

**Playback Theatre: An Investigation Into
Applied Theatre and Communities of Meaning,
with Specific Reference to Education and
Health.**

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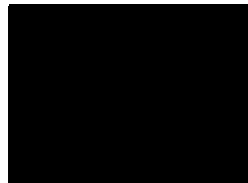
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New England.**

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I certify that the substance of this thesis has not already been submitted for any degree and is not submitted for any degree or qualification.

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



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ABSTRACT

This thesis explores Playback Theatre (PBT) as a site for learning and healing, with meaning-making as the linking dynamic. This is done through:

1. the researcher's own meaning-making of a performance;
2. a model locating PBT at the nexus of Narrative, Performance, Health and Education.
3. an analytical heuristic where the propositions implicit in the literature were made explicit, and used to search for empirical evidence using the lived experience of its participants; and,
4. the development of an emergent theory of PBT that was informed by this evidence.

The research questions are in two categories— Empirical and Theoretical. The empirical questions asked about the lived experience of PBT, and the associated process of meaning-making. These questions were then re-ordered and expanded in light of the data, to include: what is inherent in the form that might make it rich with potential for learning-healing, processes used to work towards this potential, and impacts these may have on the social-emotional lives of participants.

The empirical research covered one five month and one six month period. It involved interviewing 47 participants from nine performances and videoing rehearsals and a public performance. The investigation is post-positivistic and broadly humanistic using mixed methods: Phenomenology, Phenomenography and Grounded Theory.

The theoretical propositions are established through review of literature, and NUD*IST (4) used to examine these in light of the interview data. As the propositions were supported by empirical evidence, they were used to construct an emergent theory of PBT. At the heart of this theory is a process of meaning-making. It asserts “telling”, “witnessing”, and “modelling” as essential elements of PBT and these activate individual and group learning that gives rise to new meanings. This can lead to emotional healing. The theory also asserts that healing increases potential for additional learning to occur because it makes telling, witnessing and modelling more salient. It is finally argued that the efficacy of PBT as a vehicle for meaning-making and, hence, learning-healing, reflects the particular social-aesthetic context of PBT.

Suggestions are made regarding contributions that PBT can make to Education, and questions posed for future research.

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