

CHAPTER FIVE

Playback Theatre and Health: Healing Through the Arts

66% of people agree that ‘the arts are good for my inner self’.
(Costantoura 2000:12) in *Australians and the Arts: What do the Arts mean to Australians?*

Introduction

The previous chapter sought to locate PBT within the fields of narrative, performance and cultural studies—drawing particularly on the conceptual notions implicit in each—this served to illuminate the vertical axis of the proposed theoretical model (Figure 2). This chapter provides an overview of healing through the Arts and is more applied in nature than the previous one (Chapter Four). What this overview does is to contextualise and illuminate how PBT itself can be healing, drawing on Dramatherapy, Psychodrama, and (briefly), Narrative Therapy. In this chapter I focus on the term “therapy” rather than healing due to its wider contemporary acceptance. In addition, I situate this discussion more broadly in therapy through the arts as a precursor to considering how PBT might also be healing. This more broadly based discussion encompasses a range of cognate areas such as Psychodrama, Drama Therapy, Creative Arts Therapy, Art Therapy, Dance and allied movement-based Therapies, Music Therapy, and Narrative Therapy. Each of these therapies shares many characteristics and the same broadly-based philosophy that is conceptualised in the subtitle of Payne’s (1993) aptly named volume, *Handbook of Inquiry in the Arts Therapies: One River, Many Currents*. I draw briefly on a number of these “many currents” in order to illuminate the therapeutic or healing potential of PBT itself.

The Nexus of Theatre and Health

While PBT is multi-modal and develops multiliteracies—an idea developed later in the thesis—there still exists in some traditions a generally accepted division between science and art, healers and artists. This division exists despite a long history of alliance between ritual

and healing (MacDougall & Yoder 1998b). Aristotle, for instance, proposed that the function of tragedy was to induce the emotional and spiritual state of catharsis. Similarly, Evreinov (1927), at the turn of the century, argued that theatre is a human impulse necessary to healthy living.

A similar dichotomy is reflected in a contemporary tension between theatre's commitment to *process*—where the work is fluid and bound to the changing “present” of each performance—and an *objectives* and *outcomes* based orientation, particularly held by those who fund health-related projects (MacDougall & Yoder 1998a:6). However, theatre has been recognised as a transformative force at both individual and social levels for at least 20,000 years, dating back to the dramatic healing rituals of shamanistic cultures (Achterberg, 1985 cited in Snow (1996:200). Included in this long history are such wide-ranging events as celebrations marking peaceful transitions in people's lives, and performances of political resistance and calls for radical change (Winner 1998). Indeed, May (1975:140) argued that the creative process that lies at the heart of dramatic process is, in fact, a passion for clarity: “It is the struggle against disintegration, the struggle to bring into existence new kinds of being that give harmony and integration”. Müller-Thalheim (1975:166) has also spoken of this healing, life-affirming aspect of creativity:

We know the fantasies and the artistic daydreams which help to conquer the painful limits of existence and lead through play to art. They also help to manage our basic conflicts.

Theatre, it has been argued (Jones 1996), is necessary to living because:

- (1) It allows connections to the emotions and the unconscious, and
- (2) It satisfies the basic human need to play and create.

In addition, because theatre is set apart from everyday reality, it can be used to reflect on and react to that reality. In this way theatre can be linked with healing because of the potential both for engagement at a feelings level, and distance to allow for reflection. An examination of two forms—Drama Therapy and Psychodrama—where drama and theatre have been linked with transformation and healing will reveal how this happens.

Healing Through the Arts: Drama Therapy

Drama Therapy developed as an outgrowth of drama used in educational settings and has recently been described by Petitti (1992:43) as a specific form of intervention “used to bring about intrapsychic, interpersonal, or behavioral change”. The groundwork for drama *as*

therapy was laid by drama *as* education (Bolton 1979; 1984; Courtney 1968; Heathcote & Bolton 1995b; Sherborne 1990; Wagner 1976; Way 1967) particularly through the work of Slade¹⁹ (Meldrum 1994; 1954; 1995). This groundwork was reflected for the first time in Jenning's ground-breaking book, *Remedial Drama* (1978). Also of importance to the development of drama therapy was the work of some of the avant-garde theatre companies of the 1960's and 1970's, including Beck's *Living Theatre*, Schechner's *Performance Group*, Brook's *Theatre of Cruelty*, and Chaikin's *Open Theatre*. Each of these companies sought to redefine and ameliorate the barriers between the actor and spectator, and use the performance space as a place where everyday life could be examined. These precedents facilitated the educational and interactive components of drama therapy and PBT.

The drama therapist is trained in both the psychology of therapy and the art of drama²⁰, and therefore is able to marry the use of drama to the achievement of therapeutic goals. In a like manner, the PBT actor not only has to have finely crafted skills as a performer, but also some of the crucial skills of a therapist—particularly the ability for deep listening. This particular ability lies at the core of both psychotherapy and PBT. Skilful reflective listening underlies the development of empathy, genuineness, warmth, and positive regard (Gerber & Basham 1999), all-important in building trust and authentic relationships between actors, teller, and audience.

Drama therapy is informed by the central concepts of several approaches to psychotherapy, including humanistic, existential, psychodynamic, and cognitive-behavioural approaches (Emunah 1997). In the Creative Arts generally, and Drama Therapy and Psychodrama particularly, these concepts are supported by a number of underlying premises. Levine (1997:xv-xvi) described the most important of these premises as a belief in the “potential for creative existence in each of us”. This notion is important because *poiesis*²¹, the creative act, uses the power of the imagination to form and reform ourselves away from fragmentation and disintegration towards wholeness where the psyche is integrated and affirmed. What this means in PBT is that the actors take the teller's story and render it anew in the light of the imagination. This transformation has the power to touch not just the teller, but also the

¹⁹ It was Slade who in 1954 first coined the term “drama therapy” (Emunah 1997).

²⁰ All drama therapists are required to have a theatre background in order to become registered (Emunah 1997).

²¹ Heidegger's use of *poiesis*, the Greek word for poetry, is the creative act where art has the power to transform human life.

audience, who find its own deepest needs reflected in the playback. In this way, the “art” of PBT has the capacity to heal.

The paradox of these arts-based forms, and PBT in particular, is that the “story” of the teller is both contained *and* released. In addition, the community of those present also “hold” the teller while his or her story is shaped, given form and expressed through the use of imagination. Indeed, this is the message that art brings—expression itself is transformation (Levine 1997:15)—and it is the act of the imagination that unifies and integrates our experience of the world and the self. In Levine’s words: “imagination brings the new into being” (p.20).

There is currently a plethora of models of dramatherapy, with Casson (1998) identifying twelve models. These include, controversially for the dramatherapy community, PBT and Psychodrama. These models include, most prominently:

- (1) Theatre models of dramatherapy as promoted by Jennings (1988; 1990; 1992; 1994a; 1995; 1998);
- (2) Therapeutic drama and dramatherapy as practised by Gersie (1991; 1997; 1990) and Lahad (1992);
- (3) Role models of dramatherapy primarily developed in the United States by Landy (1990; 1993) and Read Johnson (1982; 1992); and
- (4) The anthropological approach to dramatherapy, again attributed to Jennings (Meldrum 1994).

Casson argues that many of these models are not distinct; in fact, they overlap and inter-relate in many ways. All of these models hold in common a reliance on the process of drama²² to achieve their therapeutic goals.

Perhaps not surprisingly, there also exists a multitude of definitions of dramatherapy. These definitions evolve as the genre develops, and reflect the distinct training methodologies used in different dramatherapy courses. For example, Jennings (1978), now regarded as an “elder” in the dramatherapy world, having established training programs in a number of different countries, recently defined dramatherapy as: “the term used for the application of theatre art in special situations, with the intention that it will be therapeutic, healing or

²² This process includes movement, voice, dance, theatre games, role-play, improvisation, text work, puppetry and mask work (Jennings 1998).

beneficial to the participants” (1998:33). Of all the definitions of dramatherapy, this one in particular, with its *broad* range of outcomes, sits most comfortably with PBT. It recognises that its benefits range from being entertained and exploring life issues in a “space set apart”, to specific therapeutic outcomes where the psyche is affirmed and integrated.

In addition, Jennings sees dramatherapy as “a profession whose roots are set firmly in theatre art”, and drama therapists as “creative artists” not “‘psycho’-therapists” (Meldrum 1994:17). For Jennings (1998:17), dramatherapy *is* an “art form, constantly renewing the creativity of the therapist and the client”.

Jennings also describes eight “core concepts” that reflect how dramatherapy is therapeutic. These concepts also illuminate the healing potential of PBT.

1. Theatrical distance. There are a number of notions of distance that also reflect PBT. First is the frame of mind of the clients involved in dramatherapy, or the audience in the case of PBT. For example, people often travel some distance to go the theatre, whereas in contrast a medium such as television is usually located in the living room of a house where people eat, talk, move about and generally relax. This means that distance is not only achieved through the dramatic effects of theatrical conventions—the set, lighting, paying at the door, the “space set apart” for the workshop or performance—but also by the frame of mind that people bring with them as they watch. Secondly, it is the function of distance that allows the audience to enter into the dramatic reality. This is because in drama there are two worlds that operate: the dramatic world and the everyday world. In PBT for example, distance is achieved first through the telling of one’s own story, thereby separating story from one’s self, and secondly by the actor’s embodying the story—literally making the story their own. Distance provides perspective so that change can occur; a liminal threshold can be crossed, the imagination released, and healing can take place. Therefore, paradoxically, distance both provides differentiation and facilitates connection.

According to Jennings (1998:116):

The paradox of distance is that both actor and audience come closer not just to each other but to the themes and characters of the plot and subplots. Images, metaphors and subtexts resonate for us as we are guided through this theatrical journey being communicated within the dramatic reality.

This “coming closer” is sometimes framed as empathy (Jones 1996:104), and refers to the creation of a bond between actor and audience. Jones also highlighted that it is more fruitful to think of empathy and distancing as both part of any reaction that we may have to either theatre or therapy, and not as the polar opposites they are commonly understood to be.

Therefore, art can be seen to create the space for recognition that leads to understanding through both distance and empathy.

2. The two realities. Jennings described a number of “worlds” that operate in everyday existence, two of which are most important here: the everyday “concrete” world; and the imaginary world of our dramatic imagination. Interestingly, this imaginary world is often perceived of as fantasy and therefore somehow of less value than the world of facts. Of particular concern from an educational perspective is the diminishing exercise of this ability progressively through the school system—an ability so important that it is looked for as a developmental milestone reflecting development and maturation (Wright 1996). Unfortunately, our education system places far more emphasis on factual knowledge, particularly in science and technology, rather than on the development of an individual’s imaginal capacity. This separation is perplexing as it leads to a polarisation of the arts and sciences, a differentiation that limits both capacities, as scientists making “leaps into the unknown” require imagination as well as facts (Osborne & Brady 2000).

In terms of dramatherapy, it is important that the two worlds of dramatic reality and everyday reality are separate, even though connecting. This is because people who are diagnosed as either psychotic or with borderline psychosis experience the “as-if” world as real. Jennings makes the point in this way: “People who are described as being borderline or psychotic could be described as people who are *trapped* in dramatic reality” (p.119). That is, they lose their identity and live with an assumed role. On the other hand, clients diagnosed with psychopathic personalities *live out* high dramas as their everyday lives. Jennings conceptualised these people as being trapped in their “everyday reality”. Dramatherapy facilitates the movement between the two realities as needed by the individual in a healthy way. In a like manner, PBT clearly establishes boundaries around the as-if of the playback that is created, and the reality of the audience’s everyday lives, making clear the differences between the two (Grainger 1990). Therefore, dramatherapy and PBT draw attention to difference and similarity and engage participants at a profounder level of perceptual clarity; that is, of meaning.

3. Embodiment-Projection-Role: The drama developmental paradigm.

Embodiment-Projection-Role (EPR) is a conceptualisation by Jennings (1998) of the development an individual goes through virtually from conception to about the age of seven. This three-stage model, according to Jennings, is an aspect of almost all activities and determines, in part, through an individual’s preference, what kinds of activities he or she will

participate in. For example, a person with a preference for projection will more than likely assume a “teaching” role in at least some important aspect of their life, as teaching is a projective activity (p.121). What this means in dramatherapy is that someone who has not progressed satisfactorily through these developmental stages, or has become stuck through some form of trauma, may have missed out on developing these important abilities. In dramatherapy the facilitator can use exercises and activities to develop these within a workshop situation. PBT also works with the EPR model, although not in such a direct manner. The actors, for example, model Embodiment, Projection and Role during the PBT process, and this may be less intimidating for some than having to “act this out” themselves.

The notion of projection also provides some understanding of how PBT works. Jones (1996:101) described dramatic projection this way:

Dramatic projection is the process by which clients [or the audience and teller in the case of Playback Theatre] project aspects of themselves or their experience into theatrical or dramatic materials or into enactment, and thereby externalise inner conflicts. A relationship between the inner state of the client [audience/teller] and the external dramatic form is established and developed through action. The dramatic expression enables change through the creation of perspective, along with the opportunity for exploration and insight through the enactment of projected material.

Hence in PBT, the twin processes of identification and projection facilitate a shift in perspective that can lead to a change in the way that we see or understand ourselves.

4. Dramatic re-working of experience. Reworking of material in a dramatic way is something that people constantly do, even if only in their minds. This re-working can take the form of rehearsing then replaying a job interview, replaying a hurtful comment in the same tone of voice, or retelling a story in an emotional way of a traumatic event to others in an attempt to gain “mastery” over it. In dramatherapy, for example, re-working of material can occur when clients “present” for therapy and appear to be “stuck” in their story, re-playing the troubling event in a recurring way that is debilitating. The dramatic re-working of this material can be freeing and allow the person to gain a different viewpoint, let go, and move on in their lives. The dramatic re-working of experience lies at the heart of the PBT experience, hence providing distance and perspective on events in a person’s life.

Jones (1996:102) also construed this re-working as a part of a broader therapeutic performance process that is comprised of *need identifying*, *rehearsal*, *showing* and *disengagement*. Further, he highlighted that for some participants the process itself may be therapeutic, no matter what the content may be. In short, PBT provides a structure and a

process where material can be expressed, explored, and is also a process that may be therapeutic in and of itself.

5. Dramatic structure of the mind. As Jennings and others have argued, drama and theatre permeate our language and culture, and help frame and explicate our lives (Goffman 1971; Grainger 1990; Jennings 1990, 1995, 1998; Jones 1996). It is not surprising, then, that the “structure” of the mind can be conceptualised in dramatic terminology. Jennings does this by describing an internal guide that monitors what we do; an internal artiste that is our creative and artistic self; a skilled self that also knows and experiences that state of “skilledness”; and a vulnerable self that needs support from the other three areas. Dramatherapy and PBT work towards identifying and giving voice to each of these states, thereby moving the individual towards a state of balance and equilibrium.

6. Ritualisation of life events. The ritualisation of important life events and markers occurs across all cultures. This is because ritual allows for a special form of *collective re-working of*, and *preparation for* life experiences within a community. Drama, as Jennings correctly points out, is the way ritual is performed. Both ritual and dramatherapy bring about personal transformation through imaginative means, which, interestingly for PBT, also incorporate the use of narrative (Grainger 1990). Dramatherapy and PBT draw on theatre and ritual—theatre for **re-**formation, and ritual for **trans-**formation. The ritualistic structure of both forms therefore, contains and frees creativity, promotes risk, and helps the participants move from the known to the unknown in the context of a relationship of ever increasing closeness.

7. Expansion of roles and transformation. Both Dramatherapy and PBT expand the choice of roles people have to play through releasing the imagination. While this is done in slightly different ways in each form, either by direct embodied experience in dramatherapy or through modelling different perspectives and ways of being in PBT, the end result is the same. Individuals have a wider repertoire of roles to draw on giving them greater choice and flexibility.

8. Lived metaphysical experience. There are times in people’s lives when they feel touched or moved in a way that transports them beyond the everyday into a different realm of experience. These moments can be profound times of being and knowing that generate great insight. While this does not always happen in either dramatherapy or PBT, opportunities to *be*, *feel* and *know* are part of the range of experiences accessed through the dramatic process.

In addition to these eight core concepts formulated by Jennings, a number of notions common to both theatre and drama reveal the potential for healing—four of these will be discussed briefly. The first of these is the relational nature of the forms. That is, we see ourselves at the most essential level of all—in relation to others. This process of relationship occurs through the power of imaginative identification, and reduces the insecurity and vulnerability of our existential isolation (Grainger 1990). Wilshire (1982:6) referred to this as *authorisation*, or seeking permission to *be* through our involvement with others. Commonly, this is thought of as community in PBT, as we see ourselves in the stories that are told. Secondly, Grainger draws on a variety of perspectives on drama—sociological, psychological, aesthetic and theatrical—to highlight what he claims is the most powerful therapeutic connotation of drama, as *participation* in the essential processes of human experience, rather than merely as an *imitation* of life.

This means that not only can I see myself in community with others, but also separate from others. That is, through drama I can establish myself *as* myself, as separate from others who participate in my self-awareness. Grainger (1990:25-26) described this process in these words:

The use of drama as a therapeutic medium makes the relationship between self and other, 'I-for-myself' and 'I-from-others' explicit ...my words and gestures constitute the triumph of individuality over engulfment [and therefore] I am able to distinguish some of the principles which determine my characteristic way of reacting to other people.

Thirdly, drama and theatre use symbol in the form of verbal metaphor, bodily gesture, or the shape given to a series of actions, to express ideas, thoughts or feelings outside the immediate range of their present situation. This use of symbol is healing, in that it is a way of reaching out beyond oneself to others through an “object” endowed with special significance. Importantly, this is not just an “outward” seeking phenomenon, a means of making personal contact with others, but also a transitional object that bridges the gap between the real and the imagined (Grainger 1999). Grainger (1990:33) described the function of symbol in this way:

It functions as a link between personal realities, for its symbolic nature leads us outward from ourselves into participation in the other and back again to ourselves, our frame of mind subtly changed by the experience.

In PBT, symbol is used—as in all art—to draw us out of ourselves, often through these “transitional objects” and we are thereby able to imagine and bridge into other worlds, all in the context of the community of those present.

Fourthly, and as a function of aesthetic distance, catharsis is the one attribute most associated with theatre and healing. Aristotle was the first to point out that Tragedy was “healing” in a way that was aligned with the aesthetic. This healing effect was a release of the emotions, that according to Fyfe (1967:15) “saves us from psychical distress by providing an emotional outlet”. Moreno (1946), the founder of Psychodrama, was particularly inspired by Greek Theatre, and catharsis became an organising concept in his development of the Psychodramatic form. Grainger (1996:30) described how this may happen: “During a psychodrama members of the audience, identifying with the protagonist may well see their own tragedy, conflict, anger, grief revealed and experience catharsis”.

Importantly for the development of PBT, Moreno refined his psychodramatic method to facilitate such cathartic therapeutics in the audience. This was achieved by instituting a:

period of sharing after the main enactment was over in which members of the audience share with the protagonist what the drama touched in them, what they recognised from their own life (Grainger 1996:30).

This reveals how a PBT performance may be therapeutic for those who do not tell a story, but are part of the audience. Grainger then goes on to detail five more experiences that also may be therapeutic for those in the audience.

First, there is the pleasure of watching a performance that energises and delights. Importantly, as Grainger noted, this pleasure is more than just cerebral but is part of the “felt” experience of theatre (1996:27). This is because PBT provides multi-sensory stimulation that is sensual in the way that it is felt in the body, and pleasure stands in opposition to depression. Secondly, in PBT the audience is not passive, but active witnesses to what occurs in the performance space. This role includes the process of making meaning of what is performed, participating in the *as-if* of theatre, and making conscious the experience of witness itself. Grainger (p.28) described it in this way:

As all art is an invitation to be aware so theatre can bring us into altered states of consciousness, making us aware of feelings, images, ideas, patterns, colours, struggles, revelations.

Thirdly, the audience in PBT uses both projection and transference in what could be termed the mirror technique²³—that is, using the playback form to mirror a teller’s story. In this process audience members project themselves into the playback that they are witnessing and transfer their feelings onto characters that they see before them. This is analogous to the

²³ The mirror technique is used in Psychodrama to give feedback to the protagonist (Blatner 1973).

“inbetweenness” of the conscious and the unconscious, and is described by Winnicott (1975) as the “transference illusion”. This process is especially powerful in a live performance such as PBT because we react to the physical proximity of the actors—we can see their “heartbeat”, as it were, in a way that is not apparent in a medium like television. As Cox and Theilgaard (1994:266-227) observe:

By experiencing dramatic material mirroring personal conflicts, thoughts, fantasies and feelings are projected onto fictive objects. Contact is thereby made between the conscious and unconscious material, so that a higher degree of integration becomes possible. This is one of the benefits of witnessing the plays in live performance.

Fourthly, Grainger (1996:30) described the “fusion and separation, proximity and distance” that occur for audience members. This means that in PBT the audience members feel a temporary fusion or connectedness with each other, and sometimes with the actors. This is what many describe as the feeling of *community* that they experience in PBT. In addition, as described previously, dramatic distance allows the audience members to achieve an objective subjectivity; that is, “to be a witnessing audience through others to the self” (p.30).

Finally, and closely related to the notion of distance, is the freeing and healing effect of the actors performing an action at a safe distance from the audience. This distance provides for some people a zone of safety where they are more able to connect with the meaning inherent in the action because they weren’t performing the action themselves. Therefore, the individual’s feelings of embarrassment and self-consciousness do not impede connection with the story at a deep level.

In conclusion, the healing benefits of dramatherapy and PBT occur through a combination of the power of the imagination, the connection between the mind and the body, and the use of the drama process in a space set apart. While this healing has been discussed in relation to the audience in the first instance, it is also important to realise that there are also healing benefits for the actors as well. This, however, is a subject for another thesis.

Healing Through the Arts: Psychodrama

A distinction can be made between dramatherapy and psychodrama. Psychodrama has been a cornerstone for the curative uses of drama for much of the last century (Emunah 1997). This body of work, developed by Moreno (1946), grew out of his early work with children and was described by Shearon (1980) as having the potential to help children develop more positive feelings about themselves, thereby producing more effective behaviour change. This work, with “healing” overtones, developed into Moreno’s “Theatre of Spontaneity” where

adult actors played scenes without prepared scripts or rehearsals. This freedom for the participants led Moreno to focus on those aspects of psychodrama that facilitated specific “therapeutic” effects and was instrumental in developing his “therapeutic theatre”, now referred to as “Classical Psychodrama” (Davies 1988:107).

Five elements in classical psychodrama are important in understanding PBT. First, *encounter* is the conception of “meeting” and seeing ourselves through the “eyes” of others. This sense of encounter has implications for identity formation and can be clearly seen in PBT where the actors portray the teller and social matrix in which the story exists. Furthermore, there is also the “meeting” which occurs through the playback in the performance space and the theatre itself. Secondly, *spontaneity* is that profound and potent urge towards “self-expression, play and experimentation” (Davies 1988:105). This is revealed in PBT not only in the improvised work of the actors and musician but also in the act of telling, which for many tellers is not premeditated. Third, *creativity* is released through the warm-up that is part of the structure of psychodrama and PBT, and is also modelled through the work of the actors and musician.

Next, is the concept of *sociometry* that has now developed into an area of inquiry of its own (Davies 1988). In sociometry, patterns of social groupings are revealed that expose the interconnections or lack of connection occurring within groups. In PBT these patterns are often exposed through the physicalisation of the teller’s story. Last, *catharsis*, or the vicarious release of tensions, is common to psychodrama, dramatherapy and PBT. Of related interest is how psychodrama, and Moreno’s thinking particularly, has been of profound influence in the development of so many forms of psychotherapy²⁴. This influence, not surprisingly, is most profound in the Creative Arts Therapies (Blatner 1997).

There have been many attempts to differentiate dramatherapy from psychodrama (Chesner 1994; Davies 1988), and this is reflected in a debate that is continuing through the journal *Dramatherapy*. While it is beyond the scope of this thesis to detail the arguments at length, it is helpful to briefly consider some of the similarities and differences between the two forms as a way of revealing the healing potential of PBT.

²⁴ Davies (1988:110) named dramatherapy, gestalt therapy, encounter groups, personal construct theory, family systems and therapy, and transactional analysis as having been, to a greater or lesser extent, an outcome of the “intense activity and creative fertility” that surrounded the psychodrama movement.

Similarities of Psychodrama, Dramatherapy and Playback Theatre.

The most striking similarity amongst the forms is the integral use of drama *process*²⁵ in order to achieve the therapeutic goals of: “symptom relief, emotional and physical integration, and personal growth” (Barham 1992 cited in Chesner (1994:115). Thus drama as a creative art gives shape and form to the material that is “present” in the participants. This occurs through drawing on artistic forms, the creativity, and shared cultural resources of those present. Implicit in each of these three forms is recognition that creativity is crucial to the maintenance of being whole. Furthermore, the dramatic world is *action-based*, which is in stark contrast to the verbal non-action based therapies that have their basis in the work of Freud.

Secondly, each of the three forms *connects* the emotions, intellect (both conscious and unconscious) and the body in a deep way. This means that “more” of a person is accessed, thereby increasing the potential for significant change. There are also strong parallels between the therapeutic and performance space common to each form. In this space, play, imagination, exploration and expression are encouraged and affirmed. This space has been described by Winnicott (1974) as a “potential” or “transitional” space that is liminal (Turner 1982), and hence transformative.

There are also strong resonances between the inner and outer world of the participants. Both of these worlds are “staged” dramatically, have a narrative structure often based in the imagination, fantasy or memory (Chesner 1994:117), and link the conscious with the unconscious. Each of these elements is clearly visible in PBT. In addition, the structure of each of the three forms is similar. This structure comprises of a *warm-up*, which in PBT is the process of sharing a few words and thoughts around the theme of the evening, an *action* phase where the teller’s story is played back, and a *sharing/closure* phase. In PBT this would be comprised of the audience commenting on the action and the conductor overviewing the evening’s work in a storytelling mode—that is, in a different, more formal register than used in conversation.

In addition, the important concept of role is integral to all three forms. What is different between PBT, Dramatherapy and Psychodrama is the way that role is applied. In the latter two, participants are encouraged to directly embody a role themselves, while in PBT it is the actors who assume the roles described.

²⁵ For a greater explication of the theory and practice associated with dramatic process, see O’Toole (1992).

The similarities between psychodrama and dramatherapy have prompted one leading creative arts therapist to attempt to integrate both forms into one model (Emunah 1997). What this model does for the first time is to highlight explicitly a number of issues that are critical in psychodrama, dramatherapy and PBT, if healing is to occur. These elements include issues of trust, group cohesion, resistance and transference, and spirituality—where healing, art and the sacred are reconnected.

Differences of Psychodrama, Dramatherapy and Playback Theatre.

In addition to the subtle differences described above, there are also two major differences between psychodrama and dramatherapy. What these differences reveal is that Playback Theatre is *neither* psychodrama nor dramatherapy, but is a different aesthetic form falling somewhere between the two. The first difference resides in the focus of each “session”. In psychodrama, one person—the protagonist—becomes the focus for the session, with other group members playing supporting or auxiliary roles. In dramatherapy, by contrast, the focus moves freely around the group (Chesner 1994:118). In a like manner, PBT does not focus on one person’s inner journey, but highlights a number of people’s stories to a greater or lesser extent throughout the evening.

The second major difference is between the degree of specificity or “path” that is followed in each. In psychodrama, and according to Chesner (1994:119) as a result of the historical fact that psychodrama is eminently attributable to one person, there is a “more precise map [that is used] in structuring the psychodramatic journey”. Dramatherapy, however, draws on a far wider resource base (Landy 1986), and is therefore able to travel down many different roads. PBT, by way of differentiation, has a degree of specificity in the ritual structure that is followed, similar to psychodrama, but also does not focus exclusively on one person, but several, and in this way is similar to dramatherapy. What this means is that in PBT, participants are able to explore both their own inner world and their shared world, thereby facilitating a connection between the two.

Gift.

There is also another important set of ideas surrounding the notion of “working for others” that is so important in PBT. This is the idea of gift, as reflected in the title of Fox’s (1994) volume, *Acts of Service*. First, gift is a term that permeates the practice of PBT and refers to both the “gift” of the teller’s story to those present, and the act of the playback of that story to both the teller and audience. Second, when gift is evident in PBT, then the actors and

audience appear to be truly “present”, and the act of playback is more than a performance that is paid for. This conception of gift or present creates an important dynamic in PBT and the work of Mauss (1967) and Hyde (1983) help reveal this notion.

The idea of gift as an essential element of everyday social life was first described by Mauss (1967), who characterised gift exchange as containing a three-fold set of obligations: (1) To give, (2) To receive, and (3) To repay. This is manifested in PBT first by the teller who gives the gift of his or her story, then by the actors who receive the story and offer the gift of their playback of it. Finally, the audience members are then “obliged” to continue the cycle by telling their own story—in this way, community is built. Mauss also highlighted that gift not only has a physical element, but to give something is also “to give of a part of oneself” (1967:10). This element of gift, that includes an element of self, creates a social bond that in PBT is both intimate and familiar, and links those present into a cohesive whole community bound by shared experiences and reciprocal obligations.

Importantly in terms of this research, Hyde (1983:xi) developed Mauss’ ideas on gift in relation to art in a broader social and aesthetic context. Hyde described art as a gift in this way:

A work of art is a gift, ...a thing we do not get by our own efforts. We cannot buy it, we cannot acquire it through an act of will. It is bestowed upon us.

For Hyde, art as a gift occurs in three senses. First, an artist must be open to his or her own intuition or inspiration as a starting point. In PBT this might be read as the actors’ level of skill evident through their being open or “empty” so that they can then improvise and be spontaneous. Secondly, artists must use their talents and abilities (or gifts) to transform or change the pretext²⁶—which in the case of PBT is the story told. Hyde calls this the labour of “gratitude” which gives thanks for the gift of inspiration.

Finally, the cycle is completed by the artists/actors giving their “gift” of art to others, in this way expressing thanks for what has been given. What this means is that the work of art, or the playback, is then generative, getting “larger” as it circulates and is enriched by the artist/actor who gives unity to the felt experiences and materials of his or her own life. So for Hyde, when the gift circulates freely, it not only maintains itself but actually increases in

²⁶In drama education, “pretext”, as distinct from a “neutral” stimulus, means a stimulus that embodies medium-specific symbols, form, and categories, hence providing the enacted text with elements such as roles, tension, or setting (O’Neill 1995).

value. This generative capacity is particularly important in PBT, as the art of playback binds together the actors and the audience in a greater cultural or spiritual tradition, endowing the social group with community and life.

Therefore, in PBT the gift of the story allows something new to be born in the act of playback, and in the resulting return gift a liminal threshold is passed where transformation and the “new” can occur in the community of those present. Thus, the gift of PBT can be a new way of being with oneself, and being with others. In this way, the circle is complete, *communitas* developed, and humankindness experienced.

Finally, as PBT relies so heavily on the stories that are told, it is important to briefly consider Narrative Therapy as a way of revealing the healing potential of PBT.

Narrative Therapy

There are three features of Narrative Therapy²⁷, as described by Payne (2000), that are revealing of PBT's ability to enrich people's lives, and examine individuals' past and present experience—in short, to be healing.

First, in narrative therapy the emphasis is on externalising the story, or—in a therapeutic context—the problem. That is, in Payne's words (citing Epston 1989:26), "Where the problem is the problem, not the person is the problem" (2000:53). What this means in PBT is the actual playback becomes the embodiment of the teller's story rather than the story only existing *inside* the teller. Second, narrative therapy strongly features metaphor. What is particularly revealing of metaphor in narrative therapy is that it draws on two discrete areas—literature, and anthropology. In literature, metaphor works on telling and retelling, hearing and re-hearing, a process of re-authoring and storying our lives (Payne 2000:163), whereas in anthropology metaphor works on the three step process of (i) separation, (ii) liminality, and (iii) re-incorporation.

These two areas of metaphor are clearly visible in PBT where the teller's story is told and retold in multimodal ways, and the three-step process of separation, liminality, and re-incorporation describes the process of telling, transformation and change associated with it. Finally, in narrative therapy, primacy is given to the person. This has its parallel in PBT where the art form and actors play a subservient role to the person who chooses to tell a story.

²⁷ In this case, the form of Narrative Therapy developed and practised by Epston and White (1992).

Payne (2000) described in detail the influences of post-structuralism on the Narrative Therapy of White and Epston (1990). These influences are particularly interesting in the way they reveal some of the post-structuralist nature of PBT itself. First, PBT can be seen to have post-structural elements in that the person "telling" is not assumed to have a "deficit"; that is, the person needs to tell their story in order to "grow", or for their own personal development. Second, the teller's story is seen as separate to them, and not "inside" them as such. In this sense, the story is not the person. Third, there is a foregrounding of the teller rather than the actors and the conductor. This means that the teller is seen as the privileged "expert" on his/her own life. A practical outcome of this position is that in PBT the tellers are free to accept or reject the artistic portrayal of their story. Fourth, PBT does not "pathologise" the teller, but rather—through the socially constituted artistic processes of PBT—emphasis is placed on the person's relationships and living contexts as factors contributing to the person's discoveries and decisions about his or her life.

Finally, the emphasis in PBT—as in narrative therapy—is on the interactive relationship between, in this case, teller, audience, conductor and actors. Indeed, as Kershaw (1999:11) identified, the "privileging of the audience in the process of making meanings has become crucial to the construction of clear distinctions between modernist and post-modernist aesthetic forms". This potential is illuminated through the core processes of Dramatherapy and Psychodrama. Furthermore, because PBT is based on story, the core components of narrative therapy as practised by Epston and White (1992), which is based on story and storying, are also relevant.

Playback Theatre, Active Witnessing and Healing

Playback Theatre, then, can be seen to be a multimodal aesthetic form and a site with the potential for healing. This healing may be apparent through the following ways. First, PBT provides a site where a story may be told. Second, telling the story in and of itself may be healing whatever the content. Third, the playback process provides a way of working with a teller's story. Fourth, the playback process may help the teller and the audience get in touch with their own creativity and playfulness, which may be healing. Fifth, the playback form provides both distance and engagement, leading to a change in understanding. This distance and engagement at its most basic level relates to the function of the audience and the notion of "witness". Myerhoff (1980), cited in Sinclair (2000:66), described it like this:

A story told aloud, to progeny or peers, is of course more than a text. It is an event. When it is done properly, the listener is more than a mere passive receiver or validation; he is changed.

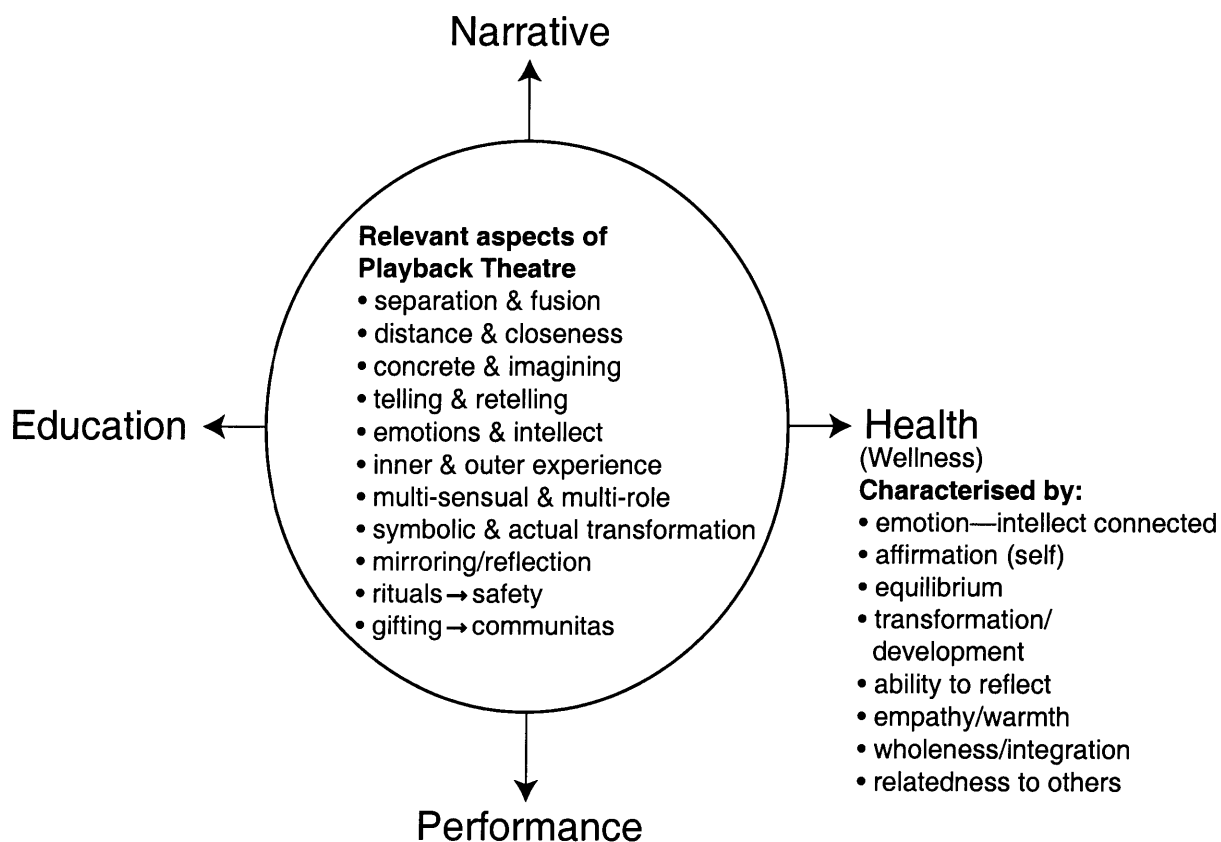
In PBT, for example, two aspects of witness are present—witnessing others, and the opportunity to witness oneself. Wilshire (1982:5) described how this opportunity may be healing: “to come to see oneself is to effect change in oneself in the very act of seeing”. What these opportunities offer is the potential for participants to develop the “audience” or reflexive part of themselves, thereby enhancing the capability to engage differently with themselves and life events; and in addition, the opportunity of being “witnessed” can be experienced as being acknowledged, supported and affirmed.

Sixth, PBT can be healing in that the audience can further witness others telling their story, thereby increasing the range of experiences of the world, if only vicariously, and also models the process of self-disclosure. Seventh, PBT provides a life-drama connection where there is the creation of another reality that is not bound by the constraints of real life. This reality has been referred to variously as a *liminal space* (Turner 1977), *transitional space* (Winnicott 1974), or the *fluid dimension* (Blatner & Blatner 1988). What is common to all of these constructs is that the participants can connect with the material presented in a variety of ways outside of the conventions of everyday life, thereby providing them opportunity to be different to how they normally might be. Eighth, PBT can be healing because it specifically models and facilitates transformation. Evreinov (1927:25) described it thus: “Transformation ... is the essence of all theatrical art, [it] is more primitive and more easily attainable than formation, which is the essence of the aesthetic arts”. Therefore, the dramatic act of PBT models transformation through its core processes, and life experience can be transformed through this different, dramatic reality. This summary is represented diagrammatically in Figure 4.

Finally, it is interesting to note that much of the development in Dramatherapy that illuminates the healing potential of PBT grew out of the educational drama movement of the 1960’s and 1970’s. This further links these two applied areas of PBT—education and health—as drama education has supplied many of the intellectual resources for healing through drama.

Figure 4

Representation of the features of the Health axis of Playback Theatre as revealed in related literature and theory



CHAPTER SIX

Playback Theatre and Education: Learning Through the Arts

Knowledge is not purely cognitive. It is also the product of our emotional sensibilities and affinities. (Dorinne K. Kondo quoted in Cameron, 1995)

To be surprised, to wonder, is to begin to understand. (José Ortega y Gasset' quoted in Cameron, 1995)

Making art is a journey. (Meinrad Craighead quoted in Cameron, 1995)

Introduction

In this chapter I explore the relationship between PBT, learning and education. As part of this exploration I draw on the cognate areas of drama education that include: Drama in Education (DIE), Theatre in Education (TIE), Environmental Theatre, Prison Theatre, Ethnic Theatre, Disability Theatre and Reminiscence Theatre. These distinct genres focus generally on Education, and education through the *process* of drama specifically. Reminiscence Theatre (Kershaw 1999; Oddey 1994; Schweitzer 1994), and what has been referred to as “Theatre-in-the-moment” or “Inter-activist theatre” (Winner 1998), also reflects a strong therapeutic concern. A further stream of development has grown out of Boal’s (1979) influential *Theatre of the Oppressed* that has been variously labelled through its different incarnations as Image Theatre, Forum Theatre (Schutzman & Cohen-Cruz 1994), Legislative Theatre (Boal & Jackson 1999), and the associated *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (Boal 1993). Interestingly, Boal’s more recent work has also focused on working with the oppression “within”, and so straddles the border between therapy and education (Boal 1995). Also of interest is Rohd’s (1998) work that uses an amalgam of these forms in working with previously untouchable issues such as HIV and AIDS.

Importantly all of these forms are participatory and interactive. It should be noted, too, that many of these genres, both the therapeutic and the educational, are not just *educational*, either for the participants or the audience, or likewise not just *therapeutic*. Indeed, in a holistic way, these genres sit across the boundaries of the four great spheres of performance: “entertainment, healing, education, and ritualizing” (Schechner 1993:20), reflecting the integrated and the multi-modal nature of the Arts themselves.

Education Through Drama

Theatre and drama are unique in their capacity to integrate several art forms as well as several aspects of the self. Jennings (1994b:3) described it this way:

In no other structure can art, music, dance, play, story and drama come together in a single entity; we are engaged by the juxtaposition of visual images, sounds, movement, verbal statements at sensory, emotional and thinking levels.

This multi-modal nature is important in an educational and therapeutic sense, and as a form of investigation and expression. Furthermore, it has given rise to a recent interest in “multiliteracies” (Cope & Kalantzis 2000); that is, how we read across a variety of modalities. Some of this work in multiliteracies provides an insight into the multi-modal nature of the Arts generally, PBT specifically, and most importantly how they can be powerful agents of change and education.

Multiliteracies and Multimodality

In 1994 a small group met in New London, New Hampshire to discuss the future of literacy teaching in a rapidly changing world, where the notion of literacy, at least as commonly understood, was altering. An outcome of this meeting and the subsequent work done by what came to be called the “New London Group” (Cope & Kalantzis 2000:5) was the term Multiliteracies. This term was designed to reflect not just one literacy, but rather a *number* of literacies that became increasingly significant in public communication (Kress 2000b). Furthermore, this diversity of literacies also reflects how life can be *read* as both theatre and performance.

Multiliteracies is an important idea in this thesis for three reasons. First, multiliteracies resonates with the multi-modal forms of representation used in a PBT event, in that there is just not one form of representation used, but many. Secondly, both of these concepts reflect the growing importance of a diversity of representational forms that are becoming important in the overall communications environment (Cazden et al. 2000). In PBT, for example, music,

the body and its movements are crucial for representation and communication. This diversity is occurring because of the profound changes manifest in the nature of the public, community and economic domains (Cazden et al. 2000), and PBT particularly works with these issues of diversity and change. Thirdly, the notion of multiliteracies and multi-modal forms of representation has pedagogical implications in PBT's ability to work with difference. This means that it would seem increasingly important for people to be able to shift registers according to social context, negotiate between different visual and iconic meanings (amongst others), and understand variations in "the gestural relationships among people, language, and material objects" (Cazden et al. 2000:14). For the audience, the ability to represent meanings using multiple senses—or synaesthesia as Kress (2000a:158) described it—is part of the human potential and modelled in PBT itself.

Two forms that have long been concerned with developing multiliteracies through meaning-making, representation, and difference are Drama In Education (DIE)²⁸ and Theatre In Education (TIE)²⁹; both terms coined to describe two bodies of related work that originally evolved in the United Kingdom³⁰. These two forms are exemplars of the potential for learning through the arts generally, and drama/theatre particularly. It is also important to understand that DIE and TIE are just two forms of drama and theatre education practice where the power of drama and theatre is engaged to link the heart with the head, thereby increasing the potential for learning. In addition, it is also important to realise that it is impossible to divorce the aesthetic concerns of learning through the arts from the educational concerns. As O'Toole (2000b:16) argues:

Careful attention to the art form of drama is essential in all educational dramatic and theatrical practice not only for the art's sake, but for the learning—in other words taking care of the elements of dramatic art produces not only better art, but better learning—and not just learning about art.

²⁸ DIE as a pedagogical tool has been substantially attributable to Heathcote (Wagner 1976), growing primarily out of the work of Slade (1954), Way (1967) and others. This body of practice has been further developed through the thinking and practice of Bolton (1979; 1984; 1992), and Heathcote and Bolton collaboratively (Heathcote & Bolton 1995b). DIE has subsequently been spread internationally through a variety of practitioners who adapted and extended the basic premises of drama in education into their own cultural contexts.

²⁹ TIE was first performed as such by the Belgrade Theatre in Coventry in the mid-1960s (O'Toole 1976).

³⁰ A parallel form usually referred to as "Creative Dramatics" evolved in the USA about the same time as DIE, but this form has not been as influential internationally, or subject to the same level of theorising.

As a way of understanding the nature of this learning, I first discuss the concept of “process” that underlies all of the creative work undertaken both in DIE, TIE and PBT. Next, I consider *role* as one of the most important building blocks in DIE, and then *play* as one of its core processes. Following on from this description, I foreground that it is the *aesthetic dimension* that makes learning through the arts so cogent and unique. In addition, I consider the influence of Freire, *Critical Pedagogy* and the notion of *praxis*—where theory informs practice and practice informs theory—as being fundamental to learning through drama. Finally, I discuss the broader notion of learning through the arts themselves.

Process in Drama in Education, Theatre in Education and Playback Theatre

As discussed in Chapter Three, PBT reflects 20th Century performance practice, in which there is a developing emphasis on both process and product. In PBT, process and product are seamlessly intertwined so as to appear as two strands of a double helix.

Playback Theatre and other contemporary forms of “theatre” and drama with similar objectives, including but not limited to Theatre for Empowerment, Theatre of the Oppressed, Theatre for Development, TIE, and DIE, have in common a number of elements that have led to these forms increasingly being labelled as “Applied Theatre”. While this term has been critiqued by some prominent theoreticians (Rasmussen 2000), what it does indicate is that theatre and dramatic process are being increasingly used for more than entertainment.

Particular to these forms of theatre is an emphasis on process rather than product, and as such, leads confusingly to these forms being labelled by critics as both *Theatre* and *Drama* without any distinction between the two. O’Toole (1992) explicitly has considered this distinction, and in doing so reveals the nature of PBT itself.

First, O’Toole (1992:1) highlights that, “drama is a dynamic event which is always part of its context”. This is in contrast to a literature-based approach that traditionally was not cognisant of its surroundings. So, *Hamlet* the play is the realisation of a text by Shakespeare whether performed in Sydney or London. Second, “process” in drama is defined by O’Toole (1992:2) as “negotiating and renegotiating the elements of the dramatic form, in terms of the context and purposes of the participants”. While this definition relates to the genre of DIE particularly, with its emphasis on fictional role-taking and improvisation, it also implies an active engagement by participants. Interestingly, this active involvement highlights the dynamic parallel process of both drama *and* education, where each is perceived subjectively. In terms of PBT, this means that the participants have an active part to play in the process,

and thereby significantly help to shape the final product. This active participation has led to what Izzo (1997; 1998) has described as “Interactive Theatre”, where the audience and actors actively and spontaneously co-create the unfolding drama. In inclusive and reactive genres, like PBT, a “bond of community” is created, restoring “if only for a few hours, our lost sense of belonging” (Izzo 1997:ix). In this way, PBT builds community.

Verriour (1994) also underscores the breadth and variety of learning dimensions that can occur through drama. These include:

- (1) An intellectual dimension where there is a change in understanding;
- (2) An emotional dimension where personal feelings, attitudes, values and beliefs constitute a crucial element;
- (3) Social learning that is inherent in the collaborative nature of the work;
- (4) Aesthetic learning where the participants learn to shape their work using elements of the art form in a pleasing way; and,
- (5) A language dimension that encompasses a range of modes of expression that human beings use to communicate with one another.

Hence, PBT as a processual form encapsulates the learning dimensions of the heart, head, community, beauty and the way these are communicated. More than this, O’Toole (1992:7) describes four distinct attributes of drama:

- (1) Drama normally exists in physical action, in three dimensions, and in time—both in the moment, and in the passage of time;
- (2) Drama is a group art, involving a number of people directly and indirectly in the action, with a number of different functions, taking part simultaneously as individuals, as sub-groups clearly identified by function, and as a whole group within the dramatic event;
- (3) The relationship between artist and audience is negotiable, and the meanings emergent between them are inevitably dynamic and shifting;

And, citing Pfister (1988:19):

- (4) Drama is multi-medial with the contexts in which drama presents itself being invariably complex and never exactly reproducible.

Each of these four attributes is also visible in PBT. What this means for PBT, then, is that any attempt to codify the signifiers in such a multi-medial text (where text is considered to be the

dramatic event) is, in O’Toole’s words, “akin to counting sand” (1992:8). This raises a number of research issues that will be discussed in the following chapter.

A second processual form that developed from 1965 onwards in the UK is that of TIE. A consideration of TIE reveals that in this genre—and particularly important for this thesis—the role of the audience is renegotiated from being *passive receivers* to *active makers* of meaning (Jackson 1997). O’Toole (1992), following on from his earlier work (1976:33), highlights three important factors in this process:

- (1) The meaning of the experience is negotiated and recreated as the audience perceive it;
- (2) Their response affects the nature of the initiative or ‘artistic’ behaviour, actively or by implication;
- (3) The role of responding has the potential to become partially but significantly that of initiating.

In processual forms with an educational agenda, the audience takes a pro-active role in the creation of the artwork.

Dramatic action has a number of functions, and like all art, layers of meaning. These functions relate to what the work means for the character performing the action, what it means for others, and how it reveals more about character performing the action through its motivation. Dramatic action then, in PBT, can elicit wider resonances within the audience than merely the action that is portrayed. To give an example, the action of a character wrapping herself up in a purple chenille dressing gown can be more than the act of robing—it can represent those times of feeling lonely and seeking the security and protection of the familiar, against the unknown and threatening elements that exist “outside”. Pfister (1988) highlighted these alternative layers of meaning by conceptualising them as *reflective*, *referential* and *poetic*.

O’Toole (1992: 48) foregrounds how all drama is influenced by the multi-layered context in which it exists. First, there is the “real context” which is:

The real pattern of relationships and situations from which the whole text which is the dramatic event arises—all the people involved in making the dramatic event and the social, ideological and cultural context in which they are living.

Second, there is the “context of the medium” that is derived from a context of those present, interacting with a space set apart using aesthetic conventions, sometimes referred to as the performance space. This latter space is referred to as the “context of the setting”. Finally, there is the “fictional context” that refers to the *as-if* world created through an interaction of the dramatic elements with the dramatic form. Each variety of context reveals that drama is a complex dynamic that is multilayered and multimodal. Furthermore, while this elaboration by

O'Toole of the dynamic of drama appears complex, it is important to understand that it is accessible to all through the power of the imagination and our innate ability to play.

Play

Play is such an important concept in drama, that it has been the subject of a number of studies and substantial theorising within Drama in Education circles (Courtney 1968; Neelands 1992; O'Toole 1992; Wilkinson & Rike 1993). Play, for example, is seen at one end of a continuum that moves through drama to theatre, thereby being at the genesis of improvisation and creative work in drama and theatre (Neelands 1984; O'Neill & Lambert 1984). However, play has broader implications that touch the heart of what it means to be whole, healthy and human. Schiller (1983), for example, wrote: "Man only plays when he is in the full sense of the word a Human Being, and he is only fully human when he plays". Further, as Handelman (1990:63) highlights, play, despite its potential as a process imbued with educational potential, is not seen as having any intrinsic value in today's world. "Play is infused with the qualities of flux and the processual that are devalued thoroughly in a positivist age".

Izzo (1997), more recently, also describes and contextualises the need for play in today's pressured world. First, Izzo considers those who are in work, and, as a result of societal changes, spend more time there, perhaps are even required to achieve greater outcomes with less resources. Often in this situation, both partners have to work to obtain a similar standard of living that their parents enjoyed. An outcome of this pressure is that they have less time for each other and the family unit becomes strained, communication diminishes and the art of conversation can become lost. In addition, workers are required to become more mobile, either to keep a job or to apply for a new one as patterns of employment shift and change. Families move, separating friends and relations, and so community disappears.

The effect of some of these tumultuous changes is that sources of support wane, become increasingly external and impersonal, and "humankindness" is diminished. Furthermore, knowledge of self in relation to others becomes less possible, thereby restricting our own capacity to develop humanity. Our need for contact with others is not met, and we lose that gift—through lack of "space" and "exercise"—to grow, be different, explore and imagine, in short—to play. This line of thinking is similar to that argued by Marcuse (1966), who argues that part of the power of the aesthetic dimension lies in its ability to counteract the alienation that comes from the bureaucratisation and mechanisation of a one-dimensional society.

One of the reasons that drama can be such a powerful pedagogical force is that it draws on children's innate ability to play. We are born with this ability, and it exists across all cultures and all time. Indeed, play is so important that children growing up without the opportunity to play become psychologically damaged (Slade 1995; Smilansky 1968; Smilansky & Shefatya 1990). Slade, one of the "fathers" of the child drama movement, observed many thousands of children in his role as a teacher and drama adviser. This experience led to him to theorise that *dramatic play* is a basic way that children move, communicate and play, and as such, there is a need for dramatic play in developmental terms. In addition, Slade (1954:35) also saw dramatic play as a basic and primitive form of theatre. He described the importance of play thus:

Play opportunity ... means development and gain. Lack of play may mean a permanent lost part of ourselves. It is this unknown, uncreated part of ourselves, this missing link, which may be a cause of difficulty and uncertainty in later years.

In his influential volume Huizinga (1970:13) also underscored the point this way:

Summing up the formal characteristics of play, we might call it a free activity standing quite consciously outside 'ordinary' life as being 'not serious', but at the same time absorbing the player intensely and utterly. It is an activity connected with no material witness, and no profit can be gained by it. It proceeds within its own proper boundaries of time and space according to the fixed rules and in an orderly manner. It promotes the formation of social groupings which tend to surround themselves with secrecy and to stress their difference from the common world by disguise or other means.

A distinguishing characteristic of play is that it exists in a space-set-apart or *temenos*. *Temenos* is an ancient Greek word meaning "the sacred enclosure" or "circle". This circle was a sacred place separated from the "real" world where different rules apply. *Temenos* is of course analogous to a stage, or in the case of PBT, the performance space. This space is liminal, not just because of its physical characteristics, but because of the qualities and purpose with which the actors and the audience imbue it. In addition, *temenos* not only exists in the physical world, but also can be a quality of mind for those present at a performance.

Play also has a number of important qualities that distinguish it from everyday life. First, play has its own logic and rules. This is manifested in DIE, TIE and PBT where we can all agree that a person can in fact "be" someone else, or for example, a strip of red cloth being pulled away from a body can be imagined as the life-blood of a person slipping away. O'Connor (1992) described this clearly in his article on how to "make drama last more than a minute", for if no one agrees to the *as-if*, then the drama cannot develop.

Second, play always has an element of tension. This element is clearly described by O'Toole (1987), and can be thought of as what “drives” the drama. Hence, the resolution of tension is the goal of play and drama. In education, this resolution of tension can be the need to find out, an obstacle to be overcome, or, as is sometimes the case in PBT, a quest for understanding. Third, play always has an element of heightened reality. This occurs because of the manipulation of the dramatic elements of time, space and tension. In this heightened reality, the dramatic space or *temenos* is always safe and inviolate; therefore, situations that are inaccessible or too terrible to endure in ordinary life can be experienced and explored in safety.

Fourth, play builds community as the players develop a bond of shared purpose and experience. In PBT, this occurs for the actors and the audience who are part of the *temenos*, both physically and through being a critical component of the process. That is, both the actors and an audience are needed for *temenos* to develop. Finally, play is representation. Huizinga (1970:14) described representation play as “not so much a constructed shown reality as a ‘realisation in appearance’: ‘imagination’ in the original sense of the word”. In this form of play, our imagination is represented as a bridge into the future and a broader range of possibilities.

Two of the first books to describe drama as a way of learning were Cook's (1917) *The Play Way* and Finlay-Johnson's (1911) *The Dramatic Method of Teaching*. These two books, along with the less acknowledged *Education by Plays and Games* (Johnson 1907), were among the first to describe play and drama as ways of learning. Underlying this approach for Cook, and typical of these volumes, was a belief that dramatic literature was better understood through play and enactment rather than by formal study alone.

More recently, Hornbrook (1989) also linked the acceptance of drama in the curriculum with the development of theories of play within the fields of education and psychology, highlighting the cross-fertilisation between the two. In addition, Spolin (1999), through her influential volumes on theatre games and exercises for adults and children, explicitly connected the techniques of theatre to the techniques of play, seeing playing a role as a psychological freedom that releases potential and spontaneity.

Bolton (1992) also highlighted the role of “narrative voice” within dramatic playing. Citing Bruner (1990), he discussed the findings of research into how four to five-year olds adopt a narrative form of discourse. This research revealed how important this form of

communication is, and the “deep implications for the child’s development in ‘meaning-making’” (p.18). He goes on to argue that:

It gives the child power over past events; it is the child’s way of absorbing the ‘canons’ of cultural behaviour; it may well reconcile, justify or excuse, but these are not its primary purpose, which is to *explicate* the past experience.

The central thesis of Bolton’s volume is that dramatic playing only becomes significant as dramatic art when attention is given to the art form of theatre. That is, “when the meaning of an event is, at least partially, encapsulated in its form” (p.19). For Bolton, this is a basic human urge, that is, “to bring order to social activities by investing the meaning of the activity within its form” (p.20)—and what PBT does is to supply that form.

An understanding of how learning can occur through play, drama and PBT is revealed through the promotion and influence of the Deweyian notion of “learning by doing” (Dewey 1959). This notion is still influential in DIE circles today, and is reflected, for example, in the title of the journal of the New South Wales Educational Drama Association (EDA) *Do It³¹*. What is important about learning through DIE and PBT is the potential for the development of empathy, insight and interpersonal skills. Much of this growth occurs through the interaction between play and role.

Role and Learning Through Imagined Experience

The ability to play, decentre and take on the role of another lies at the heart of the process of drama. This area has been extensively researched, and indeed was the subject of my own Master’s degree thesis (Wright 1996). What much of this research reveals is that this ability is both developmental (Selman & Byrne 1974; Shantz & Hobart 1989; Sturge 1982) and hierarchical (Edelstein, Keller & Wahlen 1984), that there is a distinction between role-taking and role-playing (Flavell et al. 1968; Landy 1993; Milner 1987; Selman, Lavin & Brion-Meisels 1982), and that role play is socially based (Higgins 1981; Noble & Freiberg 1988).

Neelands (1992) more recently conceptualised role-play as the “playing mode” where students can explore situations, roles and relationships. This means that students can actually get a *feel* for what it might be like to be someone else, and so widen their range of experiences, develop pro-social skills including the ability to empathise, and learn through the

³¹ EDA is an association that represents drama teachers involved in Primary, Secondary and Tertiary education across the state of NSW in Australia.

engagement of a wide range of the senses—thereby catering for a diverse range of learning styles.

PBT differs from DIE in that the teller does *not* actually embody the role of someone else; the actors carry out this embodiment of a role. While this does limit the experience in a sensual way for the participants—in terms of feeling it from the inside out and thereby delimiting its educational potential—it also provides the safety of distance in the public performance before a group of strangers. In addition, the participants are also freed from the artistry needed to “perform” in DIE (O’Toole 1990:12). The difference between these two forms, in this instance, is that in DIE the group of participants is often known to each other—a class in a school, for example—or, alternatively, some time is spent building the group dynamic before embarking on this work. In PBT, by way of contrast, people as members of the general public have very little time to interact outside the theatrical event.

Therefore, the nature of the experience in Playback is more vicarious than embodied, and relies more on dramatic projection into a role rather than a person actualising it. O’Neill (1995:159), described the essential nature of *both* DIE and PBT this way:

The essential nature of the dramatic medium is a liberating act of imagination, ... a dual consciousness in which the real and fictional worlds are held together in the mind.

This means that learning is just not particular to the classroom or the established genres of DIE and TIE. What links all of these forms is the way that participants are encouraged to look at what exists below the surface of the actions in order to see their meanings (Wilhelm & Edmiston 1998).

It is the engagement of the aesthetic that makes these forms so rich with potential as a medium for learning. Reid (1981:9), using a phenomenological approach, described the process this way. First, the “characters and events become resonant with a cluster of meanings and feelings which not only unify the action but universalise it”. Secondly, the engagement with the aesthetic reveals “discovery of what was not there before – the insights the artist experiences during the act of art-making” (Abbs 1987:55). Importantly, this discovery has a *felt* dimension which is not purely subjective (Best 1992).

This “felt” dimension is neatly circumscribed in the title of Best’s (1992) volume, *The Rationality of Feeling: Understanding the Arts in Education*. Best argued that, first, there is no feeling that does not have a cognitive dimension, because “an emotional feeling necessarily involves cognition or understanding of the object of the feeling” (p.6). Second,

“the ability to reflect on artistic meaning and value, and to formulate one’s own individual opinions, requires reasoning” (p.30). Therefore, the arts must be considered as cognitive, and as expressions of certain kinds of understanding wherein reasoning can change understanding and feeling, and feeling can change understanding and reasoning.

Third, and as an outcome of this cognitive dimension, the arts are educational in that they are vehicles for understanding and learning where artistic feelings necessarily involve “understanding or cognition” (Best 1992:2). This meaning, Best posited, is found *in* the work itself, not *behind* it or *away* from it, or in a space that he referred to as the “subjective or metaphysical realm” (1992:xvii). This is, Best argued, because we attend to the observable features of the artwork itself. What this line of argument accounts for is the fact that a number of people can see similar things in a work of art—and this shared dimension, therefore, can allow us to make a judgement as to what constitutes quality, for example. What is not explained, however, is how a single piece of work can elicit a *range* and *variation* of meanings.

This “inbetween” or metaphysical space, criticised by Best as being subjective and away from the work of art, actually lies in the interaction between the individual—using all of his or her senses—and the work itself. This space is the area usually referred to as the place where meaning is made, and it is the felt dimension that makes this experience aesthetic. Boal (1995:43) described the experience of being in this state as one of *metaxis* where there is “the image of reality and the reality of the image”. This space is closely linked to the liminal space previously described, the physical space used for the performance, and the aesthetic space (Boal 1995) described by Taylor (2000) as where the performers live. Our awareness of this space occurs because human beings have an aesthetic sense; we react to sights, sounds, smells, and textures—we don’t merely exist in the world, we perceive it. An understanding of this space or dimension will reveal how forms like PBT can be educational.

The Aesthetic Dimension

The well-known and influential Arts philosopher Maxine Greene refers to this aesthetic space or dimension as the “realm of the possible” (1999:10) where participants are able to work imaginatively—in Coleridge’s (1772-1834) famous phrase “as if”. In DIE, and in PBT, participants are allowed to see things as if they were different, thereby providing the opportunity to engage with alternative forms of reality. Educationally, therefore, participants get to see many more possibilities and potentialities for meaning, and drama as a process,

drawing as it does on the aesthetic dimension, is *expansive* of an individual's world, not reductionist.

Nicholson (1999:18) described it this way:

The aesthetic is about being fully alive—not just existing, following familiar routines and patterns of existence—but a particular kind of knowing and feeling which allows us to be both fully 'present' in the moment and also conscious of its past and future significance.

Drama, as a way of knowing, is first and foremost aesthetic knowing (Wright & Rasmussen 2001). This aesthetic is not remote or restricted to "high art", but as Wright suggested, citing Drotner (1991) and Gullsted (1996), has a "grounded" and "everyday" dimension. The stories that are told in PBT, therefore, are grounded in everyday life and popular culture, and people's experiences of that culture is primordially culture-bound, organic, subjective and qualitative (Pickering 1999). These stories from everyday life, then, can be seen to have an aesthetic dimension that is engaged through the power of the imagination.

Imagination, wrote Greene (1999:10),

lights the 'slow fuse' of the possible ... to look at things as if they could be otherwise ... to make us see differently, to give us an unexpected perspective of what lies around.

Not only is this educational for others, in being able to engage with what they see in PBT, but also for the self in an existential way, in that imagination "feeds the shaping of identity and deepens the sense of being in the world" (p.12). The aesthetic dimension, therefore, moves both PBT and educational drama away from being purely didactic or utilitarian, and into that space where "we can only provoke each other to wonder, to probe, to discern connections, to reach deeper, to seek out more and more" (Greene 1999:16). Elsewhere, Greene described this ability as a "wideawakeness", that is, an alert state of consciousness where individuals reflect on the world and the place they have in it (1989:217). Thus art can act against alienation as a revitalising, rehumanising force—where alienation is understood as anaesthetisation, as a deadening of the senses that makes repression and manipulation possible (Reitz 2000).

In further unpacking this slippery dimension, Jackson (1999) distinguishes between the work of art and the aesthetic experience of the audience member. Drawing on Dewey (1959), Jackson suggests that aesthetic experience has more to do with *perception* than with the objective qualities of the art work itself. It was Dewey who foregrounded the educational value of

aesthetic experience in this way: “Knowledge is transformed in an aesthetic experience ... [to become] something more than knowledge because it is merged with non-intellectual elements to form an experience worthwhile *as an experience*” (Dewey 1959:290). This perspective offers an awareness of the response of the audience as part of the totality of the theatrical event that exists within the aesthetic framework. This framework provides the conditions:

Through which our perceptions and our response can form themselves, enabling us to be fully open to the event and allowing us that degree of pleasure, absorption and heightened awareness, even at the most disturbing moments of the performance (Jackson 1999:57).

Using our aesthetic sense we are aware—we stop to look, to listen, to feel, and to reflect³².

Finally, it is important to understand that education through PBT does not exist as an end in and of itself, but occurs for a purpose that is illuminated through the notion of praxis and Freire’s philosophy of pedagogy—a pedagogy evident in Boal’s interactive and participatory forms of theatre (1979; 1993; 1995; 1999), and PBT itself.

Drama Pedagogy and Praxis

Praxis is a term coined by the influential Brazilian educator Freire (1972), and refers to the process of reflecting and acting *on* the world in order to transform it (Krank & Steiner 2000). While Freire had an overtly political agenda, his thinking has been important in the development of drama education pedagogy because his work was explicitly developed in order to make the world a better place—an agenda long held by drama education practitioners—and he did this through his philosophy of praxis. What is important about this term is that, first, praxis denotes a social activity (that is, change can occur when people engage with each other, as they do in drama and PBT); second, praxis ameliorates the split between practice and theory and thirdly, praxis is based in action, and so negates the criticism that theory is abstract and of little utility, and where action is perceived to be of little importance in a global sense as it does not have a firm conceptual base. Taylor (2000:5) refers to this as a division where “thinkers couldn’t practice, and the practitioners couldn’t think”.

Freire’s work countered this criticism and is identifiable through a number of distinctive features—features also visible in DIE and PBT itself. First, Freire is generally considered the

³² There are two further factors that help reveal the educational implications of PBT and DIE. These are: first, aesthetic distance, its role in obtaining perspective; and second, the role of the audience as active meaning-makers, as illuminated through reader-response theory.

inaugural philosopher of critical pedagogy (McLaren 2000), and this form of pedagogy was developed explicitly for the theatre by Boal (1979). In this form of education, action is used to inquire into oppression, and also used to rehearse change that might emancipate those who are oppressed. Second, critical pedagogy is grounded in the lived experiences of those involved. In a like manner, PBT is also grounded in the lived experiences of the participants and therefore empowers them to learn and grow as their own experience is seen to be valid and important. Finally, for Freire:

Pedagogy has as much to do with the teachable heart as the teachable mind, and as much to do with efforts to change the world as it does with rethinking the categories that we use to analyze our current condition within history (McLaren 2000:10).

In short, critical pedagogy links the heart with the head, and situates the individual as an active agent in his or her social context. In this way, PBT can also be seen, at least in part, to be critically pedagogic.

While this work developed in a third world context, Freire's goal of humanising society is worldwide. In addition, Freire's work has been important because it has been critical in generating interest in the ways that education can serve as a vehicle for social and economic transformation. Boal's (1979) *Theatre of the Oppressed* is a direct outcome of this mix of reflection and action. Furthermore, Freire's life work has been described as, "a search for unity between theory and practice" (McLaren 2000:5). Krank and Steiner (2000) describe this pedagogy or "praxis" thus:

This praxis, reflection and action, moves the individual towards ever new possibilities of a fuller and richer life through initial subjective reflection and the resulting rational and objective action.

Finally, some of the features of Freire's pedagogy fit well with competent drama education practice and PBT. Some of these features include the dialogical, the interactive, and a commitment to the sharing of power; all features of good DIE practice and PBT itself. Furthermore, as a process of education, Freire emphasised "the dialectical motion between subject and object, the self and the social, and social structure and human agency (McLaren 2000:8)—in short, the need to be cognisant of the individual's context, as well as his or her ability to creatively direct his/her own life.

In a like manner, drama education as a form of pedagogy has developed out of a practice that is based in praxis. In this way, praxis can be seen as the warp and weft of the drama fabric where, "both [function] as a part of a complex dynamic encounter" (Taylor 2000:5).

Taylor describes ten principles of praxis that underlie DIE. These ten points also help reveal how PBT is also educational.

1. Driven by inquiry. In PBT, tellers choose a story to tell, rather than having someone choosing it for them. This means that tellers can choose a story from their own lives which has a “felt” dimension and that they wish to obtain some understanding about.

2. Teacher as artist. In PBT, while the actors are not teachers in the traditional sense, they can be seen in terms of the etymology of “teach”; that is, to *show* as they playback the teller’s story. Furthermore, the actors are artists and “teachers” in the way that they show and honour tellers as authors of their own lives, with the capacity to grow and change, and “re-author” their lives if necessary. In addition, the conductor also works as an artist in the way that s/he draws out the tale from the teller, facilitating the flow of information in a way that is accessible, but not overwhelming for the actors.

3. Promotes yearning for understanding. PBT is in part based on a questing—both on the part of the teller who chooses to tell a story from his or her own life, and the audience members who listen to and watch these stories. This yearning for understanding could be a desire to make meaning from an experience, a questioning or a yearning for understanding, or a desire for illumination and sharing.

4. Well researched. In PBT the actors draw on their experiences as actors and as members of the human race, with an explicit interest in others, and the representation of others in an artistic manner. It is through this range of experiences that the actors can embody the characters projected, and the experiences of these characters can be played out and endowed with both *lived* and *felt* experience. In doing this, the actors draw on their training and sensitivity to others in order to reflect an awareness of some of the great existential issues and motivators.

Just as the teacher in a class “stage manages the retrieval of data” from the students, so too does the conductor manage the teller’s telling of the story so that the critical elements of *who*, *what*, *where* and *when* can be revealed—the *why* often being revealed in the playback itself.

5. Generates rather than transmits knowledge. It is through the artistic process described earlier that PBT is expansive. This is evident in the way that actors reveal a broader context of the story than the one described, highlighting the dramatic tension that is at the core of all theatre forms. In this way, art and PBT can be seen to have a phenomenological

bent, that is, the teller's story is universalised through the artistic multimodal representation that is at the core of all theatre work.

6. A tightly balanced yet flexible structure. In Chapter Three, I described how PBT has ritual elements, which both *contain* the story and paradoxically *release* creativity in the actors, the teller and the audience. This facilitates a shift in perspective and moves the teller into a space where s/he can “see” through more than one set of eyes. So while the content of each performance varies, depending on the stories that are told, the structure of the playback stays the same.

7. Pursues engagement and detachment.

The drama process is educational in that participants are *engaged* with the dramatic action that occurs through seeing a story from their own lives being “played back”, and then *distanced* to allow reflection. This process engages both the heart and the head and so increases the potential for powerful learning to occur. In addition, audience members are also engaged through the process of dramatic projection and the universal elements of the teller's story that are amplified through the playback process. Furthermore, detachment is also facilitated through the notion of aesthetic distance and the discussion and commentary on the playback by both the teller and the audience after each story is complete.

8. Powered by risk-taking. In PBT there are multiple levels of risk-taking. First, audience members take a risk in telling and disclosing stories from their personal lives. Second, the actors take huge risks in spontaneously improvising the teller's stories without any discussion or rehearsal before hand. These levels of risk further engage the audience as they see the capacity for the actors to completely “miss” the essence of the teller's story, thereby increasing the inherent level of excitement. It is this level of risk and spontaneity that is immediately engaging for those who watch (Barba & Savarese 1991).

9. Logically sequenced. PBT draws on the conventions of a well-told tale, managed in this case by the conductor (as in praxis principle #2). This narrative structure is described at length in Chapter Three and also completes a cycle of *giving* and *receiving* where the artistic rendering of the teller's story is returned as a “gift” back to the teller from whom it came. This artistry is framed through the conventions of the theatre form and leads on to principle #10.

10. Rich in artistry. PBT as a relatively new form of action-based cultural aesthetic is rich in artistry. This artistry not only exists within the skill of the actors, musician, and the

conductor, but also all of the disparate elements that go to comprise the theatrical event. These elements include the interaction of the sensory, artistic and the fictional, all being characterised by, “the mutuality of the performer's actions and the spectator's reactions” (Sauter 1997). It is the sensuous nature of the playback event, amplified by the artistry of its participants bounded within an aesthetic dimension, that creates the liminal space where transformation, education and change can occur.

Playback Theatre, then, can be seen to have many of the hallmarks of learning through drama, and O’Toole (2000:24) underscores that this learning is more than just personal learning, but community learning as well. In O’Toole’s view:

Theatre can provide a number of vital conditions for community learning. (1) It is a social and public forum where people meet together, and statements can be made, questions raised, that can be shared by all. (2) It is entertaining and always has the quality of ceremony ... in some ways a special event ... (3) It is also intimate – it speaks personally, communally and viscerally to all of its audience. And at its most effective, (4) It works obliquely, it raises questions, makes analogies and permits people to explore implications and consequences of their lives and attitudes.

This learning is further contextualised through a consideration of learning through the arts more generally.

Learning Through the Arts

The Arts are being increasingly recognised both as a specific *site* for learning and as a unique *language* of learning (Davis 1999; Gallas 1991, 1994; Goldberg 1997; Greene 1997). This is because the arts are crucial to human knowledge and culture, expression and communication, and therefore must be considered as fundamental to education. For example, the arts offer historical, emotional, cultural and personal sources of information and documentation (Goldberg 2001). Specifically, the arts encourage creative and critical thinking skills, “while at the same time enabling [participants] to imagine possibilities, seek solutions, and be active discoverers of knowledge” (Goldberg 1997:ix). Importantly in Education, this process of inquiry taps into a wide range of learning styles and modes of expression, in a context that is culturally responsive. In a more global sense, the arts provide humankind with modes for reflecting on, expressing, and documenting experiences, as well as providing a body of knowledge from which to draw.

The arts continue to fill a variety of roles in our lives. Goldberg (2001:9) citing Lewitzky (1989), highlights these points:

Art can, in the hands of great talent, make beauty which reverberates through our lives and carries us into rarefied strata. It can shatter our perceptions. It can clarify our anger. It can help us to understand our sorrow. The arts are a mirror for society—critic, teacher and forecaster—and teach the value of individual differences

There are a many ways that the arts can contribute to education. First, students can learn *about* the arts. In this variation, the arts become the content of the curriculum, so that students may study a particular style of theatre for example. Secondly, students may learn *with* the arts. In this variation students use an art form as the source of a study, so that a reading of *Nicholas Nickleby* will be a way of learning about 19th Century England. Third, reflecting the learning that occurs in PBT and the most powerful pedagogically, is learning *through* the arts. In this variation, the arts are used as a strategy for learning where students are engaging with, and transforming ideas, rather than merely reporting on them. In addition, and as a result of this particular form of aesthetic pedagogy being employed, imaginative, metaphoric and creative thinking skills are developed (Goldberg 1997).

There is a fourth contribution that learning through drama particularly can make to education, and that is the personal *and* social learning that occurs as a direct result of being engaged in the aesthetic and pro-social basis of drama (Wright 1996). In PBT, this means that participants can learn about themselves, others and self in relation to others using PBT as a form of inquiry that is at once intellectual, personal, meaningful, and powerful. This learning occurs because drama and theatre are “humanity’s expression of life itself” (Goldberg 1997:6). This particular form of learning also recognises that knowledge is not fixed, but evolving and non-static action (Goldberg 1997); and as we learn, we are constantly changing our understanding of the world. This can be clearly seen in the study of history, for example, where events and stories may be interpreted and re-interpreted according to perspective and new understandings as they emerge.

In learning through PBT, then, this process of interpretation and re-interpretation occurs in three ways. First, by applying his or her own imagination, the teller or audience member creates a personal connection to the story told or played back. Second, because the teller and the audience are engaged with the story and subsequent dramatic action that embodies and mobilises it, they are in a strong position to retain and apply their understandings in the future. Finally, in reflecting on the dramatic action, the teller and audience members are able to consider the work even more deeply so that understanding can come and powerful learning occur. In the arts generally, and PBT in particular, this learning occurs through

transformation, and as Goldberg (1997:4) reminds us, “transformation is a key to knowledge construction and acquisition”.

In PBT, transformation occurs at a number of levels. First, in telling a story both the teller and the story are transformed. Secondly, the actors and the musician engage with the teller’s story, and while retaining the essence of the story, transform it into something more than it originally was. In fact, as Barba (1991) indicated, this is the function of theatre itself. Third, as the audience watch PBT, they are engaged with exercising their imagination. What this does is to stretch the thinking, and simultaneously engage the audience in critical and reflective thinking. In this way, their experience is transformed. Finally, the audience and the teller are asked to comment on the playback that they have just witnessed. This formal engagement of the reflective faculties also helps to transform the audience’s experience of the story—as it is heard, moved, seen and thought about. In Goldberg’s words: “Reflecting upon your own and others’ knowledge, changes you and the way that you perceive the world” (1997:5).

PBT, then, can be seen as a way of creating a context for learning. This context facilitates the shared contexts of meaning which Verriour (1994), drawing on Beckerman (1970), conceptualised as consisting of three levels. First, there is the *literal* level of meaning that refers to the “thinking and language employed by participants in their construction of the imaginary world”. Second, there is the *referential* level of meaning where participants “use their background personal knowledge, attitudes, and present understandings” to make sense of what is happening in the drama experience. And, third, there is the *conceptual* level where participants gain new understandings as a result of “reflection during or after the dramatic playing experience” (p.59).

Concluding Comments

PBT is a form of theatre that draws on the fields of narrative, performance, therapy and education. Importantly, all of these resources combine to make a rich pastiche where insight, learning and transformation can occur. This insight can be a glimpse of oneself, or learning that is so significant as to be emancipatory or life changing. Goldberg (2001:33), also argues that the processes of representational and metaphoric thinking that occur in artistic activity “embody many of the virtues of emancipatory education and could therefore hold a unique key to education” itself.

PBT, then, can be viewed as a form with strong processual links that draws on human beings' innate ability to play, uses role to facilitate the inquiry into, and representation and embodiment of, experience in the aesthetic domain. Furthermore, PBT can be seen to hold many "Freirean" values, and is a model of the potential for how learning occurs through the Arts. Importantly, this learning can be about self, and self in relation to others, hence highlighting a capacity to grow, develop and heal. Rohd (1998:140), cogently summarises this position with these words:

Theatre allows us to converse with our souls, to passionately pursue and discover ways of living with ourselves and with others. We have no better way to work together, to learn about each other, to heal, to grow.

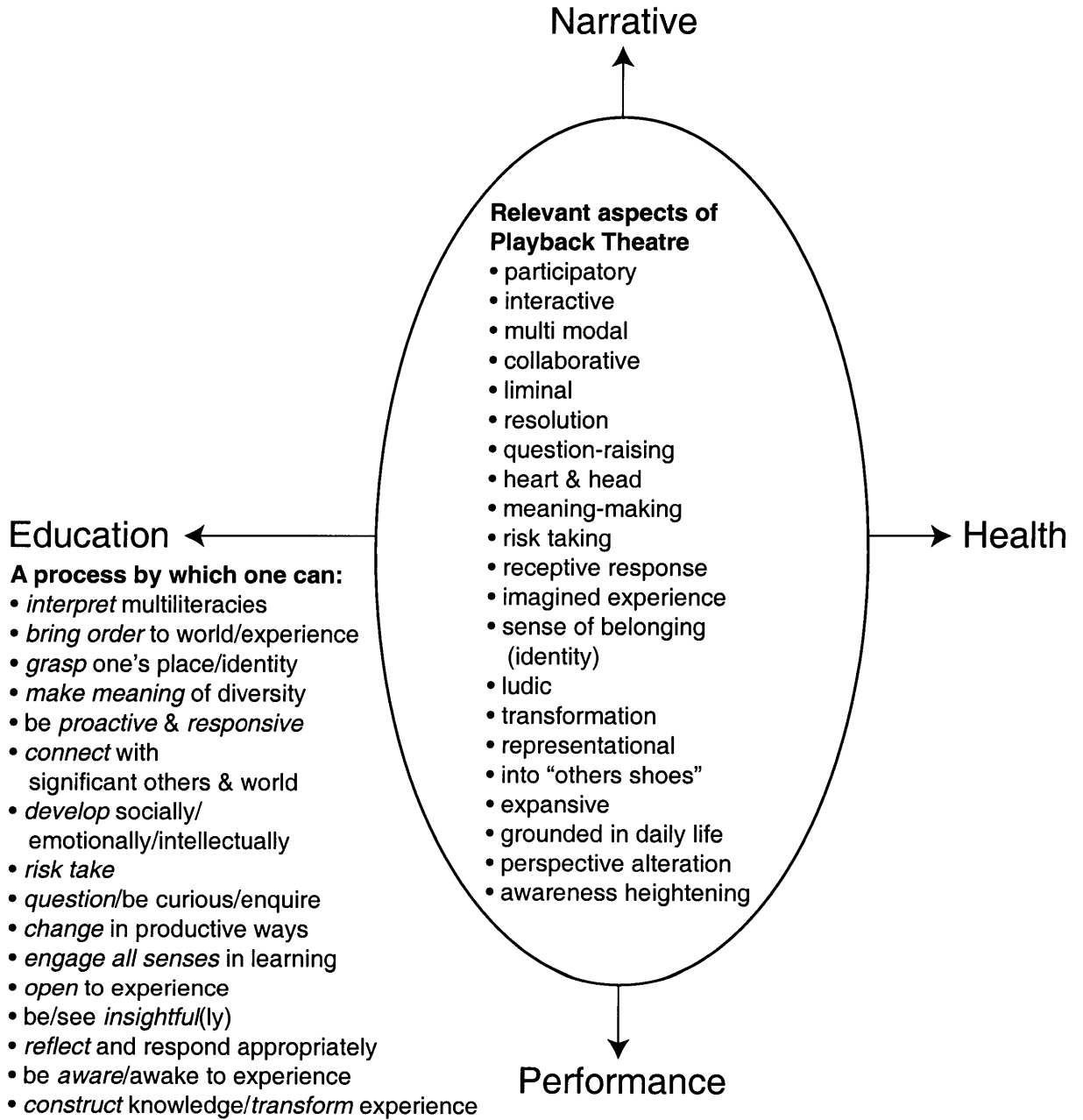
This summary is represented diagrammatically in Figure 5.

The previous three chapters have explored PBT by linking it with the broader research communities of Narrative, Performance, Education and Health. Each of these literatures have helped contextualise and reveal PBT as a site where learning-healing can be activated through the meaning-making process.

It is often the case that, at this point in a thesis, the research questions are further refined in light of the literature. However, in this case where grounded theory methods are used to analyse the data, refinement of the questions flows substantially from the analytical process itself. Therefore, this process will be discussed in Chapter Nine. The following Act (III) (Chapters 7 & 8) describes how meaning-making was researched through the lived experience of PBT itself.

Figure 5

Representation of the features of the Education axis of Playback Theatre as revealed in related literature and theory



ACT III

We shall not cease from exploration
And the end of all our exploring
Will be to arrive where we started
And know the place for the first time
TS Eliot *Four Quartets*

Introduction to this Section

The previous Act (II), that is, Chapters 4-6, outlines the outcome of examining the relevant literature concerning PBT. The “actors” in this section, that is, the theorists and practitioners in PBT, enabled a filling of the “set” (the model illustrated in Figure 2) with interrelated concepts which establish, at least theoretically, that PBT can be seen as sitting at the nexus of four fields, Narrative, Performance, Education and Health. This outline completes the consideration of the theoretical research questions iterated on pages 15-16. There remains the consideration of the empirical questions. This necessitated the formulation of an empirically based study, the outline of which is now given.

This third Act of the thesis comprises two scenes (chapters). The first (Chapter 7), describes the theoretical lens through which I looked as I was conducting the research—in other words, the methodology. This has been described by Lather (1991:3) as “the theory of knowledge and interpretative framework that guides a particular research project”. In addition, I foreground my own knowledge, experience and conceptualisations that also influenced the research process.

Therefore, in this chapter I describe:

- (1) What I bring with me to this inquiry in terms of my beliefs and understandings that influenced this process;

- (2) The theoretical lens and research specialisations that have been important in my thinking about the project, and why these particular lens and specialisations were important.

The second scene (Chapter 8), recounts the process of the inquiry. In this chapter I describe:

- (1) The methods that I used to collect the data, or empirical evidence;
- (2) What kinds of information or evidence these methods yielded;
- (3) How I went about this process; and finally,
- (4) A consideration of the challenges in researching the *ephemeral*, including some of the tensions that existing between differing paradigms and methodologies.

CHAPTER SEVEN

Researching Playback Theatre and Lived Experience: Theoretical Lenses

This study may be generally described as “post-positivist” and of “mixed methods” in nature. While this latter notion has been criticised by some researchers (Baker, Wuest & Stern 1992), there are a number of others who argue that this approach is “not only sensible, but increasingly inevitable” (Conrad et al. 1993; Johnson, Long & White 2001:243). While I was initially concerned to rigidly follow all of the tenets of a particular methodology—influenced in part by my training as a psychologist—in a belief that this would make a stronger investigation, I quickly realised that this form of qualitative work could not be circumscribed by the same exact boundaries between methods as in the case with positivist work such as an experimental study, or a population survey. For example, in seeking to determine sample size there are clear canons of practice for the researcher to draw on in ensuring that issues such as levels of significance and generalisability are considered. In grounded theory, by way of contrast, a concept of “theoretical saturation” (Glaser & Strauss 1968) is used whereby sampling is continued until no new categories emerge, and it is not possible to be able to accurately predict in advance where this level of “saturation” may emerge. In addition, Denzin and Lincoln (1994) highlight that qualitative methods are organic and still evolving, and therefore are not established in the same way as quantitative methods. Hence, I drew on a number of different methods in order to best answer my research questions. These included phenomenology, phenomenography and grounded theory. Support for this diverse approach also comes from Ricoeur (1970; 1974) who foregrounded that the phenomenon of human behaviour calls for a mixed discourse where there is a balance between divergent systems of interpretation and exploration.

The Phenomenological Orientation of the Study

One of the most important theoretical orientations in this study is phenomenology. I was led to phenomenology for a number of reasons: First, phenomenology is concerned with subjectivity or lived experience, and particularly the emotional component of that experience which includes a social dimension (Ellis & Flaherty 1992). This focus foregrounds the individual's experience of being-in-the-world (Crotty 1996; Moustakas 1990, 1994; Spinelli 1989; Van Manen 1997), and also includes an awareness of the researcher. Phenomenology, therefore, does not seek to artificially separate this lived experience from some notion of "objective reality". Greene (2000:iii) describes such a position as: "the arbitrary separation of the inquiring subject from the phenomena presenting themselves to consciousness, mistakenly identified with some objective reality". This separation can lead to distortions that Greene and many others have worked to ameliorate through their interest in the arts and arts-based forms of inquiry (Barone 1995; Diamond, & Mullen 1999; Greene 1997, 1999). In Moustakas' (1994:45) words:

Because all knowledge and experience are connected to phenomena, things in consciousness that appear in the surrounding world, inevitably a unity must exist between ourselves as knowers and the things or objects that we come to know and depend upon.

In a like manner, this project is driven by a desire to conduct an inquiry that reveals PBT in a way that its life and texture, experiences and meanings can be made clear and not distorted through notions of Cartesian dualism and the associated "truth" claims typically asserted by logical positivists.

Second, phenomenology shares many tenets with humanistic psychology and can help reveal the human element of PBT, where the participants are given status and considered experts on their own lives. Third, phenomenology has been long concerned with art and many early influential phenomenologists (Heidegger 1975; Merleau-Ponty 1964) wrote in this area. Art and phenomenology are linked in that if "art is a way of endowing the world with meaning, it is also a way of allowing the world to express itself" (States 1985:22). Hence, as the empirical questions of the research are at least partly concerned with experience and theatre art, a phenomenological attitude can be helpful in understanding how we arrive at unique interpretations of our experience, in this way, better reveal the potential of PBT as an art form and a tool for learning. In Van Manen's (1990:7) words, "in bringing to reflective awareness the nature of the events as experienced, we are able to transform or remake

ourselves”. Furthermore, an assumption of phenomenology is that knowledge can be gained from art as well as science (Boss, Dahl & Kaplan 1992).

Fourthly, this potential for learning also relates to the experience of meaning-making, one of the core concerns of phenomenology and also of this research (see Research Question 2b). Spinelli (1989:1) makes this link clear: “As human beings, we attempt to make sense of all of our experiences. Through our mental acts, we strive to impose meaning on our world”. From a phenomenological point of view, then, to do research is always to question the way we experience, and hence, make meaning of the world (Van Manen 1997). While meaning is a fraught term, and the subject of long running debates between philosophers, there is general agreement that “meaning is at the heart of perceiving, remembering, judging, feeling and thinking” (Moustakas 1994:68). In short, phenomenology seeks to establish a new perspective from which to view or understand things (Ihde 1986:17).

Fifth, phenomenology has been a useful resource for a number of theatre scholars³³ as they seek to understand the phenomenon of theatre (Martin & Sauter 1995; Sauter 1997, 2000; Schoenmakers 1990; States 1985). States (1985:2), for example, draws on phenomenology to describe theatre’s ability to “create, and bring forth”, to awaken the audience’s memory of their own “perceptual encounters”, and describes theatre as a “place of disclosure” (p.4), all-important notions within this investigation. In other words, phenomenology allows us to consider PBT as a *way of seeing*. Sixth, phenomenology and aesthetics imply one another, and aesthetic enjoyment—one of the *primogenital factors of the human condition*—provides access to the point where the work stands out and becomes alive within the perspectives of each of us (Kronegger 1991:ix-x). This perspective can help us understand the pleasure

³³ Phenomenology has also been an important resource for a number of prominent DIE practitioners, most notably Heathcote and Bolton. Heathcote, for example, works metaphorically and phenomenologically, so that in commenting on Bolton’s explanation of a session on bullying in a Canadian school, she suggested working in a parallel way by considering an astronaut who was too tall—the point being that “accommodating difference” (Bolton 1992) was the *essence of the problem* and so bullying could be considered metaphorically and phenomenologically. In addition, Bolton also foregrounded a phenomenological attitude when he described the learning and new insights that come not from direct confrontation but from what he refers to as a “prismatic” angling of knowledge. Bolton (1992) explained it this way:

It is as if using a directly focused spotlight to illuminate something either merely highlights those features you already knew about or actually takes away the contours of its meaning... For *seeing it anew*, the spotlight must be beamed through a *prism* and the consequent refraction throws up new meanings.

participants get in watching a PBT performance, and how this pleasure can also help them to access their own experiences.

Finally, even though phenomenology—in respect of its ontological and epistemological assumptions—is a philosophy rather than a strict set of methods, a phenomenological attitude on the part of researcher has implications for the way the investigation is conducted. For example, according to Moustakas (1994:13):

The empirical phenomenological approach involves a return to experience in order to obtain comprehensive descriptions that provide the basis for a reflective structural analysis that portrays the essences of experience.

Therefore, a consideration of some of the major tenets of phenomenology will help reveal the process of this investigation and also the phenomenological nature of PBT itself.

Phenomenology and Theatre

Spinelli (1989:2) highlighted that the world, as we experience it, is a phenomenal world and “that which is experienced by us is inextricably linked to our in-built, innate capacity to construct meaning”. Put another way, we are meaning-making creatures and this capacity lies at the heart of the educational implications of both DIE and PBT. Spinelli also highlighted that phenomenology is a “general approach which encompasses a *variety* of doctrines whose common focus is directed towards the investigation of our experience of the world” (p.3). What is important about this idea is that phenomenology is not just one strict method for conducting and thinking about research, but rather encompasses a number of different branches. A more recent view by Van Manen (2000) presents this diversity graphically and shows how a number of branches of phenomenology continue to evolve out of a rich and complex background.

For example, Van Manen (2000) has identified six specific branches of phenomenological inquiry, including Transcendental Phenomenology, Existential Phenomenology, Hermeneutic Phenomenology, Linguistical Phenomenology, Ethical Phenomenology, and most recently, the Phenomenology of Practice. This last movement is practised and described by such scholars as Giorgi and Fischer in psychology, Crotty and Benner in nursing, and Van Manen himself in the areas of pedagogy and education. Specifically, the phenomenology of practice as described by Van Manen (2000) seeks to “employ phenomenological method in applied or professional contexts ... and the practical concerns of everyday living”. This last movement is the one closest to my own concerns, though as Van Manen (2000) foregrounds, “there exist

many continuities and discontinuities among the various phenomenological orientations and movements”.

One of these discontinuities relates to the split now identified between European phenomenology and American phenomenology, particularly as practised in Nursing (Caelli 2000; Crotty 1996). In the latter, Caelli (2000:366-367) identified a “focus on describing participant’s lived experience within the context of culture”, whereas the former continues to focus on the “universals” or “unchanging meaning of it”. However, it is interesting to note that the situated form of phenomenology, as explicated in nursing research, reflects a more post-modern conception of the world where people live and research is conducted (Caelli 2000).

While these branches of phenomenology have developed in differing ways there are a certain number of principles informing the practice of phenomenology itself. The first of these principles, *intentionality*, helps us understand why we are “meaning-making creatures”. This concept is so important to human beings that Spinelli describes the **inability** to make meaning as being “fundamentally disturbing ... [and] tension provoking”, whereas by way of contrast, the ability to make or **uncover** meaning allows us to “relax mentally when we are able to explain events or behaviour that appear inexplicable to us” (Spinelli 1989:5). Indeed, this resolution of tension—or the desire for understanding—is the motivation for some Playback participants to tell their stories in such a forum. In other words, interpretation or meaning-making reduces the tension we feel as a result of being confronted by the “meaningless”. Meaning, then, for the phenomenologist is implicit in our experience of reality.

Intentionality, according to Spinelli (1989:11) describes “the fundamental action of the mind reaching out to the stimuli which make up the real world in order to translate them into its realm of meaningful experience”. That is, there is always a consciousness of *something*, and whatever sense we make of the world is *intentionally* derived. Intentionality, a term originally ascribed to Brentano (1838-1917), is described in his words as:

No hearing without something heard, no believing without something believed, no hoping without something hoped, no striving without something striven for, no joy without something we are joyous about (Spiegelberg 1982:37).

In PBT an audience as it watches undergoes an intentional experience based on a number of influences. Hence, this experience is open to a multiplicity of interpretations—determined by cultural, personal and, quite possibly, biologically based variables. The phenomenological view however posits, that, to some degree, “many of us do, indeed, partially share similar interpretations of reality” (Spinelli 1989:5).

What is important about this notion is that no matter how widespread or generally accepted our interpretations of the world may seem to be, they remain *interpretations*. For example, phenomenologists propose that our experience of the world is made up of an interaction between the “raw matter of the world” and our “mental faculties” (Spinelli 1989:8). This means that what we see “acted out” is, in and of itself, an experience *of* an experience that is understood or interpreted through both our own experiences, and the influence of shared meanings derived from the socio-cultural milieu in which we live. Phenomenologically-based research illuminates how each of us arrives at this experience of the world. However, for phenomenology the central feature of experience—no matter what this experience is—is a *structure* called “intentionality” (Ihde 1986:23).

States, for example, discussed the phenomenological base of theatre in terms of intentionality and the “immediacy of perception’s encounter with a world” (1985:46). He goes on to cite Merleau-Ponty (1962:186):

Vision is not a certain mode of thought or presence to self, it is the means given me for being absent from myself, for being present at the fission of Being from the inside—the fission at whose termination, and not before, I come back to myself.

The phenomenological view, then, is that the actor enables us to recognise the human “from the inside”, so that the grief I see being expressed in a playback arouses *my* grief in me. States explained how this happens phenomenologically. As I watch the actor exist as a character in someone else’s story, expressing grief, I experience a “unique ontological confusion” and therefore exist in a “new dimension”—in this way my engagement with what happens is an “enhancement of being” (p.47). Hence, some stories that we see played back remind us of others we have experienced, and our view of these stories will be influenced by such memories. In turn, these will lead to biases of perception, be they negative or positive³⁴.

The maxim that Husserl coined to characterise phenomenology was: “To the things themselves” (1970:12-13). That is, for the early phenomenologists, the reality or nature of a phenomenon like PBT was to be found in the phenomenon itself, not away from it. While more modern phenomenology admits that it can not tell us what the “true” nature of reality is,

³⁴ As an aside, States (1985:69) cites phenomenologists such as Merleau-Ponty (1962; 1964) who have pointed to the (likely invariant) tendency that as human beings we have to categorise new experiences in terms of their “fitness” to past ones, in order to give the new experiences a “meaning” which rationalises our subsequent behaviour and attitudes towards it. Such a process clearly allows learning to take place.

the phenomenological questioning of experience or phenomenal reality does help in a quest to understand the world, or in this case, PBT itself.

The next important notion of phenomenology for this investigation was the two experiential foci or “correlational poles” (Ihde 1986:43), described by Husserl as comprising the very act of intentionality. These two foci were labelled the NOEMA and the NOESIS. The first of these, the noematic focus, is the *what* of experience, so that in a PBT performance this could be the story as it is played back by the actors and the musician. The noetic focus, on the other hand, relates to those influences—including biological and socio-cultural—that an individual brings to bear on that act that enables him or her to respond in a unique way. These two foci, in part, explain why—for phenomenologists—experience is only partly sharable. That is, the noetic focus, what an individual brings to the task, shapes understanding and thereby limits the extent to which any experiences can be said to be shared between individuals.

What this means in terms of this present research is that the **experience** of PBT is a product of both *shared* and *unshared* variables; that is, there is both an *invariate* to the act as it is portrayed, and a *difference* in how we perceive that portrayal. While this theorising reveals “difference” as an essential element of experience, it does not negate the powerful role that “shared” beliefs and experiences can have on what we see. Husserl (1977:91), for example, did not ignore the importance of the *intersubjective*. He stated:

I experience the world (including others) and, according to its experiential sense, not as (so to speak) my private synthetic formation but as other than mine alone (mir Frende), as an intersubjective world, actually there for everyone, accessible in respect of its Objects to everyone.

Importantly, the way that the *Other* is accessible to me is through empathy, an intentional category comprised of my experience of others’ experience, a “thereness-for-me of others” (Moustakas 1994:37). This was an important quality that I sought to carry with me through this investigation. Thus, a phenomenological frame enables us to see that our perception of PBT is influenced by such factors as: our past experience of theatre, the quality of the acting, the affective state in which we view the event, and the group with whom we share this experience.

Schutz (1967:106) also helps in understanding how an individual’s lived experiences of the world help him or her to understand someone else’s experiences. In Schutz’s words:

If I look at my whole stock of your lived experiences and ask about the structure of this knowledge, one thing becomes clear: This is that everything that I know about your conscious life is really based on my knowledge of my own lived experiences. My lived experiences of you are constituted in simultaneity or quasimultaneity with your lived experiences, to which they are intentionally related. It is only because of this that, when I look backward, I am able to synchronize my past experiences of you with your past experiences.

Phenomenologists also highlighted the influence of *future expectations* on our perceptions. What this might imply for a person's experience of PBT is: Does the person intend to attend PBT again? Might they tell a story? Or, alternatively, having told, propose to tell again? What might be the likelihood of seeing these people again in this, or other contexts? Hence, what we might think about the future can impact on the nature of a current experience. For example, someone might choose to tell a "risky" story, knowing that they might never see anyone from that PBT performance again—alternatively, they might modify what they say if they expect to see these people in different, or even similar contexts.

Phenomenological Method

Further developments in phenomenology have focussed on variants of the experience as seen through the eyes of the researcher, and Spinelli (1989), citing Ihde (1986) and Grossman (1984), goes on to describe three distinguishable, though interrelated steps that could be said to comprise a phenomenological *method*, although there are a number of variations available on the theme (Moustakas 1990; 1994). These three steps or challenges are important because they represent the phenomenological "attitude" that I carried with me into this investigation.

The first challenge for the researcher, according to Spinelli (1989), is to set aside, as far as humanly possible, all his or her expectations, assumptions and biases in order to be as **open** to the experience as possible. This process has become known as the rule of *epoché*, and the action of setting aside, *bracketing*. This process allows subsequent or potentially more adequate interpretations to emerge. In the case of this investigation, for example, this meant that I approached each performance *bracketing*, as far as possible, my prior knowledge of the phenomenon. In this way I consciously worked not to let my expectations and assumptions "blind me" to what else emerged. In Spinelli's words, "The very recognition of bias lessens its impact on our immediate experience" (1989:17).

The second step in the phenomenological method is to describe, in as full and complete a way as possible, the phenomena under investigation—an example of this is given in Chapter Two. This initial emphasis on *description* rather than interpretation means that the researcher is held back from jumping to conclusions that again may delimit later, more adequate

interpretations. The essence of this rule in Spinelli's words is "describe, don't explain" (1989:17). The third step in the phenomenological method is to treat all data as having equal value. That is, we do not impose any initial hierarchies of significance on our descriptions. This "rule of horizontalisation" (Spinelli 1989:18) again works to try and delimit any early categorisation that may occur, so that the researcher avoids making immediate potentially misleading hierarchically based judgements.

Spinelli (1989:22) described the method this way:

The phenomenological method seeks to avoid the imposing of set beliefs, biases, explanatory theories and hypotheses upon our experience either at the very start of any examination or before it becomes useful to do so.

There are a number of important consequences of the phenomenological method for this investigation. First, phenomenology works to distinguish between **straightforward** and **reflective** experience—the former being *action-based*, and the latter requiring *interpretation*. Reflective experience is important because meaning is constructed through it, and it is through this form of experience—after the event—that understanding is developed and theory can emerge. This form of experience has implications for the methods that are used, the way the data are collected and analysed.

Second, phenomenological method argues that each of us can be described as being-in-the-world, and our experience of this is "things as they appear to us" and this is unique and unsharable (Ihde 1986). A consequence of this notion for this project is that what people see in PBT is a result of their **intentional** interpretation, that is, the *noetic* rather than the *noematic* focus described earlier. In other words, according to phenomenological theory, people's experience of PBT is unique, and is made unique—at least in part—by being able to compare it to others and perceiving a difference. What this means for this investigation is what we experience is our own interpretation of the phenomenon of PBT, not some ultimate "reality" of PBT. And in this sense, phenomenology—at its heart—is concerned with experience. Therefore, in applying this method to the current investigation, I attempt to arrive at increasingly adequate—though never complete or final—conclusions concerning the experience of PBT.

What a phenomenological attitude does, then, is to raise my awareness of the importance of each of these factors and therefore increase the potential for me as researcher to reveal more adequate descriptions of PBT and the experience for those who attend. On a more pragmatic level, this attitude also raises the difficulty of researching a phenomenon as ephemeral as PBT, a matter that I will come to shortly.

The Phenomenological Nature of Playback Theatre and of this Investigation.

The development of phenomenologically derived forms of psychotherapy also has implications for this study. This is because one of the most important influences of existential thought on Western psychology, and for this research, is a “focus ...on man [sic] as an individual person as being-in-the-world” (Misiak & Sexton 1973:84). This stands in contrast to a presupposition that human beings can be adequately understood through a model that is based solely on the natural or biological sciences. This development of a more **human-based** approach also characterises this study. The development of phenomenological psychotherapy out of this more human-based approach to phenomenology has important implications for revealing PBT generally, and for this investigation particularly.

First, in the words of Spinelli (1989:127):

If there is an ultimate aim to phenomenological therapy, it is to offer the means to individuals to examine, confront, clarify and reassess their understanding of life, the problems encountered through their life, and the limits imposed upon the possibilities inherent in being-in-the-world.

This aim is very close to many of the goals expressed for PBT, and, importantly, foregrounds the phenomenological nature of PBT itself. If, as Spinelli (1989:127) suggested, the role of the phenomenological therapist is not a medical/curative one but, rather, that of a “stimulus to explore”, then this also parallels the case I have previously made for PBT having a health-related rather than a focused therapeutic role. Thus, the phenomenological nature of PBT allows for individual understanding and perspective, where *exploration* and *understanding* can lead to a therapeutic goal, but through essentially a **phenomenological inquiry** into a teller’s story, rather than a more scientific/curative perspective where the teller needs to be “fixed”. In other words, therapy might be an outcome of PBT but this is not its primary aim or concern. Spinelli (1989:127) cites van Deurzen-Smith’s (1988) revealing words:

The existential approach to counselling centres on an exploration of someone’s particular way of seeing life, the world and herself. The goal is to help her to establish what is it that matters to her, so that she can begin to feel more in tune with herself and therefore more real and alive”.

Second, if we accept the acknowledged emphasis placed in phenomenological psychotherapy upon the exploration of the “client’s consciousness and experience of being-in-the-world” (p.128), then the central effort on the part of the therapist, and the researcher in this case, is to enter into the client’s or co-inquirer’s *inner-world* as fully as possible in order to reveal his/her worldviews and hold this up for consideration.

This notion also reveals the phenomenological nature of PBT—as well as this research—and has several implications. For example, one of the actor’s main goals in PBT is to enter into the inner world of the teller as fully and completely as s/he can. In this sense, the actor can be considered a researcher of the teller’s story and life-world. In a parallel way, I as the “researcher” also need to enter into the life/inner world of the co-inquirer as s/he reflects on his/her experience of PBT. In order to do this successfully, we need to both have *empathy with*, and *personal neutrality towards*, the teller’s stories (in both senses described here). Therefore, the emphasis is on *descriptive questioning*—that is, the **what** and the **how** of the experience, rather than the **why**.

Interestingly, this process of entering into a person’s subjective world and then reflecting or mirroring it back in an accurate and concrete way as possible also highlights the parallels between the phenomenological nature of PBT itself, the humanistic psychological tradition and the nature of this investigation. For example, Rogers proposed three necessary and sufficient attitudes that are necessary on the part of the therapist in Rogerian therapy in order to facilitate the development of a unique and non-threatening relationship. This is a relationship that “opens the way for clients to *expose, reconsider, and evaluate* their *subjective experiences of themselves and the world* (Rogers 1951; 1961, emphasis added). The first of these attitudes is **unconditional positive regard**, with its phenomenological parallel in bracketing; the second attitude is **accurate empathy**, that is, “grasping and adhering to the client’s frame of reference as closely as possible” (p.151); and thirdly, an attitude that facilitates **congruence**, which is being as fully as possible—an authentic being, in phenomenological terms—*present* with the client. These three attitudes or conditions are also clearly visible within a PBT performance, and reveal the healing potential of the form.

In conclusion, PBT can be seen to be phenomenological in that:

- It offers the means whereby participants—particularly the tellers—can “examine, confront, clarify and reassess their understanding of life ... and the possibilities of being-in-the-world”.
- It provides a stimulus for all participants to explore.
- The actors facilitate this exploration through entering into the teller’s world as fully as possible, and reflect this world back for consideration.
- The conductor reflects a phenomenological attitude by asking “what” or “how” questions that focus on an individual’s noematic and noetic experience, rather than those that assume a direct causality.

As an interesting parallel, merely by changing a few key words in the preceding points—*actors* and *conductor* for **researcher**, for example—these phenomenological

concepts also describe the process of this inquiry. Finally, in the words of Fox (1982:302), we can see the link between PBT and phenomenology made manifest: “we consider that each source for dramatic action must be an individual’s personal experience”.

This research process also had heuristic elements in that “the research question and methodology flow[ed] out of inner awareness, meaning and inspiration” (Moustakas 1990:11). That is, as I considered the phenomenon of PBT I entered fully into it, I “search[ed] introspectively, meditatively, and reflectively into its nature and meaning”, and “with full and unqualified interest, I [was] determined to extend my understanding and knowledge of [this] experience” (p.11). With heuristic research, for example, Moustakas (1990:14) claimed that the researcher “must have had a direct, personal encounter with the phenomenon being investigated”, a precondition unlike phenomenology [as he described it] where the researcher may not have undergone the experience in a “vital, intense, and full way”.

Second, during this investigation I sought to obtain “qualitative depictions that are at the heart and depths of a person’s experience—depictions of situations, events, conversations, relationships, feelings, thoughts, values and beliefs”—in short, “the raw material of knowledge and experience from the empirical world” (Moustakas 1990:38). Importantly, in a later volume, Moustakas (1994) went on to make a distinction between heuristic research and the influential Duquesne tradition of phenomenological research. This distinction lies in the fact that in the Duquesne tradition there is usually a focus on a situation “in which the experience investigated occurs”; however, in heuristic research—as Moustakas himself described it—it is rare for only “one example or situation” to be used (1994:18). In this present research, for example, nine separate performances of PBT were responded to, not just one. Hence, while this project could not be strictly defined as a heuristic investigation, the heuristic elements that are implicit do reveal my own positioning within this research process; where the questions around PBT are “challenging and puzzling”, and the questions matter “personally” and also have a “social significance” (Moustakas 1990).

While phenomenology as a philosophy has been important to this study, and heuristics to a lesser extent, there have been two more important research specialisations that have *specifically* shaped the collection and analysis of the data: phenomenography and grounded theory. I will deal with each of these in turn. The first of these—closely linked to phenomenology, though qualitatively different—is that of phenomenography, developed predominately by Marton and a group of PhD students at the University of Göteborg, Sweden.

Phenomenography

Phenomenography has been an important research specialisation to this thesis for a number of reasons. First, phenomenography has predominantly been concerned with learning, particularly “learning as coming to experience the world, or aspects of the world, in particular ways” (Marton & Booth 1997:vii). This educational research approach seeks to describe the variations that people experience of situations and phenomena in their worlds. This notion can help to reveal how people learn, and in particular, how people learn in PBT—learning that is critical if there is to be any making-of-meaning or change in understanding. In Marton’s (1994, emphasis added) words, phenomenography is concerned with “the anatomy of awareness as seen from an *educational* point of view”.

Second, there has evolved a well-articulated philosophy and theoretical stance around phenomenography that has led to a number of empirically developed methods that can guide an investigation such as this one (Dall’Alba & Hasselgren 1996), though as Marton and Booth (1997:111) are at pains to point out: “Phenomenography is not a method in itself, although there are methodological elements associated with it”.

Third, while phenomenology can describe the “essence” of an experience, phenomenography can map the “range” of responses or conceptualisations of an experience, therefore revealing the *variation* in the ways of experiencing phenomena, in this case, PBT. Etymologically, phenomenography is derived from the two Greek words “phainemenon” and “graphein”, which mean *appearance* and *description*. Hence, phenomenography is about the description of things as they appear to us. In Marton and Booth’s words: “The nature of phenomenography is basically descriptive and methodologically oriented” (1997:2).

What is unique and distinctive about phenomenography is that this research specialisation works from what Marton (1981) described as a “second order perspective”. This means that the descriptions of these variations come from the participants involved—through their eyes, as it were—whereas, by way of contrast in phenomenology, the researcher constructs a structural description based on the respondent’s answers. Although this is a fine-grained distinction, it is an important one, more adequately “bracketing out” the researcher, in my view, than a phenomenological analysis, referred to by Marton (1978) as a *first-order perspective*. In short, I explored the experience of PBT particularly through the experience of those who attended, in other words, through the experience of *others* rather than my own (Hasselgren 1996).

The next important aspect of phenomenography grew out of an study by Säljö (Marton & Säljö 1976; 1975). In this study, forty female first term university students were given a comprehension task based on a typical education textbook. The results revealed that there was *not* a uniform understanding of the issues presented, nor were there 40 *different* answers. Rather, further analysis uncovered four distinctly different ways that respondents made sense of the main arguments of the text. Furthermore, these four qualitatively different ways of understanding could be brought together into a “composite understanding”, of which they turn out to be parts (Marton & Booth 1997:20). Subsequent studies, including Svensson (1976; 1977), also revealed that there was a hierarchy of logical relationships between these ways of understanding. What is important about this notion of bounded variation is highlighted in a review that Marton and Booth (1997:32) undertook of 25 years of research using phenomenographic principles. They stated that:

In every case studied, a limited number of distinctively different ways of understanding the content of learning and/or a limited number of distinctively different ways of approaching the learning task were found.

Furthermore,

The qualitatively different ways of understanding the content of a learning task are logically related to each other because they represent a more or less partial grasp of the same constituent elements.

What this meant for this investigation was that, using phenomenographic principles, it became possible to map the range of experiences that the audience had of performances of Sydney Playback Theatre (SPT)—research question 1b, and this produced an insight into PBT itself. In addition, this “mapping” also helped to reveal the process of making-meaning that was also integral to this project—research question 2b.

Phenomenology and phenomenography share a number of important principles³⁵: the first is the “phenomenon” or appearance—the stem of both words—and the concept of *intentionality*. Second, is a shared awareness that there are always two aspects of an experience—the noema and noesis, or structural and referential components. Third, both share the concept of horizontalisation—both internal and external—“that which surrounds both the

³⁵ As an aside, Marton & Booth (1997) borrow many terms from the conceptual framework of phenomenology, sometimes with slightly different emphases, thereby showing the same genealogy. Marton & Booth (1997:117) also go as far as to suggest that “phenomenography could legitimately be seen as a child of the phenomenology family”. Interestingly, Hasselgren (2001) also highlighted that the first use of the word “phenomenography” was within the phenomenological tradition in Sonnemann’s 1954 volume *Existence and Therapy*.

phenomena as it appears and the relationship of the parts to the contours of the experience” (Marton & Booth 1997:87). What is important about this concept is that when the researcher is considering the data, all aspects are considered equal, that is, no one aspect is treated as being of more importance than any other—at least until it is useful to do so. Fourth, in both phenomenology and phenomenography, the researcher “brackets out” as far as possible his/her own expectations, experiences and biases.

What is *different* about phenomenology and phenomenography is that, at least in classical phenomenology, there is an attempt to look at a phenomenon stripped bare of its context—the “essence” of an experience. However, in phenomenography, Marton and Booth (1997:83) highlight the impossible nature of this task, and it is worthwhile quoting them at length:

We cannot separate our understanding of the *situation* and our understanding of the *phenomena* that lend sense to the situation. Not only is the situation understood in terms of the phenomena involved, but we are aware of the phenomena from the point of view of the particular situation. Furthermore, not only is our experience of the situation molded [sic] by the phenomena as we experience them, but our experience of the phenomena is modified, transformed, and developed through the situations we experience them in.

Therefore, phenomenography is always mindful of the context that a phenomenon occurs in, and this is accessed through the only route we have into the participant’s own experience, that is the experience itself as expressed in the participant’s own words or acts. Lather (1991) helped contextualise this idea further through her emphasis on the recent *linguistic turn* in social theory. This “shift” emphasised a focus on the power of language to organise our thoughts and experience, and this reflects “an increasing focus on the role of language in the construction of knowledge” (p.9), thereby emphasising the *constructed* nature of knowledge as opposed to knowledge being *found*.

Finally, it is also interesting to note that Giorgi’s (1986) phenomenological re-analysis of Säljö’s (1979) data on conceptions of learning obtained according to phenomenographic principles revealed the same five concepts that accounted for the empirical variations of learning in educational settings. The difference between the two studies lay in the interpretations given to those variations, not the results.

There has been recent criticism of phenomenography by Richardson (1999) who claims that there are a number of conceptual and methodological difficulties with phenomenographic research and that these could be resolved by a “constructionist revision of phenomenographic research” (p.53). Some of these views can be attributed to cultural differences and reflect Richardson’s own biases in a culture, where by his own admission, phenomenography is not

well known and other paradigms are in the ascendancy. What Richardson does highlight, however, is the need for the researcher to be reflexive with regard to his or her own practice and aware of some of the links that exist between phenomenology, phenomenography, and grounded theory, the third theoretical orientation in this study.

Grounded Theory

Grounded Theory grew out of the sociological tradition of what has become known as the Chicago School of Symbolic Interactionism and Qualitative Research³⁶ (Anells 1996; Glaser 1998:21). What is important about this background is that it has imbued grounded theory with beliefs pertaining to the social construction of knowledge, and “man as a meaning-making animal” (Glaser 1998:32), all-important ideas in this research.

The three basic elements of grounded theory are *concepts*, *categories* and *propositions* (Strauss & Corbin 1998). In grounded theory, concepts become the main units of analysis because it is from the conceptualisation of the data, rather than the raw data themselves, that theory is developed. Secondly, categories are important because they are the higher-level abstraction of the concepts that they represent, and as such, provide the means to integrate the concepts that are embedded in the data. In this way, categories are the “cornerstones” of developing theory. The third important element of grounded theory is propositions that indicate generalised relationships between a category and its concepts and between discrete categories. Originally termed “hypotheses” by Glaser and Strauss (1968), the term propositions evolved to more adequately reflect the conceptual, rather than measured, relationships that emerge. What is important about grounded theory is that the generation and development of concepts, categories and propositions are components of an iterative process that allows theory to emerge rather than existing *a priori*.

A grounded theory approach has been important for this present research for a number of reasons. First, in grounded theory everything is treated as data (Glaser 1998:42). This meant that I could usefully use: my observations and field notes of a number of performances, the videos I recorded of some rehearsals and two separate performances (one public and one private), my discussions with Playback actors and musicians, as well as the interviews I collected with audience members after nine public performances of SPT, and finally, the two interviews that I conducted with Fox and Salas—the originators of the form. In addition,

³⁶ A theoretical perspective that is also compatible with phenomenology (Boss, Dahl & Kaplan 1992).

grounded theory lends itself to going out into the field and finding out what people really do and think in relation to PBT, a process that was intrinsically attractive to me.

Second, I was attracted to grounded theory as a methodology because it offered a promise of working with a form where there is very little or no empirical data collected, and therefore no well elaborated theory extant. Third, the methods of grounded theory fitted well with some of my established skills and training as an artist, educator, counsellor and researcher, as well as offering the potential of developing new methodological skills and knowledge that were immediately applicable, not only to this project, but also to the developing field of Drama Education research more generally. In addition, grounded theory provides a “licence to conceptualize” (Glaser 1998:132), something that we commonly do everyday in our attempts to understand the world around us and therefore is immediately accessible to us.

Fourth, grounded theory is, at its core, a simple technique that draws on important notions like “relevance” and “workability”, where *fit* is important and constant comparison is used in order to let it emerge. In addition, because grounded theory methods are highly accessible and therefore workable, it is relevant to many because it deals with the main concerns of the participants involved. Finally, I was attracted to grounded theory because it offers the potential for its product—theory³⁷—to be modified as new data become available (Glaser 1998). What this reveals is that knowledge *unfolds* and therefore is neither fixed nor carved in stone; that people act on the basis of meaning; and that meaning is *defined* and *redefined* through **interaction** (Strauss & Corbin 1998:9).

In summary, I conducted this investigation with a phenomenological *attitude* and was guided specifically by both phenomenographic and grounded theory methods. What is important about these methodology/methods is that phenomenology provided a **philosophy** for the study, a philosophy that grew out of what has been described as a *paradigm shift* (Lather 1991:9), that is, “a change in the beliefs, values and techniques that guide scientific inquiry, [and] has permeated discourse throughout the disciplines for over three decades now”. The phenomenographic aspect of the study revealed the **range** of participants’ experiences in relation to PBT. Finally, grounded theory methods were used to **collect** and **analyse** the empirical evidence needed in order to answer the research questions of the

³⁷ Recognising that theory that emerges from research can have many shapes and forms (Morse 1997), including notions of “high-level description” and “conceptual ordering” that also “are important to the generation of knowledge and can make a valuable contribution to the discipline” (Strauss & Corbin 1998:x).

study—noting that there is considerable overlap in these methods, with some areas more developed in one methodology than another. In other words, I chose to use the methods available that most usefully helped me to conduct this investigation in light of the research questions asked. Support for this eclectic approach comes from Dewey (1959:50):

If the artist does not perfect a new vision in his process of doing, he acts mechanically and repeats some old model fixed like a blueprint in his mind.

The overriding goal was to achieve a new understanding of PBT that was grounded in the experience of those who participated in it, and while this process involves interpretation, this was to be based on systematically carried out inquiry.

Finally, it is important to note that these methodologies and research specialisations belong to a family of qualitative research that are subject to evolutionary change, and therefore cannot be considered “pure”. Indeed, Van Manen (2000) and Caelli (2000) have highlighted the variations that now exist in phenomenology; Dall’Alba and Hasselgren (1996) have overviewed a range of practice in phenomenography; and Strauss & Corbin (1998:12) have emphasised that a number of versions of grounded theory are now being taught (cf. Glaser 1992; Melia 1996).

The following chapter will detail the actual process that I followed in pursuing my goals for this project.

CHAPTER EIGHT

Researching Playback Theatre and Lived Experience: The Process of Inquiry

There were a number of different types of data collected during this investigation. First, there were my field notes that were collected at nine public performances³⁸ of SPT. These notes included my observations of what occurred during the performance and some of my reflections on these performances after the event. Secondly, I conducted interviews with volunteers in the week after each of the performances that I attended³⁹. These interviews totalled 47 in number and included people who were regular attendees, those who attended for the first time, and a range of ages, from young people in their teens to retirees. These participants were recruited through the artistic director of SPT introducing me at the end of each public performance, and briefly indicating what my purpose was. Volunteers were then invited to contact me after the show had finished and after the actors had left the “stage” in order to debrief after that evening’s performance. I would then place myself in a prominent place with those who chose to stay after the performance, with the company providing tea and coffee and light refreshments.

Next, I would take down the names and contact details of those volunteers who wished to talk about their experience and provided them with printed information about the nature of the project, and the consent form as required by the University Ethics Committee (Appendix B). On the next day, I would then contact these volunteers in order to set up interviews during that coming week. These interviews occurred in coffee shops, public-meeting spaces,

³⁸ These public performances occurred at that time on the last Sunday of every month in The Edge Theatre, Newtown—a small intimate “upstairs” performance space in the inner city suburbs of Sydney.

³⁹ These nine separate performances occurred over a two-year period, with four attended in the last five months of one year, and five attended over the last six months of the following year.

lunchrooms at the volunteer's work place, and occasionally at the volunteer's own home. I also conducted one interview that was videotaped with Fox as he was visiting Australia en route to a workshop in New Zealand, and one interview with Salas during a four-day workshop that was run in Sydney towards the end of the data collection period. These interviews totalled 48 altogether, with the 47 audio interviews comprising the main component of the data collected. The 47 interviewees comprised 12 "tellers", that is, people who volunteered a story on the night of the performance, and 35 audience members. These 35 co-investigators participated at performances either in a small way, by offering words or phrases, or providing feedback after a playback, or did not overtly contribute in any way.

This sample size was determined on the basis of "logic and power" (Patton 1990:169), and was purposeful—in contrast to "probability sampling" as used in quantitative approaches—in that it was case-orientated rather than variable-orientated (Ragin & Becker 1989). This meant that the amount of data collected was dependent on the quality of information obtained rather than the actual number of respondents. One of the implications of this approach as reported in the literature is "we do not (or cannot) know that [the number that will be needed] until we collect more" (Sandelowski 1995:180, emphasis added). In other words, this form of sampling is more concerned with the utility value of the data collected in terms of maximising understanding, rather than the total number of people interviewed (quality versus quantity). This sample size also fits within the range of 30-50 interviews recommended by Morse (1994) for this form of qualitative investigation. Sandelowski (1995:183) offered a helpful principle in considering a vexed issue in qualitative research:

An adequate sample size in qualitative research is one that permits—by virtue of not being too large—the deep, case-orientated analysis that is a hallmark of all qualitative inquiry, and that results in—by virtue of not being too small—a new and richly textured understanding of experience.

Third, I videotaped five rehearsals of SPT at the Drama Action Centre in Sydney; a private performance of SPT held in honour of Fox and Salas at the conclusion of the four-day workshop mentioned earlier; and finally a public performance. At this latter performance I was introduced prior to the performance commencing by the artistic director of the company, where he explained the nature and purpose of videoing. Permission forms were then made available to all those present (Appendix C), with two offers being made. The first of these offers was that, at any time during the performance, I could be asked to stop videoing, and the second offer was that at the conclusion of the performance, or at any time thereafter, I could be asked to either wipe out any particular segment of the tape or surrender the tape to anyone who asked for it. It is important to understand that effort was taken to make clear to the

participants that their anonymity and confidentiality would be preserved, and moreover that this participation was entirely voluntary and that anyone could pull out at anytime without prejudice. At no stage during this process did any of these eventualities occur.

Finally, three colleagues attended a public performance of SPT with me. One of these colleagues was my supervisor; the second a colleague who had expressed considerable interest in the form; and finally, a friend and visiting scholar of this colleague. Some considerable time was spent late on that evening reflecting on the nature and form of PBT. This final public performance, which was videoed, made a total of ten performances viewed for this project altogether.

As the audio interviews constituted by far the biggest component of the data, it is worthwhile discussing the nature of these in detail.

The Research Interviews and Interviewing as a Data Collection Tool

Interviews have become almost synonymous with qualitative research (Denzin & Lincoln 1994), and this is reflected in the plethora of influential texts now available on qualitative research interviewing (Kvale 1996; Minichiello et al. 1995; Rubin & Rubin 1995). Associated with this abundance of material has also been a substantial amount of theorising around interviewing, and associated issues such as “[t]ranscription quality as an aspect of rigour in qualitative research” (Poland 1995). However, as Kvale (1996:1) highlighted: “If you want to know how people understand their world and their life, why not talk to them?”

This talking usually takes the form of a specific form of conversation, where the interviewer “attempts to understand the world from the subject’s point of view, to unfold the meaning of people’s experiences, [and] to uncover their lived world prior to scientific explanations” (Kvale 1996:1). Indeed, “conversation is a basic mode of human interaction” (p.5). Importantly, this particular form of conversation is a “construction site” of knowledge, and consequently my respondents were considered to be **co-inquirers** as we *inter-changed* views about PBT. A consideration of some practical and theoretical issues associated with interview research will help reveal this important aspect of the investigation.

The particular form of research interview used in this project was the semi-structured life world interview⁴⁰, defined by Kvale as “an interview whose purpose is to obtain descriptions of the life-world of the interviewee with respect to interpreting the meaning of the described phenomena” (1996:5-6). This specific form of interview belongs to a family of closely related types of qualitative interviews that share similar characteristics. First, these interviews have structure and purpose and are “an *intentional* way of learning about people’s feelings, thoughts and experiences” (Rubin & Rubin:2). Second, these interviews are held between strangers as well as colleagues and acquaintances. Third, the researcher “guides” the interviews, who in this case used a limited number of questions and encouraged the co-inquirer to explore these in-depth, aiming for as full and complete a description as possible. Fourth, the researcher encouraged the respondents to reflect on the events they had experienced and fully explore what meaning they may have held for them. Fifth, these interviews often have both *more* structured and *less* structured parts, but can vary in the balance between them as the interviewer responds to what the interviewee knows and feels. Hence, the interviewer “listens” intently not only to the content of what was said, but also to the emotional tone and non-verbal cues that might mark key words and ideas or reflect significant omissions. As a result of this “listening”, the nature or form of a subsequent question might change, and in this sense each interview is *invented anew* each time it occurs.

The aimed-for products of this form of interview are depth, detail and richness, which is well known as *thick description* (Geertz 1973). This type of description, grounded in interviewees’ own lived experience and expressed in their own words, forms the material that was gathered in the case of this study, then synthesised and analysed as part of “hearing” the meaning of the data. Another important aspect of these descriptions is that, in qualitative interviewing, we understand that one person’s experiences are not intrinsically more “true”

⁴⁰ This particular form of interview is also variously described as an “informal conversational interview” (Moustakas 1990:47), “topical interviews” (Rubin & Rubin 1995:28), the “long phenomenological interview” (Moustakas 1994:114) and even, with some small variations, “the phenomenographic interview” (Bruce 1994). Bruce also detailed at length the influence of phenomenology on the phenomenographic interview, further revealing the links that exist in practice between the perspectives. What this reveals is how close these forms of interview are. In practice, these distinctions are far from important as each interview is unique and ebbs and flows around the knowledge and experience of the individual who is interviewed. It is probably more helpful to think of these interviews in general terms as “qualitative research interviews” and consider the characteristics of these (Kvale 1996:30-31).

than anyone else's; they merely reflect differences in perspective, which is a strength of this form of interviewing.

These 47 interviews, conducted over two separate six-month periods twelve months apart (1996 & 1997), reflected two different imperatives, though in practice each was closely linked. The first imperative was that of focusing on the lived experience of the PBT performance attended (1996), and reflected the principles elaborated by Kvale (1996:30-31). These principles included:

Life World. The topic of qualitative interviews is the everyday lived world of the interviewee and his or her relation to it.

Meaning. The interviewee seeks to interpret the meaning of central themes in the life-world of the subject. The interviewer registers and interprets the meaning of what is said as well as how it is said.

Qualitative. Descriptions of specific situations and action sequences are elicited, not general opinions.

Deliberate Naiveté. The interviewer exhibits an openness to new and unexpected phenomena, rather than having ready-made categories and schemes of interpretation.

Focused. The interview is focused on particular themes; it is neither strictly structured with standardized questions, nor entirely "non-directive".

Ambiguity. Interviewee statements can sometimes be ambiguous, reflecting contradictions in the world the subject lives in.

Change. The process of being interviewed may produce new insights and awareness, and the subject may in the course of an interview come to change his or her description and meanings about a theme.

Sensitivity. Different interviewees can produce statements on the same themes, depending on their sensitivity to and knowledge of the interview topic.

Interpersonal Situation. The knowledge obtained is produced through the interpersonal interaction in the interview.

Positive Experience. A well carried out research interview can be a rare and enriching experience for the interviewee, who may obtain new insights into his or her life situation.

Each interview followed a similar format. First, the interviewee was thanked for the gift of their time and the interview opened with a general conversation that was designed to put them

at ease and help establish rapport. At this point I emphasised that I was not looking for a “correct” answer, but rather I wanted the co-inquirer to reflect on his or her experience of the performance, and that this experience—no matter what its nature—was useful to me. This was reinforced by my sharing a little of the methodology, where diversity of experience was considered important and revealing.

Second, I asked a series of questions that focused explicitly on the lived experience of that performance. These questions included:

- What was your experience of last night’s performance?
- What stood out for you?
- Why did you attend?
- What were your expectations of the evening?
- Was there one thing that resonated with you from the evening?
- What are a few key words that summarised your experience of the PBT performance?

If the co-investigator also offered a word or a phrase during the performance:

- What prompted you to speak?
- When you watched, what did you see?
- Was there anything else that you wanted to say that I might not have asked?

And in addition, if the interviewee was a PBT teller:

- What prompted you to tell?
- How did you feel when you saw your story being played back?
- What is different about seeing your story rendered through the playback form?

This series of interviews was used to “thematize” (Kvale 1996:88-89) the topic. In grounded theory these might be considered “sensitizing” questions, and were used to “tune the researcher into what the data might be indicating” (Strauss & Corbin 1998:77).

During the second set of interviews (1997), the focus was more on the participants’ direct experience of the performance. Therefore, co-investigators were asked similar questions to those described above, but these were extended with such questions as:

- What was your personal response to the PBT performance?
- What touched you about that?
- Where did you experience this in your body?
- Were there any particular stories that resonated with you?

In addition, each of these questions was followed by a combination of: (a) *probes* that were designed to elicit as full and complete a description as possible, (b) *reflections* where I summarised what the co-investigator had just said, and (c) *tentative interpretations* where I offered my developing understanding, and then asked the co-investigator to comment on these propositions in the light of his/her own experience.

Generally speaking, the interviews from both data collection periods ranged from 30 minutes to 80 minutes in length, with most averaging about 45—50 minutes. As time progressed, I became clearer about the nature of the material needed in order to complete the project. Consequently the interviews became shorter and more focused. This reflected, in grounded theory terms, the natural evolution of the project, that is, a movement towards theoretical saturation and my own developing understanding about the phenomenon in question (Dey 1999). Finally, helping participants articulate their experiential knowledge of the event in words can not only provide insight into the phenomena in question, but also help make concrete the feelings associated with it, hence strengthening the educative effects.

What linked each of the two data collection periods was my emphasis on a genuine dialogue “where one is encouraged to permit ideas, thoughts, feelings to unfold and be expressed naturally”, and which was only complete when “the individual has had an opportunity to tell his or her own story to a point of natural closing” (Moustakas 1990:46). This telling of the co-investigators’ story reflected both *explanation* and *expression* as two basic modes of reflecting on, and processing, experience (Reason & Hawkins 1988:79). These two sets of interviews were also linked by the guiding principles espoused by Ashworth and Lucas (2000). These principles include:

- Making minimal use of questions prepared in advance,
- The use of open-ended questions;
- Engaging in empathic listening in order to **hear** meanings, interpretations and understandings,
- Consciously silencing my concerns, preoccupations and judgements; and
- The use of prompts to pursue/clarify the co-researchers’ own line of reflection, allowing them to elaborate, provide incidents, clarifications and, maybe, to discuss events at length.

These interviews were all recorded with an audio tape recorder, even though there is one school of thought that suggests that taping “neutralizes and undermines the power of grounded theory methodology to delimit the research as quickly as possible [because] taping forestalls and delays theoretical sampling” (Glaser 1998:108). However, taping allowed me to

concentrate on the topic and dynamics of the interview without the added burden of attending to key words, themes and nuances to be remembered and documented at a later time. These interviews were then transcribed verbatim, although there has also been concern raised that the trustworthiness of the transcripts be established *prior* to transcribing in order to maintain rigor in qualitative research (Poland 1995).

Kvale (1996) also highlighted that transcription involves a series of methodological and theoretical problems. One of these reflects the issue of moving from an oral language with its own set of rules and structures into a different language with a different set of rules and resources. Also as Kvale (1996:165) highlighted, “transcripts are decontextualised conversations” which emphasise some features and omit others. This particular issue raises (for the post-modernists) the neglect of the context in which the conversation is created, and therefore a particular sensitivity to and focus on the transcription stage by the researcher is required. Transcription however, does render the interview conversations into a form that is amenable to closer analysis. These transcripts were then entered into a software program specifically developed to help researchers analyse this form of data, namely NUD*IST.

NUD*IST

NUD*IST (QSR 1997) is an acronym for Non-numerical Unstructured Data * Indexing Searching and Theorising. This software package, now accepted to be the most commonly used of its type, has been specifically developed to facilitate the qualitative researcher’s analysis of large amounts of textual—usually interview—data. It is important to realise that NUD*IST itself does not analyse data—that is the researcher’s job—but, rather, provides a sophisticated set of tools that facilitate analyses.

NUD*IST has been described as “an index-based approach to organizing qualitative data” (Northey 1997:173). This means that the researcher indexes the data within a treelike graphic interface, depending on the *text-unit*, which is the most basic unit of data that the researcher chooses it to be. This could be a word, a line of text, a sentence or a paragraph. The researcher then attaches this text unit, via the software program, to a code or category created by the researcher. These can then be hierarchically organised, linked, interrelated, searched, juxtaposed and theorised. Importantly, NUD*IST is designed to facilitate this process in a way that is flexible and supports exploratory freedom (Richards 1995).

Essentially, NUD*IST does three things: First, it allows the researcher to code the data; second, it allows the researcher to easily access this coded material *and* the context in which

the co-investigators' comments were made; third, it allows the researcher to search the database of coded material in a variety of ways. For example, a question that arose in the context of this investigation was: Does the personal response of *humour* occur in the same context as *catharsis*? In other words, in PBT, are these two linked? NUD*IST allows this, and a range of other questions to be asked as the researcher iteratively “mines” the data set.

Generally speaking, NUD*IST “holds” the researcher’s thinking about the project as it emerges in what appears, graphically, as an inverted tree structure. This structure can be changed and developed, searched and theorised, as the researcher’s understanding develops. This structure can be accessed either through the *node explorer*, that is the window (or conceptual structure) that allows the researcher to organise his or her thinking about the project, or the *document explorer*. The document explorer is that window where the researcher looks at and codes the data—in this case, interview transcripts. What this means is that both the researcher’s thinking about the project, and the raw data from the co-inquirers’ responses can iteratively intertwine throughout the process of analyses. This feature particularly supports theory construction and development, and is why this program is used extensively for this task (Richards 1995).

There is another issue related to the use of computers in the analysis of qualitative research, and that is the issue of the researcher’s “closeness” to the data. Generally speaking, qualitative research interviews seek to capture the nature of the interviewees’ experience of the world as seen through their own eyes (Rubin & Rubin 1995). This is made more difficult because “experiencing” has tacit, bodily, and perceptual components (Bohart & Tallman 1999). Therefore, it is the researcher’s goal to get as close to the interviewee’s experience as possible in order to reveal PBT itself. However, this notion of “closeness”—long an article of faith for qualitative researchers (Richards 1998)—also needs to be problematised. For example, Richards (1998) highlighted that computers were initially criticised for distancing the researcher from data, and conversely interfaces that were seen to maximise closeness were praised (Weitzman & Miles 1995). However, uncritical closeness is problematic and the classical literature of qualitative research also highlights the importance for understanding of distance (Richards 1998). This issue of the tension between closeness and distance is one that continues to occupy researchers interested in the development of qualitative research methodology.

In this particular investigation, for example, where a decision was made to seek from those present at the PBT itself views expressed through a semi-structured interview on the nature of

their experience, the alternative to coding these views and subsequent interview transcripts in accordance with a software package like NUD*IST, would be to use file cards or manually highlight lines of text. There are two difficulties with this approach: First, this technique is relatively crude and therefore less subtly reflects changes in the data and the researcher's evolving thinking about the data; and second, the researcher can easily "get lost" within such a large data set that constitutes 47 interviews of approximately 20-25 typed pages in length. Hence NUD*IST, while bringing to the analytic process certain constructs such as the hierarchical nature of knowledge and the non-neutrality that pervades *all* forms of technology, also offers to the researcher a management tool that facilitates closeness **and** distance, as well as the ability to manage large amounts of data. In addition, NUD*IST also offers the researcher a substantial amount of freedom in coding and re-coding the data as his or her understanding of the phenomena in question evolves. This flexibility is critical in an investigation such as this, where there is little or no extant literature on the phenomenon of PBT—a theatre event yet to be substantially "named" and "mapped".

Analyses

The term *method* originally meant *the way to the goal* (Kvale 1996:179) and analysis is part of that way. Etymologically, Kvale also highlighted that to analyse means to *separate something into parts or elements* (p.184). However, it is important to realise that, unlike in quantitative data analysis where there are well-established canons of practice, qualitative data analysis—comprised partly of separating data into parts or elements—is still evolving. Therefore, while there are no "standard" methods available to arrive at essential meanings and deeper implications of what is said in an interview, there are some general approaches that can be drawn on that include categorisation, condensation, narrative structuring, deeper interpretations and any combination of these approaches—the latter being referred to by Kvale (1996:181) as "ad hoc tactics for generation of meaning".

There has been a recent plethora of texts designed to help the qualitative researcher conduct data analysis (Coffey & Atkinson 1996; Miles & Huberman 1994; Silverman 1993; Tesch 1990; Wolcott 1994). These texts reveal that while some forms of analysis are used more frequently with some methods than others—meaning condensation with phenomenology, for example—there is often a free interplay of techniques that reflect the researcher's own world view and the specific research questions that s/he is exploring.

In this particular investigation, analyses were not something that occurred after all of the data were collected, but to varying degrees were built into the interview situation itself. In

other words, analysis was not an isolated stage, but rather permeated a variety of stages of the investigation. For example, in these interviews, I would often seek a clarification of meaning from the co-investigator by reflecting back my understanding of what s/he had just said, or, alternatively, by tentatively proposing what my developing understanding was and asking the co-investigator to reflect on his/her own experience in terms of these proposals. This form of analysis is typical of what would commonly occur in classical grounded theory (and phenomenography), even though each interview was not formally analysed as it was completed and prior to the next one being conducted, as in the traditional version of grounded theory.

It is also interesting to note that more recent descriptions of grounded theory do not insist on this latter technique as the only “correct” way to conduct grounded theory (Dey 1999; Strauss & Corbin 1998). This process reveals the interplay that occurs in qualitative research between *description* and *interpretation* (Kvale 1996:187), and also the tension that exists between the said and unsaid. For example, one of the goals of the interview is to help the interviewee into a state of “meta-awareness” (Marton & Booth 1997:129), where the co-investigators’ awareness of his or her awareness adds a further dimension to the process of analysis.

The analyses of the interview data were a dynamic and fluid process as I iteratively returned to the transcripts and my thinking as “held” in NUD*IST. This process followed those techniques recognisable within grounded theory as open and axial coding (Strauss & Corbin 1998), where concepts, with their properties and dimensions, were discovered in the data. This process could be seen to be a microanalysis, as each transcript was considered line by line, and “events, happenings, objects, and actions/interactions that are found to be conceptually similar in nature or related in meaning are grouped under more abstract concepts termed categories” (Strauss & Corbin 1998:102). These categories were then named in the NUD*IST tree at points called *nodes*. This graphical representation of the researcher’s thinking about the project then develops as the researcher decided where relationships exist between these categories and the lower hierarchical relationships of specific instances of these categories. Further reflection on this developing graphical representation then lets the researcher abstract to higher order ideas as patterns emerge and relationships become clarified. This is referred to as “axial coding” in grounded theory terms (Strauss & Corbin 1998).

While there exists a degree of variety in approaches to qualitative data analysis, there is also a core of commonly accepted procedures (Coffey & Atkinson 1996). This usually starts with the identification of key themes and patterns, and, in turn, this depends on the processes of coding data. Coding data can be seen to serve two different purposes. First, and most importantly, there is a process of generating concepts *from* and *with* the data.

For example, in response to the question, “What was your experience of the PBT performance?” there were clearly two categories of **description**—an emotional and an intellectual response. These became higher order ideas that helped to organise this section of data so that all fragments of data that were defined as having some common property or element were clustered together. Second, it needed to be condensed into “analyzable units” (Coffey & Atkinson 1996:26). This means that the data needed to be organised in a way that allowed the researcher to manage and retrieve the most meaningful bits, and this process was particularly facilitated through NUD*IST.

It is also important to realise, however, that coding is not analysis in and of itself; rather, it is a *beginning point* that enables us to see what the data might be saying (Richards 1995). Coffey and Atkinson described coding, in practice, as “a range of approaches that aid the organization, retrieval, and interpretation of data” (1996:27), and Miles & Huberman (1994:56) suggested that coding allows the researcher to “differentiate and combine the data you have retrieved and the reflections you make about this information”. Coding, therefore, can be seen to serve a variety of purposes, including (a) noticing relevant phenomena, (b) collecting examples of them, and (c) analysing them in order to find commonalities, differences, patterns, and structures (Siedel & Kelle 1995:55-56). However, it is important to realise that this was more than just a process of simplification and reduction. Coding, for example, can also be conceptualised as “data complication”—in this sense it can be used to “expand, transform, and reconceptualize data, opening up more diverse analytical possibilities” (Coffey & Atkinson 1996:29). In short, coding can be the beginning of theorising, where the researcher is making theoretical decisions about “what will be a category, what text is to be coded at that category, how it should be defined, and where it goes in the overall picture” (Richards 1995:121).

Finally, codes are organisers that are not fixed; rather, they are tools to think with, and can evolve and change as the researcher’s understanding develops. In Coffey and Atkinson’s words: “Starting to create categories is a way of beginning to read and think about the data in a systematic and organized way” (1996:32).

The next stage in the analysis process consisted of moving from a **descriptive** level (Chapter 2), where the phenomenon was described or confirmed to an **interpretative** level, where the implicit was made explicit (Morse 1997) (Chapters 9, 10 and 11). This included a focus on PBT—the thing itself—and a consideration of the audience’s lived experience of PBT. This consideration—where links emerged, were thought about and established—was where the important analytic work lay as I read and re-read the data.

The audience’s reception, experience of, and response to a PBT performance could be seen to be both phenomenographic and grounded theory in nature as I described the categories and sub-categories of response, including the *variation* (in phenomenographic terms) and the *dimensions* (in grounded theory terms) of these categories and sub-categories that were conceptualised, named and described.

Finally, I moved to a **disclosive** level of theory, in Morses’ (1997) terms (Chapter 12). This third level of theory associated with qualitative research allowed me to reveal the structure of PBT and the links and relationships that exist between the concepts, categories of description and phases of the phenomenon. This was achieved through a consideration of the propositions that are contained within the literature on PBT, and then seeking to “map” these on to the conceptual framework contained within the NUD*IST tree—this process either providing confirmatory evidence in relation to these propositions, or throwing them into a new light⁴¹.

In this sense, this investigation could be seen as a case study of SPT where the intention was not necessarily to itemise the features of the case (Scott & Usher 2000), but rather to develop theoretical conclusions that were grounded in the experiences of those who attended.

The Research Challenges and Researching the Ephemeral

This process of inquiry raised a number of research challenges. First, there is no one “right” way to conduct a research project where the focus is on trying to theorise about, and draw conclusions from, what are essentially interpersonal encounters that focus on the subjectivity of understanding. In addition, it is my belief that certain research methods throw into relief particular features of the research landscape and, as a consequence, background

⁴¹ As an aside, Morse (1997) went on to describe the fourth and highest level of theory that can be derived from qualitative research, which is “explanatory”. This level of theory is usually what is tested in quantitative research. However, I did not propose to develop a theory of this power from an investigation that looked at participants’ experiences of one Playback Theatre company.

others. Therefore, it is important to be aware of, and have sensitivity to, the phenomena in question and be flexible in approach—employing those methods that best help illuminate the questions that are being asked—while simultaneously recognising that these choices will have an impact on the processes *and* outcomes of an investigation.

Second, while the focus of this project is on the lived world of an individual's experience, this inner world often seems private and unique. Consequently, how can the nature of this experience—which sometimes seems beyond words—ever be fully described and made understandable? Van Manen (1997) provided an insight into this issue when he described the essentially *social* world of language where meaning is created, thereby also raising the paradox of using a socially-based mode of communication to express what can seem unique and inexpressible. Therefore, the researcher needs to exhibit an empathic approach, where the researcher's own life-world is more remote, and the co-investigators' life-world is foregrounded.

Third, there exists a tension between what the phenomenologists describe as “essences”, bearing in mind however the post-modern and post-structuralist position that critiques this notion, instead foregrounding *context*, *intersubjectivity* and the role of *language*. In addition, while experience is personal—and both phenomenologists and American pragmatists such as Dewey and Rorty emphasise the role of personal experience in coming to know the world—it is also not possible to ignore the influence of such factors as gender and culture. Hence, a consideration of these broader constructs helps us move away from such traditional binary oppositions such as action and reflection, feeling and thinking, the heart and the head, and representation and explanation (Haynes 2001a).

Fourth, the processes of PBT, and arts education more generally, are underlaid by the process of the imagination—working **as-if**, in drama terms—which “bring[s] the new into being” (Levine 1997:20). In this sense, each act of imagination is also an act of integration or unification which has a “felt” and sensuous, or aesthetic, dimension. In addition, it is the productive imagination that brings the “scattered data of the senses together with the formalism of the intellect into a living experience” (Levine 1997). Hence, the power of the imagination to transform and translate is only accessible through experience and descriptions of experience, even though these are at one remove from the imagination itself. An attempt to get “closer” to what is essentially a creative process means moving away from looking from the outside in; in other words, to look from the “inside” out, using the “language” of art to interpret art. In this way, the arts themselves become the primary mode of inquiry.

This issue is made further complex by the *ephemeral* nature of PBT and performance more generally (McAuley 1999:236). First, performance exists in the moment, and is both a “doing” and a “representation of a doing”. As such, performance is both an “enactment” and an “act” (Maclean 1988), or as Schechner described it “behaviour twice displayed” (1993:1). This means that performance exists over a time that will not be repeated, and consequently, any subsequent performances will be marked as different (Phelan 1993). This level of difference raises a number of pressing issues for the conduct of research on such an ephemeral event. For example, how does the researcher “get at” the nature of the lived experience of PBT—which, in this case, is “thrice displayed”—and in addition, how can one be “present” at such an event in an intersubjective way that does not mask the nature of the experience itself? As Haynes (2001a) so poignantly asks about PBT, who is the artist and who is the spectator?

A potential for addressing some of these challenges is to use the artistic, or playback, process itself. This is a movement that is gathering impetus internationally, where drama and arts-based approaches are being used to expand a repertoire of ways of meaning-making and representing data (Diamond & Mullen 1999; Finley & Knowles 1995; Norris 2000). Bolton (1996), for example, in his discussion of drama, drama as research, and the research process more generally, highlighted the highly complex ways of meaning-making that occur in all three. Indeed, the very processes of PBT itself mirror many of the research processes inherent in qualitative methods, where the emphasis is on making sense out of what we know (Walker 1991). Walker described it this way: “The researcher dismantles and reassembles conventional or commonsense meanings, altering the balance between what seems strange and what is familiar, striving to find new ways of looking at the world” (p.107).

In PBT, for example, the conductor elicits keywords from the teller that contextualises or situates the teller’s story and the characters in it. Next, the actors reframe the teller’s story in an artistic way. This process is analogous to the process of data simplification and data complication, mentioned earlier. In addition, the playing back of a teller’s story is an alternate form of data representation that facilitates new ways of looking at the world. In this way, new meanings can be created through the act of finding an appropriate form to convey them—in other words, transformation and representation lead to new insights. Therefore, PBT can be seen as a “process” research tool, whereby data is collected, analysed, represented and disseminated. What is different about this playback process is that, in contrast to other more traditional methods, this occurs simultaneously, and with interaction from the “audience”—hence it is participatory, recursive and evocative. In Grainger’s (1999:131,

emphasis added) words: “An artistic medium becomes a kind of *laboratory* for working on, and working through, alternative ways of being in the world”.

In this investigation, however, the focus was not on using the playback process as a methodology—though this could easily be a future research project. Rather, the focus was on the *lived experience* of those who participated in the PBT event. It is also important to realise that such a future project would require of *all* participants a high degree of skill and understanding in Playback, as well as a propensity to take risks with such a performance-based form.

Finally, to conclude this chapter I would like to turn my attention briefly to issues of what constitutes **quality** in qualitative research generally, and how this pertains to this investigation particularly.

Quality in Qualitative Research and this Investigation

While it is commonly agreed that we are past having to provide long justifications for qualitative research as a mode of inquiry (Eisner 1991; Kvale 1995; Maxwell 1992), there are still questions about what constitutes quality in such interpretative research traditions (Lincoln 1995). Discussion about issues of quality in qualitative research serves two purposes: first, an awareness of such characteristics guides scholars in undertaking post-positivistic research; and second, discussion also informs those who seek to understand such research and use it. A consideration of what traits would characterise “good” qualitative research—recognising that these are still evolving and developing—will help reveal how criticisms that potentially could be levelled at this family of research, of which this investigation is a member, have been considered and addressed.

There has been a substantial degree of criticism of what has been described as “the scientific holy trinity”, that is *validity*, *reliability* and *generalisability* (Kvale 1995:20). These have long been the criteria by which “quality” or rigor was assessed in positivistic research. These criticisms have included outright rejection of these concepts (Guba & Lincoln 1989; Wolcott 1990), a modification of the terms where broader definitions have been sought that are in some way synonymous with high-calibre qualitative research itself (Maxwell 1992), to new sets of criteria altogether (Guba & Lincoln 1989). Each of these criticisms has been underlaid in part by new conceptions of knowledge where it is accepted that there are “multiple ways of knowing and multiple truths” (Kvale 1995:21).

Validity, in particular, has long been a key issue “in debates over the legitimacy of qualitative research” (Maxwell 1992:279). Kvale also highlighted that a broader conception of the notion of validity in particular, where the question “[Do] our observations indeed reflect the phenomena ... [is] of interest to us” is a helpful one. This is because there is still utility value in the notion of validity when it is considered more broadly. Kvale then goes on to detail various forms of validity—including construct validity, and validity as “craftsmanship, communication, and as action” (1995:26). What is important about these descriptions is that they reflect a more rhetorical and discursive approach than normally associated with validity as applied to psychometrics, hence reflecting the social and linguistic construction of “valid” knowledge. This idea of “knowledge as conversation” was reflected in the way that data collected about participants’ experience of PBT—that is, through a particular form of “conversation” where meaning was constructed between us, and where the interviewee was credited with being an expert on their own experience, and hence a *co-investigator*.

Second, when validity is considered in terms of “craftsmanship” there is a focus on “continually checking, questioning, and theoretically interpreting the findings” (Kvale 1995:27). This was addressed in this investigation through continually checking back with the co-investigators as the interviews progressed by (a) reflecting back not only the content of what was said, but also what was implied through inference and nuance, (b) reflecting back my interpretation of what was said in a tentative way so that this could be confirmed or denied, (c) tentatively sharing what my developing understanding was of the project in a provisional way, with an invitation to comment on this in light of their own experience, and (d) sharing the themes and concepts as they emerged from the data.

This notion of checking, or constant comparative method (Glaser & Strauss 1968), helped illuminate other constructs such as *credibility*, *plausibility* and *trustworthiness* (Guba & Lincoln 1989; Miles & Huberman 1994). These evaluative notions were then extended through: providing feedback to the SPT on two separate occasions, conducting a focus group with audience members from another company in a different city, and a subsequent focus group with the original group of co-investigators. Each of these occasions provided verification, or “member checking” (Guba 1981), by the relevant community of those who attend PBT—community being another kind of quality criterion (Lincoln 1995). This approach reflects Kvale’s proposition of validity as “questioning”, “theorizing” and communicative validity, that is, “testing the validity of knowledge claims in a dialogue” (1995:28-29, 31). In other words, this entails *confirmability* as described by (Northey 1997:172, citing Guba & Lincoln 1985), where “data, interpretations, and outcomes of

inquiries are rooted in contexts and persons apart from the evaluator and are not simply figments of the evaluator's imagination".

Positionality, that is where a text displays "authenticity" or "honesty" about its own position and the position of the author of that text, is another kind of quality criterion (Lincoln 1995). Therefore, it is important that, following the work of standpoint epistemologists (particularly scholars like Donna Haraway and bell hooks), I enunciated both "where I [was] coming from" and "what I [brought] with me" to this task, as elaborated in Chapter One.

There are a number of other *emerging* criteria foregrounded by Lincoln (1995). These include voice, critical subjectivity or reflexivity, sacredness and sharing the perquisites of power. These are attitudes that reflect the researcher's beliefs about relationships where there is not a disproportionate power relationship; that are built on mutual respect; that are characterised by reciprocity; and where the co-investigators are treated with a "deep appreciation of the human condition" (1995:284). These have all been important principles to me as I have conducted this investigation. What is important about these criteria is that, first, they are not absolute (Manning 1997), and second, not only do they reflect a change in priorities about "what research is, who it is for, and who should have access to it" (Lincoln 1995:278), but also they indicate that this form of research is serious, systematic, sustained, reflexive *and* credible.