

Playback Theatre as a Response to the Impact of Political Violence and Structural Oppression

Ben Rivers

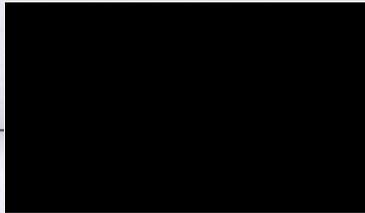
University of New England, Australia

Candidate Certification

STATEMENT OF ORIGINALITY

I, Ben Rivers, certify that the substance of this thesis has not already been submitted for any degree and is not currently being submitted for any other degree or qualification.

I certify that any help received in preparing this thesis and all sources used have been acknowledged in this thesis.



Signature of Candidate:

Signature of Principal Supervisor:

A faint, illegible signature of the candidate is visible in the signature line.

29/11/13
[illegible]

Abstract: In Playback Theatre, audience members share true stories from their own lives and subsequently watch as a team of actors and musicians turn these accounts into improvised enactments. The method is now practiced in over 60 countries as a way to promote dialogue, community building, and psychosocial wellbeing. This thesis, composed of 7 published articles, covers new ground by investigating the use of Playback Theatre for addressing the impact of political violence and structural oppression. The enactment of personal stories within a communal context is presented as an effective intervention within broader efforts that aim to raise consciousness and mobilize diverse audiences towards engagement in political action. In addition to Playback's role as a form of cultural activism, the author also explores its use as a form of community-based trauma response – one that enables practitioners and community members to address the structural roots of large-scale violence while also attending to the personal impact of adversity. The limitations, risks and pitfalls of Playback are also presented, including the possibility that practitioners may inadvertently exert their privilege to replicate oppressive ideologies or dynamics within the performance space. The importance of working collaboratively and strategically with a range of partners is also emphasized. Although the discussion focuses on the use of Playback Theatre within occupied Palestine, some articles also explore its use within other contexts including the Dalit movement in India. In addition to a focus on the pragmatic functions of Playback Theatre, the author also explores the value of beauty and aesthetics, particularly in relation to psychodramatic group work.

CONTENTS

Introduction | Page 4

Chapter 1 | *Playback Theatre as a response to the impact of political violence in occupied Palestine* | Page 40

Chapter 2 | *The Freedom Bus and Playback Theatre: Beyond Neo-colonial Approaches to Trauma Response in Occupied Palestine* | Page 76

Chapter 3 | *Playback Theatre, Cultural Resistance and the Limits of Trauma Discourse* | Page 101

Chapter 4 | *Narrative Power: Playback Theatre as cultural resistance in Occupied Palestine* | Page 112

Chapter 5 | *Cherry Theft Under Apartheid* | Page 147

Chapter 6 | *Educate, Agitate, Organize! Playback Theatre and its role in social movements* | Page 172

Chapter 7 | *Mobilizing Aesthetics in Pyschodramatic Group Work* | Page 196

Conclusion | Page 217

Consolidated reference list | Page 221