias que no se contaron eran generalmente aquellas acerca de la relación con los esposos.

En general, este estudio abordó la falta de investigaciones que exploren la experiencia del público de TP y aporta evidencia preliminar acerca de sus beneficios en una comunidad de refugiadas y solicitantes de asilo. Provee alguna validación a las reflexiones de las actrices de TP sobre lo que es efectivo en su práctica. Sin embargo, se requiere muchas investigaciones adicionales para explorar cómo comprenden otros grupos de individuos su experiencia de asistir a sesiones de TP tanto por parte de poblaciones clínicas como no-clínicas. Otras investigaciones podrían explorar el impacto a largo plazo del TP. Algunas de las mujeres en esta investigación hablaron del potente impacto del TP después de una o dos funciones; por lo tanto, sería interesante explorar la percepción del público tanto en funciones únicas así como de grupos que se reúnen regularmente para participar en funciones, tal vez después de seis meses o más.

Conclusión

Los temas identificados en este análisis se combinan para crear una historia general del TP como un enfoque comunitario donde se cuentan y escuchan historias en un contexto seguro y de apoyo, lo que permite la liberación emocional y una experiencia de crecimiento y cambio personal. Las historias contadas acerca del TP reflejan algunos aspectos de las terapias formales que están fundamentadas en evidencia comprobada. Por ejemplo, las historias describían una liberación emocional, el desarrollo de la reflexión y comprensión personal, y transformaciones personales como lograr ser más segura o más paciente. Estos aspectos de ayuda del TP se pueden comprender dentro de marcos de referencia como por ejemplo la terapia psicodinámica y narrativa. Sin embargo, a diferencia de las intervenciones formales, el TP ofrece la continuidad de las amistades y del apoyo en un escenario comunitario real. Esta manera de apoyar a otras personas corresponde con perspectivas de la
psicología comunitaria que ayuda a movilizar recursos dentro de las comunidades como una manera de proveer estrategias de prevención e intervención.

Las mujeres en esta foto hacen parte de un nuevo grupo; por motivos de salvaguardar su identidad, no son las que participaron en esta investigación.

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