PEER EDUCATION: 
BUILDING COMMUNITY THROUGH 
PLAYBACK THEATRE ACTION METHODS

By Monica Kintigh

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BUILDING COMMUNITY THROUGH
PLAYBACK THEATRE ACTION METHODS

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The present world is bombarded by technology. At the touch of fingertips, computers send mail, order groceries, report the latest news, entertain with videos, and create virtual reality. Technology increases accessibility to information, allowing efficient communication with persons across continents and oceans. Ironically, technology also isolates by allowing humans to passively react or ignore information.

By avoiding personal contact and experiential interaction, technology removes an important component of development and learning. Learning is not simply ingesting knowledge but experiencing knowledge through critical thought, emotional response, and constructive interaction.

Human beings need to find meaning in a world that is technologically advanced, yet interpersonally eroding. Adolescents and college students struggle to find meaning and significance in a world where their friends lives are lost to alcoholism, drugs, AIDS, violence, date rape, eating disorders, and more. Few find the answers on the internet or in their textbooks.

The struggle of this research is to find ways to create a community where development and education increases through interactive processes that engage multiple intelligences. Consider the metaphor where each person’s ability to learn is a camera. Rational thought is simply one lens through which knowledge passes. Other lens such as kinesthetic intelligence, musical intelligence, interpersonal intelligence, intrapersonal intelligence, spatial intelligence
(Gardner, 1991), and emotional intelligence (Goleman, 1996) allow knowledge to be engaged and captured. When students engage their mind, body, emotion and spirit in the learning process, they can be active participants in the construction of knowledge and the creation of themselves.

This kind of learning does not happen in a vacuum. Building community is an important component of the process. “It takes a village to raise a child” is an African proverb that can be heard in the media and is the core concept of a book by Hillary Rodham Clinton about the importance of society’s role in the education and development of children (Clinton, 1996). As in any widely used idiom, the phrase has historical meaning, functional meaning, communal meaning, and personal meaning.

Historically, this phrase relates to the concept of tribal groups building community through the use of ritual drama. Yearly events, significant stages of development and unique experiences all became a part of society as these traditions were shared, acted out, sung, or celebrated. These tribal rituals are preliterate performances of narrative information, the basic formula for building a community response to the personal growth and development of the individual from childhood into adulthood (Fox, 1992c).

Functionally, the phrase places responsibility for growth and development on society. No individual acts alone without impacting the development of others. Consequently, the actions of others impact the development of the individual. For the child to function positively as an adult, there must be an interactive environment which allows the narrative of the community to include the narrative of the child.
Communally, a sense of belonging is occurs when personal stories create an emotional response through shared experiences. The phrase “it takes a village to raise a child” suggests that the child and the community move toward understanding and unity through experiential interactions that have emotional impact.

Personally, the phrase suggests that an individual’s identification with the community is a natural phenomenon. Adler suggests that humans develop positively through social interest. Initially this interest in others happens in the family constellation: our first social reality. It is a reality from which persons perceive, interpret, conclude, and generalize meaning and significance to others and the world around them (Thomas & Marchant, 1983). The child learns about self, others, and the world from experiential interactions with the parents and siblings.

As the child moves out of the family constellation, these become patterns of behavior that are expanded or modified as the person chooses to respond with spontaneity. Spontaneity is the extent to which a person can act readily, but appropriately, doing something new, better, more creative than ever before (Moreno, 1985; Fox, 1987). Adlerians describe this as creative power, the development of creative potential to make productive decisions in order to solve life's problems adequately (Manaster & Corsini, 1982). Experiential interactive learning methods encourage the use of spontaneous creative power because they acknowledge the importance of mind, body, spirit, and emotion. Awareness of the value and significance of experience and body awareness are inherent in experiential learning and therapy.

The experiences of a therapist, a challenge course facilitator and a teacher, shows the interconnectedness of emotion, physical awareness, and perceptual interpretation as understanding becomes insight, emerging in constructive action. The counselor can help create
an experience where the client’s intellect, creativity and passion become active participants in their own healing, learning, and empowerment. The challenge course facilitator creates an outdoor experiential learning environment that uses kinesthetic, emotional, and rational intelligence simultaneously as a group works to get each participant over a 14 foot wall or an individual traverses a wire 30 feet in the air. These ways of knowing and understanding work simultaneously as learning occurs. A teacher uses a drama to engage students in learning new concepts through action. For example third grade science students can learn the difference between solids, liquids, and gases by becoming molecules of water. As molecules of ice, they stand stiff and squeeze together in a tight group. As they enact the ice becoming liquid, the students begin to slowly move and separate. Eventually, as the water gets hotter and begins to boil, the students move faster and faster until the whole room is filled with their movement. The students can’t see the molecules moving, and yet the teacher can use action methods to make the concept a concrete reality.

Statement of the Problem

The question is how to engage students in thinking and learning to take constructive actions regarding critical life issues such as drugs, alcohol, eating disorders, date rape, gang violence, and AIDS. Peer education programs at colleges and high schools attempt to train students using the model of natural helpers or mentors. They often use traditional methods of education, tapping into rational thought and helping skills that rely primarily on acquisition of knowledge through cognitive sharing of information.
Richard Schechner (1977) in his book, *Performance Theory*, identified the yearnings of youth as the same yearnings of primitive people that triggered artistic movements to concretize and start to satisfy those yearnings. Schechner identified four yearnings that can lead a person to new knowledge:

**Wholeness** is the desire to integrate mind/body/feelings. In groups wholeness is building unity in families, communities, and systems. Wholeness is the opposite of fragmented individuals, alienation at work, rivalries, and ecological warfare. Wholeness acknowledges the interconnectedness of experience and art when we find art where we are and not in a museum.

**Process and organic growth** is a desire to end the assembly-line approach to produce change. This is a yearning to be the artist, not a desire to be an art critic. The struggle of the process creates as much, if not more, satisfaction and new knowledge as reaching the final goal.

**Concreteness** is the desire to turn theories, abstraction, and generalizations into sensory awareness, involvement and experience. In education today we see concreteness in multisensory teaching. Concepts are made concrete as educators tap into sensory experiences that are visual, auditory, kinesthetic, oral, and olfactory.

**Religious transcendental experience** is the desire for a spiritual awakening that gives personal meaning to life. These yearnings are inherent in the pursuit of Zen, yoga, community rituals, mysticism, participation or experimental theatre, performance poetry, music festivals, etc.

These four categories are inseparable in actual experience. They overlap, feed from each other, exchange, and transform into one another. This interconnectedness leads to a kind of knowledge that Schechner (1977) refers to as actualizing. Actualizing is a special way of handling experiences that leaps across the gap of past and present, individual and group, inner
and outer. Somewhere in the link between the etymological roots of the word “drama” (from the Greek *dran*: to do, to act, to make) and the word “dream” (from the Old English *dram*: a dream or shout of joy) is the feeling of actualizing. It is an acknowledgment that an experience is beyond what has been previously understood and has now become deeply personal.

Knowledge, according to Weinstock-Wynters (1996), is about some person’s story, some person’s history, some person’s set of memories, and a particular set of expectations. The utilization of theatre, specifically the action methods of playback theatre that use personal story and enactment, reaches across multiple intelligences in an effort to bridge the gap between objective facts and a person’s subjective construction of knowledge.

This is a cognitive-field theoretical view of the process of education. Cognitive-field theory has its roots in the laws of perception developed by Werthmeir and the followers of gestalt psychology (Bigge, 1971). Each person applies these laws from a unique perspective in an attempt to unify cognition and environment into a personal life space. Learning occurs as insights are discovered. Insight is cognitive restructuring made complete through action. Our insightful actions become personal “moments of truth;” they are the stories that form our personal narrative.

Traditional forms of education have focused on methods that tap into modes of consciousness which are linear, sequential, logical, symbolic, verbal, reality-based, temporal, and abstract (Vitale, 1982). Playback theatre action methods use additional modes of consciousness which are holistic, concrete, symbolic, random, intuitive, nonverbal, fantasy-oriented, nontemporal, and analogic. Traditional teaching and learning styles tend to rely heavily on functions that reside in the left hemisphere of the brain. Playback theatre action
methods rely heavily on functions that reside in the right hemisphere of the brain while still
tapping some of the functions of the left hemisphere. In addition, traditional teaching and
learning methods often evaluate their efficacy in terms of some kind of measurement of
knowledge or test. A more holistic approach would use methods that allow for experience,
demonstration and application of knowledge through action methods.

To better understand the efficacy of playback theatre action methods and their impact on
college students involved in peer education, researchers should use a qualitative approach.
Maxwell (1996) suggested four purposes for which qualitative research designs are suited: (a)
understanding the meaning, for participants of the study, of the events, situations and actions
they are involved with and of the accounts that they give of their lives and experiences; (b)
understanding the particular context within which the participants act, and the influence that this
context has on their actions; (c) identifying unanticipated phenomenon and influences, and
generating new grounded theories about the latter; and (d) understanding the process by which
events and actions take place.

Review of Literature
To begin this type of research one must understand the origin of playback theatre and its action
methods, be able to describe playback theatre action methods, discover the theoretical
underpinnings of playback theatre action methods, and describe learning theory found in
playback theatre action methods.

Origin of playback theatre
Playback Theatre, founded by Jonathan Fox in 1975, reflects the origin of drama, "the ancient impulse to communicate and dramatize one's experience, thereby integrating it both in one's psyche and in the evolution of the community" (Salas, 1983, p. 15).

Playback Theatre uses action methods as the primary therapeutic agent. Action methods are counseling techniques used to create insight through experiences that lead to constructive actions by the client or group. The benefit of action methods have been discussed by several sources (Carlson-Sabelli, 1989; Sternberg & Garcia, 1989; D'Amato & Dean, 1988; Kellerman, 1987; Hare, 1986; Lubin & Lubin, 1973). Playback Theatre is an action method devoted to the improvisational dramatization of personal story or stories. Tellers, interviewed by a conductor, narrate a moment in life which is "played back" by performers using mime, music, and spontaneous spoken scenes (Fox, 1991).

Playback Theatre is a process that can be adapted to many settings. Playback Theatre exists in three forms: (a) artistic, (b) therapeutic, and (c) social/developmental (Fox, 1992a). Artistic Playback Theatre involves a company of actors who work on the skills and techniques of acting and performance. The performance is an evening's experience. The actors are open to improvise and enact whatever moments the audience members or tellers offer to share. Therapeutic Playback Theatre usually occurs in a clinical setting. A therapist uses Playback Theatre action methods with a particular client population. In therapeutic settings, clients may become the actors in each other's stories or they may be the audiences who experiences the sharing of the story enactment. In addition, the therapist may choose to blend playback theatre with other types of intervention. Social/developmental Playback Theatre is used in schools, colleges, companies, and community centers. Educational goals are the focus in
The training of playback theatre groups for social/developmental programs will be the focus of my research.

The origins of playback theatre are similar to other modern non-scripted theatre (NST) groups that have developed from the dramatic traditions of preliterate cultures (Fox, 1993).

"Illiterate bards sang tales which involved repetition, concrete narration, and performance that encompassed both the traditional and the improvisational. Furthermore, while the experience was most definitely designed to be fun, there was a higher purpose involved, centering on the importance of remembrance and the transmission of a community's most important truths" (Fox, 1992c, p. 10).

Three elements are missing from this early form that focus on theatre as a conscious process involving certain forms. First is the portrayal of story. Theatre will have narrative characteristics, such as characters, objects, settings, events, crises. Second theatre will have actors playing a role. This involves both an awareness of the role and of self simultaneously. Third, theatre involves performance. Performance is an intentionality that it takes place before witnesses. What separates theatrical art from everyday drama is that the actor and the witness share an understanding that experience is fictive (Fox, 1992c). Thus theatre, scripted or not, is the bridge between linguistic and non-linguistic communication.

Fox (1993) considers NST groups to have approximately six branches in contemporary theater. Playback Theatre, Fox's creation in 1975, seems to draw from several of these branches. First is the Experimental Theater of Artaud (1958), Brecht (1964), and Grotowski (1968) who sought a new aesthetic form often concerned with political reform and social change. Second is the Educational Theatre Movement developing after World War II in England. The work of
artists like Brian Way (1967) and Peter Slade (1968) led to Theatre in Education (TIE) in the United States in the 1970's. Viola Spolin's (1963) improvisational theatre game approach is used in many educational settings. Comic-Satiric theater, a third branch of NST, came alive in the work of groups such as Second City, and the NBC network's "Saturday Night Live." The fourth branch, Community Theatre, is normally seen as traditional scripted performances, has also reached into the nonscripted form with ethnic ritual performances in attempt to raise multicultural awareness. Fifth is the therapeutic branch, which began developing in the 1930's through the work of psychiatrist, J. L. Moreno (Fox, 1978). Moreno founded psychodrama, role-playing, and sociodrama. This type of theatre focuses on dramatization of real-life personal stories for the purpose of increasing spontaneity and expanding the matrix of identity through action methods. Finally, Clowning is a branch of NST that has been referred to as the "new vaudeville." Clowns offer a non-literary performance which values intimate, human relationships with audiences.

NST groups have a strong interest in eliminating the separation between actor and audience. Brook (1986) wanted a natural audience and an event in which both sides, actors and audience, relax to the point where judgment and defenses melt into shared experience. Boal's (1979) simultaneous dramaturgy asked audiences to give suggestions that shaped the endings. Grotowski (1968) believed in a poor theatre without make-up, scenery, light, or sound; but a theatre which exists primarily on the perceptual live communal link between actor and spectator. A singular characteristic of NST is the communal orientation. Company members work toward collective creation.
Description of playback theatre action methods

Playback Theatre action methods use several basic processes: (a) warm up, (b) story interview, (c) story enactment, and (d) acknowledgment of the teller (Fox, 1991; Fox, 1982).

The warm up begins the Playback Theatre process. Initially, there is a moment of greeting (introducing self) between members of the group in order to develop some level of trust and confidence in the group (Fox, 1983). The conductor, leading the experience, uses the warm up period to establish an emotionally safe environment. As each group member risks revealing a part of self, the other members of the group respond, and begin to experience spontaneity. The second part of the warm up might include sociometric games, improvisational games, songs, group-building exercises, or movement exercises (Fox & Salas, 1993 personal communication; Blatner & Blatner, 1988). The warm up is a catalyst to encourage personal sharing.

The story interview is the second step in the process of Playback Theatre. As a result of the warm up, a group member decides to become a teller and is chosen by the conductor to share a personal story. The conductor asks questions designed to elicit basic facts and descriptive feelings from which the actors will enact the story. Tellers choose the setting and the important characters in the story including the someone to play themselves, the tellers' actor. Before the story enactment begins, the conductor summarizes the story elements of plot, such as climax and resolution, directing the actors to set up the scene (Fox, 1992a).

Story enactment is the third part of the process. The actors do not attempt to re-enact the exact moment as it actually occurred but to catch the spirit and intensity of the personal story. Actors create the scene through the use of colored cloths and limited props such as chairs or
wooden boxes. Some Playback Theatre experiences include improvised music to help create mood. This experience of observing personal story can have the effect of bringing the essential elements of the story into focus (Fox, 1992a).

The acknowledgment is the an important part of the process. At the end of the story, the conductor acknowledges the teller and asks if this enactment captured the essence of the story. As in any form of communication, the feedback loop is crucial. For example, the message is sent, in this case by the teller. The actors receive the message and show they understood the message and its significance by playing back the essence of the message in improvisation. To complete the feedback loop, the teller must acknowledge that the message was received in the way it was intended. The teller has the option to share parts of the story with more crucial information that had been deleted in the first interview (Fox, 1982). The story may end at this point or the teller could be given the option of identifying and watching an alternative ending: transforming the scene to predict the future. Fox (1993, personal communication) indicated that he no longer prefers to use alternative positive endings as a part of the Playback Theatre experience for several reasons: (a) he trusts in the healing effect of telling and witnessing to others, (b) he accepts that often life involves learning to accept what one cannot change, and (c) he believes the next teller's story may offer a symbolic alternative for the group experience.

Fox (1992a, 1992b, 1991, 1982) described the interconnectedness of personal stories as one teller's memory awakens the longings of another. When the warm up is effective and there is strong tele in the group, there will be strong connections in the stories. Tele, from the Greek tele meaning "end," "purpose" or "distance," is the simplest unit of feeling transmitted from one person to another as persons are motivated to choose those with whom they will interact.
(Goldman & Morrison, 1984). Moreno and Moreno (1975) describe this phenomenon as an encounter. The fundamental process of tele is reciprocity: of attraction, of rejection, of excitation, of inhibition, of indifference, or of distortion. This striving in relationship to others is the teleological view held by Adlerians; an individual uses mind and body together in the pursuit of goals that result in behaviors which move in a useful or useless direction (Mozak, 1989). Playback Theatre seeks to build on the tele of attraction where one teller's story attracts the next teller to share, and one story brings healing to another story's grief.

There are three primary forms used in the basic structure of playback theatre. Once these forms gain familiarity there are numerous deviations that can develop. The three forms are fluid sculptures, pairs, and the story scene.

Fluid Sculpture is a moving structure created by four to six actors whose intent is capturing the essence of a particular feeling from a specific moment or experience. Rather than strike a pose, as in a statue or still body sculpture, the fluid sculpture offers sound and movement from a collection of actors giving the experience breath and depth of meaning.

For example, the teller explains that she recently locked her keys in her car while it was still running and a group of her students were watching. When asked to describe the feeling, she replies that she feels frustrated and embarrassed. The conductor responds by saying “Frustrated embarrassment. Let’s watch.” Actors step up one at a time to create a sound and movement organism that captures the essence of the experience. The first bends down making a pounding motion saying “Oh, no!” repeatedly. Actors two and three try to hide number one, looking over their shoulder as if someone might see. Three other actors step up to connect to the sculpture building on the presence of those preceding. The sound and movements continue for less than a
minute and then spontaneously stop. This is the moment of acknowledgment as the actors pause and gently look at the teller. The conductor asks the question, “Did this capture the essence of the moment?”

This form captures feelings, moments, concepts, and images. It can be done with or without words. Abstract movements and sounds connected in a fluid sculpture can be used to explore feelings or thinking about a subject, concept, or social situation. Fluid sculpture is one way to transform a feeling or idea into action.

**Pairs** is an action method that allows the teller to describe conflicting feelings in a given situation. As persons develop, maturity is often a measure of a person’s ability to live with contradictions and conflicting feelings. Many decisions that persons make come from trying to resolve conflicting feelings surrounding one choice or another. Pairs is an action method that focuses on the contradictions.

Consider an adolescent girl whose best friend wants her to go with her to a party where she has heard drugs will be present. Part of her wants to attend the party and support a friend who has been loyal to her for several years, and the other part doesn’t want to go, get high, or get involved with people who are using drugs. The actors form pairs on stage with one person in front and one standing behind. Each pair gives the feeling that they are one entity. One at a time each pair enacts the conflicting feelings. Although they act as one entity each person in the pair takes one side of the conflict. For example one pair might begin with the person in front kneeling and holding her hand out saying repeatedly “I’ll do anything for my friend” and almost simultaneously the person behind attempts to pull her up saying in her ear, “This isn’t me, this doesn’t feel right . . . “ They freeze after several seconds and acknowledge the teller with a nod.
Then the other pairs take their turn, perhaps enacting a slightly different but similar aspect of the conflict that the teller described. Then comes the moment of acknowledgment as the actors pause and gently look at the teller. The conductor asks the question, “Did this capture the essence of the moment?” And the teller is asked to respond to the enactment. The form of pairs gives permission for two conflicting emotions to reside within the self.

Both fluid sculptures and pairs are forms that encourage and develop communication, respectful contact, and deeply engaged listening. They provide an opportunity to actively listen to another person and to give back the essence of their telling using body, mind, and emotion simultaneously. These forms encourage leadership and risk-taking as actors step forward to share in the teller’s personal story offering it back to them in an improvised moment.

The story scene is the third form of playback theatre. Unlike pairs or fluid sculptures, the actors begin to work with more than the emotions of the personal moment; they use character development, space, movement, plot sequence, rhythm, music, and ritual. The story scene is a ritualized experience. The physical layout never varies. This is called the frame. The teller sits close to the actors, next to the conductor who acts as a liaison between the teller, the actors, and the audience. The actors are chosen and stand center stage in front of boxes, milk crates, or chairs that can serve as parts of the story scene. To the left of the actors is the cloth tree filled with multiple colors and textures of cloth that can be chosen to enhance character, physical setting, props, or abstract feelings that are created in the story scene. Musical instruments are displayed to the right, where a musician steps up to create the mood of the story.

The story scene begins when someone volunteers and is chosen to tell his story. In this example a college student tells of a recent funeral where he lost a friend who overdosed on
heroin. Each person in the story element is chosen as the conductor interviews the teller. The conductor synthesizes the story and its essence as the actors listen for the significant moments in the teller’s experience. In this case the enactment includes three specific moments of the story including the moment of grief and anger when the teller hears of the death, the ceremony at the funeral, the concern afterwards about the family and friends who are left behind. The story is recreated for the teller and the point of resolution offers a feeling of hope as the actors respond to the loss and the need of the teller to create meaning from the loss. The musician frames the background which captures the mood of the expedience. The actors, audience, and conductor now hold a piece of the story that connects the teller’s experience to their own. Playback theatre is the spontaneous improvisational story-telling that brings someone’s real life experience into the life of a community. The connection is complete when the actors look to the teller and the conductor asks if this captured the essence of the experience. In addition, the story scene may be followed by a period of post-action sharing where actors or audience members say a few words to express how they each connected with the teller’s story. The interconnectedness of personal stories unifies the community.

Theoretical underpinnings of playback theatre action methods

Fox (1978) described playback theatre action methods as a group process that enables people to feel the burden of their personal narrative and find transcendence in a communal experience. The power of narrative, tales, myths, drama, and art provide the natural modes for depicting human predicaments. Human culture is a stock of "forms" for giving structure and
meaning to human conflicts. We are a species that created itself by our symbol-making, our institution-creating, and our culture-creating (Bruner, 1983).

The stories persons choose to tell appear to act as a metaphor for their patterns in daily life. According to The American College Dictionary, "metaphor" is a figure of speech in which a term or phrase is applied to something to which it is not literally applicable in order to suggest a resemblance. The use of metaphor is an analogic process that been used in therapy with both children and adults. Irwin (1987) discussed the child's capacity to externalize and symbolize with the use of drama in therapy. After listening to folk legends, children choose to dramatize or model in clay the character that metaphorically expresses their feelings and provide opportunities to work out their problems (Ramon & Baharav, 1978). Peterson and Fontana (1991) considered the key ingredients for metaphoric storytelling and its potential power as a resource for bringing about substantive change in therapeutic interventions with children and youth. The mutual storytelling technique, as developed by Gardener (1971), utilized the child's own story, the child's familiar symbols, and the child's vocabulary as metaphorical communication, transmitted at a primary level and contributing to clinical change. Penn and Sheinberg (1991) presented the idea that the metaphor of a story is a valuable addition to family therapy. Since the family sees themselves in a story stance, they are more likely to see themselves in the process of changing to ideas or narratives that may work better.

Concretization occurs when a metaphor is acted out (Williams, 1989). A part of the self is represented outside the speaking self in an object or another person whereby dramatic dialogue can evolve. By taking the real-world situation and concretizing it in the form of a metaphor, persons find new ways of acting and being. Moreno discussed this concept as the therapeutic
theatre, “a milieu which can be as broad as the wings of imagination and yet inclusive of every particle of our real world” (Fox, 1987). Ansbacher and Ansbacher (1956) discussed concretization by the example of human beings' desire to be like God in the actions of striving for perfection, greatness and mastery of the environment.

Adlerians describe therapy as a process of creative movement or action (Mozak, 1989). Dramatic actions are those actions which evoke spontaneity and insight. Once dramatic action has taken place, reality shifts. Humanity has acknowledged this quality from the beginning. Tribal people from all over the world use dramatic dance to promote the mental health of the community, as did the ancient Athenians (Landy, 1952). According to Moreno (1985), the creative act has four characters:

The first character (of creativity) is its spontaneity. The second character is a feeling of surprise of the unexpected. The third character is its unreality which is bent upon changing the reality within which it rises, something prior to and beyond the given reality is operating in a creative act. The fourth character is the process of... acting upon rather than simply acting. It is the difference between a creature and creator (pp. 35-36).

Action methods offer persons the opportunity to engage in the use of their own creative power as it connects with others in a community experience.

Action methods send a verbal narrative into a dramatic contexts of time and space (Williams, 1989). Stories communicated through dramatic action transcend the present moment through subjective universal perceptions. Moreno and Moreno (1975) described this dramatic context in their discussion of the four dramatic universals of reality, time, space, and cosmos.
The dramatic universal of reality is divided into three types of reality: (a) infra-reality, reality that has been reduced to thoughts about or feelings about reality; (b) actual reality, the way in which one lives and relates to others; and (c) surplus reality, the intangible, invisible dimensions of intra-psychic and extra-psychic life. Reality is phenomenological to the extent that it is personal and subjective. This interpretation of reality seems to be compatible with an important tenet of Romanticism called "Weltanshauung." Ellenberger (1970) described "Weltanshauung" as the uniqueness of the individual brought on by a specific way of perceiving the world that is particular to a nation, a historical period, or an individual.

Moreno and Moreno (1975) further discussed the dramatic universals of time and space from an existential view of the "here and now." Action methods bring all three dimensions of time together. Past, present and future can be experienced in the existential dramatic moment (Fox, 1987; Moreno, 1985). Similarly, dramatic space is created when persons begin to act "as if" the environment of the story scene had been reconstructed around them. Adlerians frequently referred to Vaihinger's philosophy of the "as if" (Mozak, 1989; Ellenberger, 1970). This concept of self and of the world was based on subjective or fictional truths. Stanislavski (1936), theorist of acting, described the "magic if" as a challenge to action. The actor considers, "What would I do if I were this character in this situation, at this time and in this place?" Actors behave "as if" these fictions were reality.

According to Moreno and Moreno (1975), the dramatic universal of cosmos or cosmodynamics is the existential human being's attempt to find meaning in the universe. Titus (1964) describes Existentialism as a universal element in all human thinking which describes their existence and conflicts, the origin of these conflicts, and the anticipation of overcoming
them. Moreno and Moreno (1975) believed that an action “method which does not concern itself with these enormous cosmic implications, with man's very destiny, is incomplete and inadequate” (p. 20). Action methods are the concretization of a supreme being living within the person who controls the direction of the story and the role the person plays.

Learning theory in playback theatre action methods

Learning is an educational process rather than an instructional one. Instruct comes from a Latin root that “to give information, direction, or guidance.” However, educate comes from a Latin root meaning “to draw out or develop.” The burden of responsibility is different. An instructor controls the amount of information conveyed and its application. An educator expects the learning to be a process of discovery as information connects and interacts with personal experience to form new meanings. Elkind (1981) called these interactive processes “mediating structures.” Playback theatre action methods use narrative drama as mediating structures.

Bruner (1983) described learning as modes of representation. These modes of representation are the cognitive processes that allow a person to gain new insights. Bruner characterized modes of representation into three levels: (a) enactive, storing knowledge in the form of habits, (b) iconic, storing knowledge in images, and (c) symbolic, storing knowledge by means of a symbol system. Bruner’s theory suggests that learning progresses through each mode of representation before it is intellectually and volitionally controlled. Only when knowledge has been used and practiced spontaneously, can it be possessed. Playback theatre action methods encourage the possession of knowledge through the creation of narrative, drama, and music.
Purpose of the Study

The primary purpose of this study was to use some of the action methods of playback theatre to facilitate the acquisition of knowledge through experience of community. Playback theatre action methods and their development are described, but there is only one study available where participants are asked to examine the process of learning and community building through the use of playback theatre action methods. Weinstock-Wynters (1996) used playback theatre action methods as a tool for teaching her course, *Psychology of the Oppressed*. She discovered that the use of playback theatre action methods provided an opportunity for passion and emotion to be a catalyst for intellectual thought.

This research study will investigate the construction of knowledge through the development of a peer education theatre company of college students at Texas Christian University. Like Weinstock-Wynters (1996), this study will examine the students’ ability to assimilate new knowledge through multiple intelligences. In addition, the peer education program seeks to impact the life choices that students make regarding issues like drugs, alcohol, depression, sexual assault, grief, and eating disorders. The relationship between personal stories and perceptions regarding these issues will be addressed. This study will investigate the impact of action methods on the group’s dynamics; and the relationship between action methods, individual perceptions, and the construction of knowledge for both the group and individuals.

Research Questions and Propositions
The research questions for this dissertation developed from the statement of the problem and purpose of this study:

1. What kind of changes in group dynamics, if any, occur when playback theatre action methods are used?

2. What is the relationship between action methods, individual perceptions, and the construction of knowledge for both the group and individual participants?

Propositions involve generalized relationships which are inductively derived from the study of phenomenon it represents. In quantitative research the term hypothesis is used to discuss measured relationships, while in qualitative research the term proposition is used to discuss conceptual relationships (Pandit, 1996). As a result of this study The researcher hopes to accept the following propositions:

1. When playback theatre action methods are used, the group interactions will become more personal, relationship-oriented in the content dimension and more speculative, confrontive in process dimension. (These dimensions will be thoroughly defined later in chapter two under, Hill Interaction Matrix.)

2. When playback theatre action methods are used, individuals will perceive the group as an interconnected community.

3. The acquisition of knowledge can be the result of individual perceptual understanding that may include emotional, mental, and physical response to new experiences.
CHAPTER II

PROCEDURES

The procedures for this study followed a qualitative research design. Having reviewed the literature which discusses playback theatre and its development through NST, there was only one study available that attempted to study the process of participants’ experiences and the possible effects these experiences had on group dynamics, individual interactions, personal perceptions, and the construction of knowledge. Weinstock-Wynters (1996) in her dissertation, Toward a Pedagogy of Inclusivity: Building Community in the College Classroom Through the Action Methods of Psychodrama and Playback Theatre, studied the effects of using action methods to teach a college course on the psychology of oppression. Specifically, she used student journals, personal interviews, and focus group to evaluate the effectiveness of action methods as a teaching tool and method of building community in the class. Weinsock-Wynters did not use any instruments to evaluate the experiences of the participants which might add some objectivity and less researcher bias to her study.

For these reasons, the researcher proposed to study a group as it is being trained to use playback theatre action methods. Having participated in intensive playback theater training, the context of the study was a peer education theatre group at Texas Christian University (TCU), where the researcher is employed as a licensed professional counselor and advisor to the peer educator program. The group met for approximately sixteen hours of training over eight sessions
Each training session was approximately 2 hours and focused on concepts covered in chapter one of this dissertation, the TCU Campus Mentor Manual (source), and the BACCHUS/GAMMA certified peer education manual (source). Group members were asked to review the pertinent material before each session. For example, group members previewed the section on eating disorders before the training session where self image was the focus. In addition to the training sessions, the group prepared a workshop for a university group which incorporated playback theatre action methods.

The procedures for this study have been summarized in a flow chart (Appendix A). The following sections of this chapter will detail definitions of terms, subjects, data collection, data organization and analysis, and validity.

Definition of Terms

Actor: Actors are persons chosen by the teller through the process of tele, a process of mutual attraction. Actors actively listen to the description of their roles and translate their understanding into action with the help of the conductor (Fox, 1992, personal communication).

Conductor: The conductor has several responsibilities in the Playback Theatre sessions. The conductor leads the warm-up, conducts the interviews with tellers, focuses and directs the action of the story enactment, facilitates sharing between stories, and facilitates post-action sharing (Fox, 1992, personal communication).
Fluid sculptures: This action method is a human sound and movement presentation that lasts less than a minute. Fluid sculptures capture the essence of feeling that a memory evokes.

Pairs: This action method allows the actors to capture those moments when the teller shares conflicting or contradicting emotions. Two persons present the inner dialogue of the self, but each actor takes an opposing feeling to act out, presenting them as though they are one being.

Peer educator: A peer educator is a person who is trained in active listening skills and who prepares presentations for others of similar age or educational level about issues that effect both individual and community wellness such as alcoholism, drug abuse, eating disorders, dating violence, and sexual health.

Playback theatre action methods: Playback theatre action methods include fluid sculptures, pairs, sociometric games, and other variations of the basic playback theatre process.

Post-action sharing: Post-action sharing is a time that allows actors and other group members to share with the teller the ways in which the story connects with their own lives. Post-action sharing may be of a verbal or nonverbal nature; a silence filled with emotion may convey as much connection as a long explanation of the inner workings of a person's experiencing (Moreno & Moreno, 1975).

Sociometry & sociometric games: "The essence of sociometry lies in the idea that
groups have an internal life of their own and that this life can best be
understood by examining the choices members make at any given moment
with regard to each other” (Fox, 1987, p. viii) Sociometry and sociometric
games are processes for illuminating theses choices and the patterns of
interactions that result. For example, participants might be asked to choose,
by standing near or touching the shoulder of, the person who they know very
well. The act of choosing one and rejecting others forms a matrix of
sociometry that warms up the group. As a warm-up activity, sociometric
games are those which force choices and illuminate the group dynamics
(Appendix C).

Story acknowledgment: The acknowledgment is the opportunity to complete the
communication feedback loop. When the story enactment is complete, there is
a moment of acknowledgment from the teller that the actors actively listen
and captured the essence of the story.

Story enactment: The story enactment is not meant to be a realistic, factual portrayal
of an event, but is meant to capture the essence of the story in an
expressionistic way using mime, improvisation, colorful cloths, simple props,
and music.

Story interview: The story interview is an important element in the process of
Playback theatre. The conductor asks questions designed to elicit basic facts
and descriptive feelings from which the actors will enact the story. Tellers
are asked to choose the setting and the important characters in the story including themselves. The conductor focuses the interview on key elements such as setting, feelings of each character, conflict, and resolution (Fox, 1992a).

Teller: Tellers are those persons who chose to share a personal story. Tellers are interviewed by the conductor, choose actors who are important to the story, watch the story enactment, and participate in the post-action sharing session (Fox, 1992, personal communication).

Warm up: The warm-up refers to those activities that prepare group members to share their stories. The warm-up is a part of the Playback Theatre process that relies strongly on the Morenean concept of tele, attraction between group members (Moreno, 1985). This process is facilitated through experiential activities, interpersonal group interaction, sociometric games, songs, or ice breakers.

Subjects

Subjects for this study were drawn from students who have volunteered to be a part of the peer education program at Texas Christian University (TCU). The university is primarily an undergraduate institution. Interested students were solicited from the student newspaper, flyers, email and informal presentations to university classes or organizations. The group was composed of 21 students.
Students received an informed consent form explaining their involvement in the study, how the results will be used, and the time commitment involved prior to participating in the study. Each participant was expected to read and sign the informed consent form (Appendix D).

Data Collection

Maxwell (1996) emphasized the importance of a structured approach to qualitative research. A structured approach allows for comparability of data across sources and can be useful in answering variance questions, questions that deal with the differences between things and their explanations. In contrast, unstructured approaches allow the researcher to focus on a particular phenomenon studied; they trade generalizability and comparability for internal validity and contextual understanding. The optimal design allows for comparability, yet includes enough flexibility to pursue emerging insights. This study used several methods of data collection including videotaped process group, session feedback forms, individual interviews, and group environment scale.

Videotaped process groups

A videotaped process group was held before the training and after the training was completed. Group members participated in videotaped process groups before the training to get to know each other since the group would be sharing an experience together and after the training to debrief what experiences were shared and what the experiences were like. The purpose of the process groups was to provide the researcher with pre-training and post-training videos and analyze the interactions of the participants using the Hill Interaction Matrix (HIM).
A ten minute segment from the end of each videotape was transcribed and each participants’ responses were categorized by three judges.

**Group Environment Scale (GES)**

The GES is one of ten Social Climate Scales developed by Rudolf Moos, (1994). The GES consists of 10 subscales that measure the actual, preferred, and expected social environments of task-oriented, social, psychotherapy, and self-help groups. The 10 subscales assess three underlying sets of dimensions: relationship dimensions, personal growth or goal oriented dimensions, and system maintenance or change dimensions. Each subscale is described below.

**Cohesion.** In the relationship dimension, the member’s involvement in and commitment to the group and the concern and friendship that they show for one another is cohesion.

**Leader support.** The second subscale in the relationship dimension is leader support; it is the amount of help, concern, and friendship the leader shows for the members.

**Expressiveness.** In the relationship dimension, expressiveness is defined as the amount of freedom of action and expression of feelings that each group encourages.

**Independence.** The amount of independent action and expression encouraged by the group is measured by the independence subscale from the personal growth dimension.

**Task orientation.** In the personal growth dimension, the task orientation subscale measures the amount of emphasis on completing concrete, practical tasks and on decision making and training.
Self-discovery. Self-discovery measures how much the group encourages members’ discussion of personal problems and is a part of the personal growth dimension.

Anger and Aggression. The final subscale of the personal growth dimension measures the extent to which there is open expression of anger and disagreement in the group.

Order and Organization. In the system maintenance or change dimension, order and organization measures the formality and structure of the group and the explicitness of rules and sanctions.

Leader control. The extent to which the leader directs the group, makes decisions, and enforces rules is measured in the leader control subscale. This is a part of the system maintenance or change dimension.

Innovation. The final subscale in the system maintenance or change dimension, measures how much the group promotes diversity and change in its own functions and activities.

The GES has three forms: the Real Form (Form R) measures members’ and leaders’ perceptions of their group, the Ideal Form (Form I) measures members’ and leaders’ conceptions of the ideal group setting, and the Expectations Form (Form E) measures prospective members’ or leaders’ expectations about group settings. The three GES forms are parallel; each of the 90 items in Form I and Form E corresponds to an item in Form R. The test-retest reliabilities for each subscale, all in an acceptable range, varied from a low of .65 and a high of .87. The overall stability of the GES profile was examined over a two year interval. The mean profile stability coefficient was .92 after 4 months, .91 after 8 months, .84 after 12 months, and .78 after 24 months. Cronbah’s Alpha was used to determine internal consistency for each of the 10 subscales, and all were in an acceptable range, varying from .62 to .86. Content and construct
validity are described extensively in the GES Manual where research with self-help, mutual
support, task-oriented, social, and psychotherapy groups are cited (Moos, 1994).

For the purposes of this study, the GES Form E and GES Form R (Appendix E) were
used as a pretest-posttest measure to allow for more objectivity and comparability than might be
present in some qualitative designs. Form E was given to prospective group members and Form
R was given at the end of training.

Session feedback sheets. The researcher developed a session feedback sheet to gather
data regarding each participant’s experience and the researcher’s experience for each session
(Appendix F). The primary purpose of this feedback was to gather immediate information about
the participant’s response to the session and to monitor the researcher’s experience. The
feedback forms were filled out during the last five minutes of each session. The information
recorded included what learning took place; what questions remained unanswered; what
emotions, thoughts, or physical actions emerged; and a short phrase describing the community.

Individual interview

After the training was complete, the researcher conducted a verbal face to face individual
interview (Appendix G) with 14 participants for approximately thirty minutes. The students
discussed personal ways of learning as it relates to the content and processes used in this
training. The intention of this interview was to gather information about the participant’s
experience, information about what methods appeared to be more effective, and information
about those methods that might be changed.

Audience feedback sheet
At the end of any group presentations, the researcher elicited feedback from the audience participants regarding their responses to the experience (Appendix G). It was similar to the session feedback sheet in terms of the feedback requested, but also asked for the audience participant to evaluate the effectiveness of the presentation compared to others that they may have experienced. An informed consent form (Appendix G) accompanied the feedback sheet and no audience participant was required to participate. Feedback sheets were separated from the informed consent before they were analyzed in order to insure anonymity.

Data Analysis

The first step in analysis of data involved organization of the material as it was being collected. Transcripts of videotaped process groups and the HIM codes of the interactions were compared and contrasted. Individual session feedback, individual interviews, and audience feedback sheets were coded using categorizing strategies to discover emergent themes that occurred between individuals and to determine unifying group dynamics that occurred. The GES Form E and the GES Form R were analyzed using Wilcoxon matched-pairs signed-rank test (Wilcoxon T).

Hill Interaction Matrix

Developed by William Fawcett Hill (1956), the Hill Interaction Matrix, (HIM) is a useful tool in conceptualizing group dynamics and process by examining the verbal interaction of its members (Berg & Landreth, 1990). The HIM, conceptualizes interactions in the group on two dimensions. Hill’s Matrix (Figure 2) is illustrated with the content dimensions across the top horizontal axis and the process dimensions down the vertical axis. The content dimension
describes what is being discussed, and the process dimension describes how it is being discussed. Each cell of the matrix represents a category of response identified by both content and process. The categories are ordered in terms of assumed therapeutic benefit. The rankings are based on the following assumptions: member centeredness, interpersonal risk taking, and interpersonal feedback. Although the HIM was developed in a clinical therapeutic setting, sixteen of the twenty cells of the matrix are appropriate and generalizable to any group setting. The initial process category, responsive, is only appropriate with persons who are severely withdrawn or highly defensive such as those persons who might be found in a residential or day treatment hospital. A thorough discussion of the theoretical constructs underlying the HIM can be found in the HIM manual (Hill, 1956). A cell by cell description of the HIM is included in this paper (Appendix B).

The content dimension of the HIM falls into four types (Berg & Landreth, 1990). Topic responses include any subject other than the group itself, a member of the group, or a relationship within the group. General interest material and socializing would be coded in one of the topic cells. Group responses are discussions about the group, its rules, formation, procedure, or membership. Personal responses focus on individual group members, their personality traits, problems, etc. The group member may be talking about self or about some other group member. Relationship responses are those that give evidence of a relationship. These responses may include discussions about relationships but it is not necessary for an responses to be coded in this way.

The process dimension of the HIM categorizes responses by the manner in which the group member discusses something pr how an individual member initiates and responds to group
content (Berg & Landreth, 1990). *Conventional* responses are those responses that included facts and information shared in a socially appropriate manner. The level of sharing is more descriptive than problem solving. *Assertive* responses tend to shut off discussion rather than enhance it. The level of sharing may be hostile or argumentative, but is often stated in a manner that does not appear open to another point of view. *Speculative* responses are characterized by cooperative, two-way open communication. There is an implicit invitation to interact and examine issues. *Confrontive* responses are those that add to the discussion through statements that clarify, resolve, draw conclusions, or evaluate. In addition confrontive responses often give support to the speaker’s opinion.

The lower right hand section of the HIM is referred to as the “power quadrant” (Berg & Landreth, 1990). The “power quadrant” includes interaction patterns that are speculative-personal, speculative-relationship, confrontive-personal, and confrontive-relationship. The assumption underlying this descriptive term is that the more time a group spends communicating through these four categories of interaction, the greater the quality of experience for the individuals and the group.

Three judges were trained by the researcher to use the HIM and then practiced coding sample interactions. The judges watched the videotape segment from tape one and then recorded their responses on the transcription of videotape one. The same procedure was followed for videotape two. Judges scores were tested for reliability using Spearman’s rho. Each Judges’ responses were recorded on a 2 x2 table with row 1 being the frequency of responses for cells 1-12 and row 2 being the frequency of responses in cells 13-16. Column 1 was the frequency scores for videotape 1 and column 2 was the frequency of responses for videotape 2. The data
was interpreted using Chi-Square ($\chi^2$) with 1 degree of freedom (df). Hinkle, Weirsm, and Jurs (1988) identify $\chi^2$ test for dependent samples as a test which may be used in pretest-posttest designs in which the same sample of subjects is categorized before and after and intervening treatment. A histogram of the responses for each judges, one before training and one after the group training, were constructed comparing each cell with the number of interactions that is coded into that cell. Cells containing no responses were deleted from the histograms.

**Grounded Theory Approach**

The researcher coded the data from session feedback sheets, individual interviews, and audience feedback sheets using a grounded theory approach. The three basic elements of grounded theory are concepts, categories, and propositions (Pandit, 1996). Concepts are the basic units of analysis since it is from conceptualization of data, not the actual data, that theory is developed. It is by comparing incidents and naming like phenomena with the same term that the researcher can accumulate the basic units for theory. Categories are higher in level and more abstract than the theories they represent. Grouping concepts forms categories or patterns of experience. (example- pacing, self-medicating, resting, and watching one’s diet: all may represent the same process- keeping and illness under control or self-strategies for controlling illness). These categories or themes from participant’s experiences are pieced together to form a comprehensive picture of the collective experience (Aronson, 1994). Propositions are formed from the generalized relationships which are inductively derived from the study of phenomenon it represents.

As these propositions emerged, the researcher built a valid argument for their formulation. Chenauil (1995) described data analysis as a process of winnowing, separating that
which is significant or exemplary from that which is insignificant or redundant. The presentation of the data in chapter three reflects this process of analysis. Reconstruction of the context was an important part of presenting the data. By juxtaposing excerpts with talk about the data, the researcher formulated the story line to help the reader comprehend the process.

**Wilcoxon T**

Data from the GES Form E and the GES Form R was analyzed using the Wilcoxon matched pairs signed rank test (Wilcoxon $T$). This test is commonly used in designs that involve matched pairs of subjects or pretests and posttests (Hinkle, Weirsma, and Jurs, 1988). The Wilcoxon $T$ was determined as follows:

1. The researcher determined the difference between pretest and posttest scores for each individual. These scores are difference scores.

2. The researcher ranked the absolute values of the difference scores, and then placed the appropriate sign with the rank; if the pretest score was larger than the posttest score, the sign was positive. If tied ranks occurred a correction factor for tied ranks was used (Seigel, 1956).

3. The researcher summed the ranks with the less frequent sign yielding $T$.

4. The calculated value of the Wilcoxon $T$ was interpreted by using the critical values for two-tailed tests found in Hinkle, Weirsma, and Jurs (1988). The proposition that there is no difference between the pretest and posttest scores was rejected if the Wilcoxon $T$ was not less than the critical value for $T$ at the .05 level or better.

**Validation Methods**
The phenomenon of being muddled is a natural, and sometimes necessary, part of the overall process of qualitative research. Recognizing when this is happening and working to tidy it up or keep it plumb is an important part of the process (Chenail, 1997). Triangulation is one method that helps the researcher achieve this.

The term triangulation comes from the practice by which sailors and surveyors determine location by studying the intersection of three points. With the proper equipment and with careful measurements, people are able to circumnavigate the world and to construct magnificent buildings accurately within a few degrees or inches. Triangulation, in research terms, usually means that researchers use different sets of data, different types of analyses, different researchers, and/or different theoretical perspectives to study one particular phenomenon. With sailing and surveying, the object of triangulation is for persons to find their location in relation to two other points. In research, the idea is similar, but it is easy to forget that the researcher is part of the study.

The researcher collected information using a variety of methods that are both qualitative and quantitative. To form the basis for any discussion, both positive and negative evidence must be examined and alternate explanations must be explored.

As in any qualitative study, there is a chance of bias from the researcher, the participants, or the self-report instruments that could impact the findings. The use of objective judges to code the HIM, anonymous session feedback sheets, and anonymous audience feedback sheets should allow for some validity.
CHAPTER THREE

SUMMARY AND DISCUSSION

This final chapter has been organized around six sections. The Story is the researcher’s notes regarding what occurred before, during, and after the training. An outline of the training sessions and detailed descriptions of each activity can be found in Appendix C. Proposition One: The Dialogue discusses the differences between group interactions before and after training. Proposition Two: The Character reveals the changes in group dynamics before, during, and after the training. Proposition Three: The Theme connects the excerpts from the session summaries and individual interviews through a variety of themes which emerged regarding the acquisition of knowledge. The Conclusion summarizes the results, and Implications suggests areas for future study.

The Story

The Prologue

Students entered the room hesitantly. After reading and signing the informed consent and completing the GES Form E, the group cleared away the tables and chairs and formed a circle for a process group. The purpose of this group was for the participants to get to know each other since they would be spending at least eight sessions together. Topics ranged form why the
participant came to the training to information participants were hoping to learn. After about thirty minutes, the leader began session one.

Session One: Communication

The group began this session with a warm-up activity called “Who is here?” A discussion about the organization of material in a story versus thought format, and the basics of communication or active listening, were reviewed following the exercise. Next the group participated in a guided imagery exercise where participants imagined a person or an experience from childhood where they felt safe and secure. Then they imagined a person or event within the last year where they felt safe and secure. The leader asked them to consider how these two persons or events are similar. In small groups of four the leader asked them to share these experiences. Participants seemed more comfortable sharing stories in small groups rather than in the large group. There was some acknowledgment of the diversity of the group and some anxiousness about how the training would go. Most participants looked for the leader to take control. The sessions summaries indicated that the following questions remained unanswered for 33% of the participants:

1. Why do people do the things that they do?
2. How do people in the group feel about things?
3. Do the males in the group have something to hide; they did not say much?
4. What are some positive ways to approach difficult situations when family and friends come to you?

Session Two: Self Image
As a story starter, The leader asked the group to consider someone they knew who had a poor self image and to use this person’s issue as a part of the story if they could. During the “Build a story” exercise, participants seemed hesitant to end the story and start a new one. Each of the stories went around the group at least once. The stories had a definite ebb and flow as the characters in the stories attempted to move toward and away from behaviors that were useful and productive. This was a warm up to several tableau stories which were all similar in that the teller was feeling out of control, often embarrassed, and vulnerable. The session focused on the inner feelings of persons battling self image and eating disorders rather than the behaviors of restricting, bingeing, and purging. The connection of the playback action methods and their efficacy in peer education or helping others explore emotions were questions that 28% of the group felt were unanswered.

Session Three: Dealing with Stress

This session began with chairs sitting in a circle. The group reviewed everyone’s name. The participants warmed up to each other using a variation on a common child’s game called “fruit basket.” This game allows persons to identify similarities in a non-threatening and humorous way and led into a discussion of stress and relaxation techniques. Several techniques of actor training involve the concepts of relaxation, centering, humor, visualizing, and switching roles effectively. This session created a bit more anxiety for some participants as they were asked to take on a roles as individuals and lead the group. The session ended with a playback story in which the teller was stranded in a club in Dallas. Her friend left her there, drove the teller’s car home to Fort Worth, and did not return the car until the teller went to the friend’s
home two days later to retrieve it. During the post-action sharing some participants talked about the role of trust and risk-taking as they relate to coping with stress. Both the positive and negative results of stress were noticed. Session summaries indicated that there were fewer questions from the group. 24% of the participants wanted more specific ways to relax and others were wanting to know specific ways to solve friends’ problems.

Session Four: Addictions

The warm up activity for session four was “What are you doing?” Much like obsessions and addictions, the participant in this activity does some action repetitively until a new person enters the circle and asks the question, “What are you doing?” The activity served two purposes. First it served as a warm up to a discussion of addictions, alcohol, and drugs. Second it served to increased spontaneity in the group as persons moved in and out of the action, changing the scene and the repetitive movement. The group discussed the issues of alcohol abuse in individuals, in families, and on the TCU campus. Using the exercise “Norm and the Other”, the group explored perceptions of what the TCU norms are and how each individual fits in relation to these perceptions. The session ended with a playback story in which the teller shared an experience she had with her alcoholic father. The story began with her father telling her that he would not support or help her financially with college. The story escalated to a physical altercation where the police intervened and she had to decide whether or not to press charges against him, and the story ended with her estranged from her father until he was willing to apologize and admit that he was wrong in the way that he handled the situation. Some of the
post action sharing related to how to confront friends and family members who are engaged in destructive behaviors. This session elicited unanswered questions from 47% of the participants:

1. What about the moral and legal issues of drugs and under age drinking?
2. What effect does weight have on alcohol absorption?
3. Is there really any solution to the problem of alcohol?
What steps can we take to change campus attitudes?

Session Five: Sexual Health

This session began with lots of energy. The leader warmed up the group with a story song. This is the type of song where the basic structure of each verse is the same but the story changes as participants offer different phrases to fill in actions. The leader handed out rhythm instruments and the group improvised an accompaniment. The participants had fun with the instruments and the story song additions which led to a discussion of the structure of playback stories and the use of sound, music and colored cloth to create mood and emotion. Since this session focused on the issue of sexual health, participants were asked to work either individually or collectively in small groups to make a sculpture related to the issue of sexual health and to name it. This exercise emphasized both the serious concerns and the humor often experienced when this subject is discussed. We briefly discussed sexually transmitted diseases, SAFE sex (not Secret, not Abusive, all Feelings are OK, and afterward not feeling Empty), and abstinence. We used the action method of fluid sculptures to enact the tellers’ shared experiences regarding the issues. The leader was aware of fatigue in the group. The participant’s did not seem as focused during this session and neither did the fluid sculptures. As a group, they appeared to
have more knowledge about the issue than experience with the issue or concerns about it. Three participants (14%) asked questions concerning the lack of discussions concerning moral issues, the efficacy of playback action methods, and how to solve this problem for a friend.

Session Six: Relationships, dating violence, date rape

As a warm-up, the group began with several different balancing exercises. Using only their sense of touch the participants learned to move in relationship to another without discussing it verbally. This sense of relationship and connectedness led us into a discussion of relationships, dating, dating violence and acquaintance rape. Unlike some of our other sessions where the leader instructed the group about the issue and then elicited stories through action methods, this discussion began with a personal story that continued to be a core part of the discussion and brought forward the participant’s conflicted feelings and related experiences where persons felt opposing feelings in the same moment. Pairs training emerged out of this discussion. Through the action method called “Pairs” participants learned to playback those polarized emotions that sometimes emerge in relationships. This session was a bit more difficult for the researcher because of playing the role of the actors’ coach while also trying to acknowledge the tellers’ experiences. Again, the session summaries indicated that three participants (14%) asked questions concerning the lack of discussions concerning moral issues, the efficacy of playback action methods, and how to solve this problem for a friend.

Session Seven: Depression, grief and suicide prevention
This session’s warm-up was an awareness exercise where each person closed their eyes and thought about the issues of depression, grief, death, and dying. They were to reflect on persons, past and present, who had influenced their thoughts about these topics. The discussion that followed focused on understanding the signs of depression, the stages of grief, how to be supportive to friends and family, and how to help a friend who is depressed or is talking about suicide. The exercise “My relationship to IT” gave each person a chance to show in a concrete way their relationship to death and dying. The group sat in a circle around a chair draped in a black cloth. Without words, participants were invited to come into the center of the circle and show their relationship to death and dying. They were encouraged to change or add to the sculpture as they entered the scene. While the soundtrack from ”Out of Africa” played in the background, many of the participants entered into the center to create a concrete image of their emotional response to this issue. During the post action sharing some shared their experiences of being in the center of the circle and creating, while others talked about what it was like to share the experience by watching. The session continued with a playback story in which the teller talked about her own therapeutic experiences when she learned that she was depressed, the process of “letting go” of her mother as “perfect,” and accepting her mother and herself in a more useful way. Session summaries indicated only two participants (10%) who had unanswered questions. One had unresolved feelings after the exercise about “death,” and the other was wondering about how to celebrate life.
Session Eight: Saying Good-bye, Transitions

As a warm-up for the last session, the group discussed times and places where people say good bye. Stories of summer camp, leaving high school, and moving to a new state, emerged. The leader discussed the ways that society ritualizes good-byes so that persons can let go and move on. Participants were asked to reflect back on the past sessions and consider any stories that they had wanted to tell but didn’t have the opportunity to tell. One woman offered to tell the story of her finding her friend who had taken an overdose of pills, of seeing her in the hospital and lying to her about her ex-boyfriend coming to see her. The story ended several months later at a party where the friend was reconciled with the teller and her other friends. In the post action sharing, one of the other participants was able to connect with the story because her friend had died from an overdose and she wished that she had an opportunity to resolve that friendship.

Those who had enacted the story reflected on what it was like to play their parts and how this story connected with their own lives. As a good-bye activity, the group enacted the “car wash” where each person walks with eyes closed through a pathway between two lines of participants. As the person passed, the participants gently guided them down the path with a pat on the shoulder, an encouraging word, or a wish for the future. Session summaries indicated no unanswered questions at the end of this session.

Session summary forms were collected at the end of each training session. After the final session, individual participants filled out the GES form R. Then the group came together for a process group to discuss what individuals had learned about each other and the group. After about thirty minutes, the group ended with plans for future meetings and a date for a group presentation.
Group Presentation: Depression

Six out of the 21 trainees were available for the group presentation. The small group had two planning sessions for the presentation totaling about two and one-half hours. The presentation included handouts on depression donated from the TCU Counseling Center, a group warm-up developed from the “Fruitbasket” activity learned in training, pairs, fluid sculptures, two playback stories, and post-action sharing. Audience feedback forms were collected after the session or were mailed to the researcher after the session. One audience member wrote “Last night being there with us interacting about the story, giving words that describe the feelings, helped people put themselves in place of the teller and connect on a more personal level.”

The Epilogue

The researcher interviewed 14 of the participants approximately one to two weeks after training was completed. Interviews ranged from fifteen to thirty minutes. Interviews were transcribed by the researcher for analysis using a grounded theory approach. Session Summaries were typed into a database for coding and sorting. The interviews, session summaries, and audience feedback sheets comprised the core of information that the researcher discovered about the acquisition of knowledge and the building of community using playback action methods. Videotape transcripts were typed by the researcher for analysis by three judges. The judges, chosen because they were graduate students in counseling and higher education, were trained to use the HIM by the researcher, but the researcher was not allowed to have input during the coding of the interactions. The GES answer sheets were scored by the researcher’s assistant. All

Proposition One: The Dialogue

Observations

The group interactions were observed by the researcher during the process groups and afterward while transcribing them. Anecdotal observations indicated that the pre-training process group (A) had several moments of silence, some participants were lying down, and their verbal delivery was slow and deliberate. The researcher observed that the post-training process group (B) was much more lively, participants were sitting up, they were responding to each other with eye contact, and their verbal delivery was more spontaneous. Participants were less hesitant to make statements about themselves or others in the group in videotape B. The groups appeared to have changed in the type and intensity of interactions between members.

“I think that a lot of us came away with better listening skills. I know that when we were listening to somebody tell their story, especially when we were acting it out, we were listening very carefully to not so much as the words, but maybe the emotions underneath it. (We improved) a lot of our personal skills on how to deal with people, not so much like regular school skills, but just people skills (Interview 13).”

Results

In order to validate these observations, participants’ interactions from the last ten minutes of the two process groups were transcribed by the researcher and coded by three judges using the
The judges’ responses were tested for reliability using Spearman’s rho (SPSS, 1999). Table 1 below shows that the inter-judge reliability is statistically significant videotape A.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>J1</th>
<th>J2</th>
<th>J3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Correlation Coefficient</td>
<td>1.000</td>
<td>.974*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td></td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Correlation is significant at the .01 level (2-tailed).

Similarly, Table Two shows statistically significant inter-judge reliability for videotape B.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>J1</th>
<th>J2</th>
<th>J3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Correlation Coefficient</td>
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<td>.978*</td>
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<tr>
<td>sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td></td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>44</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Each judges’ scores were tabulated on a separate 2 x 2 observed frequency table (Table 3). Since the researcher was attempting to determine if there were statistically more interactions in the “power quadrant” of the HIM (cells 13-16), rows were divided by interactions which were coded into cells 1-12 for Row one or by interactions which were coded into cells 13-16 for Row two. Columns were divided by videotape A for column one and videotape B for column two. The $\chi^2$ test for dependent samples was used to calculate the significance for change (Hinkle, Wiersma, & Jurs, 1988). The critical value for $\chi^2$ with 1 df at $\alpha=.01$ is 6.635. Since the $\chi^2$ value for each table (Judge 1= 11.53, Judge 2=14.31, Judge 3=10.07) was above the critical value (6.635), then the researcher concluded that there were significantly more interactions coded in the “power quadrant” of the HIM for videotape B than videotape A.

Therefore the researcher concluded that when playback theatre action methods were used, the group interactions became more personal, relationship-oriented in the content dimension and more speculative, confrontive in process dimension.

Table 3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tape A</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tape B</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Tape A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------</td>
<td>--------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cells 1-12</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cells 13-16</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

$\chi^2 = 11.53 \quad \chi_{cv}^2 = 6.635 \quad df = 1$

Judge 2

<table>
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<th></th>
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<th>Tape B</th>
<th>Totals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cells 1-12</td>
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<td>18</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cells 13-16</td>
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<tr>
<td>Totals</td>
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<td>47</td>
<td>88</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

$\chi^2 = 14.31 \quad \chi_{cv}^2 = 6.635 \quad df = 1$

Judge 3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Tape A</th>
<th>Tape B</th>
<th>Totals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>22</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals</td>
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<td>89</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

$\chi^2 = 10.07 \quad \chi_{cv}^2 = 6.635 \quad df = 1$

Proposition Two: The Character

Participant observations

“I was amazed at the group dynamics. Having been in business classes and learning how groups operate, when groups first come together they aren’t open with each other and...
they tend to hide information, they don’t want to be as open because they don’t want to be judged by the other people. . . . so it really shocked me at how quickly the group came together. By the end . . . there were some individuals who were being kind of negative with each other, but it was all in fun and a big joke. And it really surprised me. . . So I learned a lot about group dynamics.” (Interview 6)

Participants were asked to write a word or phrase to describe the “community of the group” at the end of each session. The researcher coded these responses using the subscale categories of the GES. There were 223 responses from the eight sessions. 31% of the responses described the expressiveness of the group as easy-going, friendly, thoughtful, energetic, imaginative, listening, fun, and informal. 27% of the characterized the group’s cohesion. Initially participants used words like “building community” and “finding similarities.” As the sessions progressed, the group was described as “supportive” and “bonding now that we see each other’s personalities.” By the end of the sessions, the participants used words like “togetherness,” “closeness,” and “united” to describe the community of the group. A pie graph showing the percentages of responses coded into each subscale category can be found in Appendix J. Some subcales, Leader Support and Leader Control, were omitted from the graph because there were no responses coded into those subscales.

Statistical Analysis

In addition to the session summaries, the GES Form E and the GES Form R were given as pretest-posttest measures of the group environment. The Wilcoxin T was used to test for no difference in the pretest-posttest scores (Hinkle, Wiersma, & Jurs, 1988). Table 4 shows the
Wilcoxin $T$ and critical values of $T$ for $N$ matched pairs of pretest posttest scores at $\alpha = .05$ and $\alpha = .01$. The $N$ changes for each subscale since difference scores of zero were dropped. The researcher discovered that there was a significant difference in the pretest-posttest scores at $\alpha = .01$ for Cohesion, Expression, Independence, Self-discovery, and Innovation. Pretest-posttest scores for Leader Support and Anger & Aggression were significantly different at $\alpha = .05$. There was no statistical difference between pretest-posttest scores for Task Orientation, Order & Organization, and Leader Control. Significant differences in pretest-posttest scores were found when the calculated Wilcoxin $T$ was less than the critical value for $T$ found in Table C.4 in Hinkle, Wiersma, and Jurs (1988).

Therefore the researcher concluded that when playback theatre action methods are used, individuals will perceive the group as an interconnected community which is more cohesive, expressive, promotes independence, encourages self-discovery, and adapts in innovative ways. In addition, leader control and organization was less important than leader support and the group’s ability to work with processes of anger and aggression.

Table 4

<table>
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<th>Subscale</th>
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<th>$T_{cv} \alpha = .01$</th>
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<td>----------------------</td>
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### Proposition Three: The Theme

#### Types of Participant Responses

The researcher examined participant responses to the session summary forms and individual interviews to reach conclusions regarding the acquisition of knowledge. From the session summaries, question one (What were some of the concepts that we explored and discussed?) and question two (What emotions, thoughts, or physical actions emerged?) were coded into categories.

The four categories for question one were topic, methods/techniques, relationships, and related concepts. 51% of the responses were statements reflecting the topic of the session, 24% of the responses discussed playback actions methods that were used during the session, and 25% of the responses were about the participants’ personal relationships or other related concepts.
The four categories for question two were actions, emotions, ideas/opinions, and stories. 71% of the responses to question two were emotions that emerged through the sessions. The high percentage of responses regarding suggested to the researcher that an emotional connection was an important part of the acquisition of knowledge. Dreikurs and Soltz (1964) encourage parents to use emotional responses in children as a cue to the goals of their behavior and their internal thought processes. Similarly, Weinstock-Wynters (1998) suggests that there is value in addressing emotional responses because this allows for students to make meaning out of their lives.

In this study, playback theatre action methods were the primary mode for examining emotional responses. The action methods were effective because they allowed participants to create an experience, to concretize concepts, and to use multiple intelligences to process information.

Individual interviews with participants suggested several ways in which knowledge is acquired. Some believed that knowledge is constructed by comparing and contrasting new information with personal subjective framework of knowledge or internal process.

Knowledge Through Internal Processes

“I kind of think a lot of times we have a framework, even if its wrong, that we kind of have set up of how the world works or how things are. And we kind of add to that as though it’s a skeleton like we add pieces of information like its the flesh of it. Some times the very framework of what we believe can be demolished or smashed, and we have to build a new framework. Or other times we replace pieces of information with other
information and it kind of builds up. . . I see it as this big body of information that we’re putting together. I also think that there is a big difference between knowledge and wisdom. Like we could have the information with facts, but not necessarily know their meaning, like how they fit together, or how to apply them like how they are useful in our lives. Wisdom would be like synthesizing all of it together and making it kind of work and seeing the whole picture and seeing how things are intricately involved. The movement from knowledge to wisdom is God given, its mystical. It is an internal process of finding inconsistencies and reconciling them into the framework. Evaluating something all the way back to its source and finding the validity of the source (Interview 4).

As new information is presented “some come to new knowledge by either accepting it or rejecting it based on internal processes (Interview 14).” An important part of per education presentations is trying to relate it to the participants. “If you tell me this fact or that fact and you can’t relate it to my life its going to be hard for me to remember it. . . . Somehow its got to be connected with your own experience (Interview 13)”. “ When I learn concepts I just have to apply them to my own life and how I could use them.” (Interview 7)

Knowledge Through Modeling

For some participants, modeling was an important part of constructing new knowledge. “I think people get their knowledge by watching other people’s actions. Like watching what other people do and how they react to something. Watching, even people you don’t know, influences new knowledge for a lot of people (Interview 12).” Persons can respond to new
emotions when actions are modeled. “You know like some of the playback theatre stories . . . I might not have had family problems but when we had the scene I had a part of that experience vicariously. You kind of feel like you’ve been there when you’ve had that experience (Interview 7).” When one considers modeling as an important component of playback theatre action methods, then what one does after the presentation can be just as important. For example, “if we do a presentation on alcohol and then they see one of us out abusing alcohol. Its not always what happens in a presentation its what you do afterwards. Its your whole lifestyle is important because we do learn by watching other people more than what they say (Interview 5).”

Knowledge Through Experiences

Hands-on Experiences connect emotions, concepts, and actions simultaneously as persons acquire new knowledge. “I guess the best way is just from experiencing it. I mean like we did. Like I might take notes on a video and memorize them with out really understanding them (Interview 10).” Persons draw on knowledge that created memories where physical action was connected with emotional attachments.

“I guess its sort of looking back and . . . you realize how much you learned when you were younger. Like I remember stories from when I was a kid that had affected me so much now that I didn’t have any idea were so important. So I think that probably your environment has an awfully lot to do with it (Interview 9).”

Constructing knowledge is about making ideas concrete through metaphor and action methods.

“And while sometimes you can learn by other people’s mistakes, there are other times when you just have to experience things for yourself. . . . But I’ve had people tell me well
this is the answer that you are looking for and a lot of times I resent that. We don’t rely on that; we have to find out for ourselves. And until we’ve seen it ourselves or experienced it, we don’t trust the opinions of others. Either you have to go through it or you have to visibly see others act it out. Because when you see, it makes it more tangible. . . . And even when we did the role, I could really kind of feel what the person who told the story was feeling or some of the characters involved were feeling just by watching them act it out. It made it a lot more real (Interview 6).”

When emotion, intellect, and physicality are combined in learning methods, persons begin to respond with spontaneity; they can act readily, but appropriately, doing something new, better, more creative than ever before. “The things that I really learn I hold the idea in my head and then when something happens I’ll apply it. I’ll always be using it, or thinking about it, or just making sure its effective and useful (Interview 7).” Playback theatre action methods encourage this kind of multimodal process where emotion, intellect, and physical action engage the person in constructing new knowledge.

“I think people learn at different speeds and in different ways, and I think the best way to learn is to experience. Obviously since you’re just one person you can’t have every experience. That’s why you learn from other’s experiences as well. But You have to apply them to yourself. Which is why I thought the playback theatre was so great because its hard to apply a situation that’s totally different from yours to yourself if you’ve never experienced it, or you’re not even close to that situation. So a great way to learn is to just put yourself in that situation, which people do in improvisation. You mostly just learn off others and they from you. Others’ ideas form into your own and you
kind of gear them to yourself. . . . I think the best way is to experience concepts whether real or through theatre methods. Just to be in that situation helps a lot (Interview 3).”

Acknowledgment and Application of Knowledge

In addition to understanding how knowledge can be acquired, it was important for the researcher to consider what the participants learned and how they were using this knowledge. When playback action methods are used, concepts seemed less important than process.

Taking risks. For example several participants discussed trust and risk-taking as an important part of what they learned through the training. “Forcing myself to get up there and do stuff. I realize like how sheltered I’ve been. . . . But it made me understand other people’s problems better (Interview 1).” As a result some acquired new insight through constructive action.

“I’m more open with people and not so reserved. I used to think that I was not qualified to do you know listening in tough situations. But now I’m not quite as reserved and I’m not scared to be saying the wrong thing and making them more upset. I feel more comfortable doing the active listening stuff and that can be more helpful (Interview 7).”

Several participants discussed the difficulty taking risks. For example, they described having to force themselves to participate because they didn’t believe that they could get up and speak or move in front of the group. Actively participating in the process “helped me really see it (issues like depression, sexual assault, etc.) in a different way (Interview 13).”
Communication and active listening skills were the concepts most often discussed by the participants in this study. Giving and receiving feedback from others was discovered to be more than simple dialogue between persons.

“I think we learned a lot of skills as far as learning to relate in a group and learning skills that would allow them to work together to be effective as far as everyone being involved and feeling that they’re part of the group . . . that not one person was really dominating, we were all part of it . . . Including drama was really fun. It just gave a whole new perspective of learning to relate as a group. And being able to communicate and share with one another in meaningful way (Interview 4).”

In addition participants learned to listen beyond the words to interpret the essence of the communication by understanding the connection of underlying emotion. “I know that when we were listening to somebody tell their story especially when we were acting it out we were listening very carefully to not so much as the words but maybe the emotions underneath it (Interview 5).” Participants also reflected on the importance of nonverbal communication in making more meaningful connections between persons.

“ When I came away, I felt more confident in my ability to help people. Like listening was funny because when I came back, I was ready to listen to everybody and kind of more aware of the fact that people will open up to someone who is a listener. They pick up on the fact that you’re a listener and they immediately began talking and share things. Like even the body language where you have this open posture, I think people really do read that. My awareness of all that is really heightened. I’ve noticed like body language with people and just being able to read that (Interview 4).”
The ability to communicate effectively and identify the essence of another’s experiences increases one’s empathy and ability to be encouraging.

“I think we just kind of learned that we can all help each other because we’ve all been through hard times and experiences and that like we could each help each other and help other people too by just being able to share and encourage. And that I guess that I came in with the idea that I’ve never been through any of these things. That I don’t have to be going through the exact same thing to be able to be there for someone (Interview 7).”

Encouragement, listening for the essence of the person’s story, an awareness of the role that communication has on the group process; all created a broader understanding of the communication process and its applications. “I think that I try to listen more. I try be more open and sharing my experiences. I really think this affected the closeness of the group. I really didn’t expect that (Interview 11).”

Diversity. One of the most interesting discoveries was the ability of the group to accept diversity. Initially the researcher had some concerns about how the group might connect because there were about 25% of the group who were from minority groups. In our initial process group several of the students talked about their concerns about the lack of diversity on campus and how the training group was much more diverse than the TCU community at large. Interestingly, the topic of diversity, understanding differences and acceptance emerged in individual interviews with participants.

“I learned . . . for some reason I learned a lot about diversity in like all different sorts of ways. It was weird, like I’d been in situations in frog camp (a new student transition experience at TCU) where people would sit around in a circle and pour out their hearts,
and cry, and it was sad and you felt for them; but for some reason, I guess the way it was structured, we all became so close so fast before we even knew that much about that each others personal lives that I was able to relate more to each person to like actually feel bad, not because its my responsibility to feel bad for them, but I actually felt for them. So I learned how to accept more. From my background some things are not very acceptable, like I’ve had a strict Christian upbringing, so I’m not very experienced in handling family kind of problems. So I learned more how to relate to those situations and how to accept them more. Since the training I’ve just been much more accepting of the way life is instead of the way I’ve always was preached the way life should be. But in order to explain where life should be, you have to acknowledge where it is. And its easy to be. . . its helped me in like to go to a person’s level to help bring them out of a situation. It’s helped me so much to learn how to be with people in a more intimate way (Interview 3)”

Many of the participants discussed concerns that in the past they have not taken the time to get to know people who appear different or are outside their usual circle of friends. “One thing was just realizing that other people had experienced what you had experienced even if it wasn’t like the exact same. . . maybe you learned the same lesson from it, like how to approach your problems in a different way (Interview 8).” In addition participants discussed that the group learned that acceptance does not have to mean that we all believe the same things.

“It doesn’t matter if they don’t agree with me just listen to other peoples ideas and understand that they can think that way. It doesn’t have to affect me. Cause I know in our group we had a lot of different views but it didn’t matter because we could all accept each other. There was a lot of honesty in the group (Interview 5).”
One participant unexpectedly learned some new information about a friend that was not a part of the training and knowing more of her story affected the way in which she interacted with the friend. “It made me see her in a whole new light. I have kept it to myself but our interactions have been different since I learned more of her story (Interview 14).”

**Building community.** As was discussed under proposition two, the group emerged as an interconnected community. In their individual interviews, participants reflected about the importance of this sense of belonging. “And I think that it was just another step to remind me of the importance of keeping that balance of community and self intertwined (Interview 9).” Finding one’s place in the group was an important part of learning to build a community that seemed both diverse and united.

“We got to know people as a whole - - because like it seemed like it was a little microcosm. Everybody was so different but we all had so much in common. It seemed like we could kind of relate back to the outside world. I guess everybody’s got something going on and realized that. But I learned that although we’re really different, we can connect on this issue (Interview 14).”

**Efficacy of Playback Theatre Action Methods**

When asked which action methods were the most effective, many participants commented on the full playback story describing it as powerful, dramatic, touching, and concrete.

“I think the most effective was the playback theatre. The first time we did it was weird, like we didn’t really know what we were doing, we didn’t really understand what it was being used for. . . . But then the next time it started to sink in, what it was, and I started to
realize how neat it is for us to see a situation but then I realized how it was an awesome tool to use. For the people acting it out to display those emotions to see how the characters would react in the situations, put themselves in the situations and show how other people would react. I thought that was definitely the best to do the full story where you could get the feedback afterwards (Interview 3).

Some participants felt that the playback theatre stories were the most effective tool, but they felt intimidated by the method.

“That’s hard for me because the ones that were the most effective were the ones that I was the least comfortable doing. Like the dramatic. . . the ones that we finally learned to do, the stories. . . those really were probably the most effective. I participated in the feedback afterwards, but I definitely avoided being chosen for the scene by looking down or hiding my eyes (Interview 9).”

Often the participants felt that the other action methods were too abstract, and they had difficulty understanding their purpose. To some degree these attitudes were expected since Fluid Sculptures, Pairs, and other sociometric activities were primarily warm up activities which prepared the actors to act and the tellers to tell. However, some participants disagreed, one participant, who had previously been an art major, like the aesthetic quality of the sculptures because it allowed for each individual to display their own creativity in a combined effort to form an organic whole. Another participant commented on the effect of the Pairs activity: “I think what we did where an actor worked with a partner and you had to show the extreme opposing feelings was a quick way to connect the group to the core emotions of the teller and to show that connection to those watching (Interview 8).”
The researcher concludes that there is a relationship between action methods, individual perceptions, and the construction of knowledge for both the group and individuals. The acquisition of knowledge can be the result of individual perceptual understanding that may include emotional, mental, and physical response to new experiences.

The Conclusion

This study suggested that playback theatre action methods provide the climate where groups can improve the quality of their interactions. Hill (1956) asserts that the more a group exhibits member centeredness, interpersonal risk taking, and interpersonal feedback, the more beneficial the experience will be. The HIM was constructed with an ordered sequence of categories based on the belief that interactions falling into the “power quadrant” (cells 13-16) were more effective for group building than those falling in lower cells. Since the researcher concluded that there were significantly more interactions coded in the “power quadrant” of the HIM for videotape B than videotape A, the researcher must also assume that the group playback theatre action methods are a catalyst for keeping the focus on persons in the group, encouraging risk taking behaviors, and producing constructive feedback between members.

The primary purpose of this study was to use of some of the action methods of playback theatre to facilitate the acquisition of knowledge through experience of community. This statement implies that participants should perceive the learning environment as an interconnected community. Based on session summaries, individual interviews, and the analysis of the GES The training group became more cohesive, expressive, promoted independence,
encouraged self-discovery, and adapted in innovative ways. “I see our behavior as part of a bigger whole, not disconnected (Interview 14).” The researcher noted that there was very little discussion regarding role of the leader in the group. In some of the interviews, participants expressed a desire for a clearer structure and focus from the beginning, while most expressed the belief that allowing the stories and the focus of the group to be an interactive process added to their sense of ownership and belonging. The experience of an interconnected community created a space where positive growth could occur. Bruner (1983) would describe this as Vygotsky’s zone of proximal development. The zone of proximal development is the distance between what knowledge the person possesses and what a person can obtain through connection with others to reach new levels of understanding. Weinsyock-wynters (1998) called this the third space, a place where the whole self is engaged in the process of education. The researcher believes that process of community building in intricately connected with a person’s ability to make meaning out of experiences. Adlerians describe this as a natural phenomenon where persons reach insight through making sense of their place in a social context (Ansbacher & Ansbacher, 1956).

Participants in the study noted several processes by which they acquired new knowledge: (a) knowledge through internal processes, (b) knowledge through modeling, (c) knowledge through experiences, (d) knowledge through acknowledgment and application. Knowledge acquired through internal processes occurs when a personal connection is made between the present and the past. The connection is a catalyst for assimilation and adaptation which can lead to new growth. Modeling creates a framework where persons learn by being embedded in the social context where visual, auditory, and kinesthetic responses to the behavior of others can
create deeper understanding and new ways of responding. Experiencing involves an emotional, intellectual, and physical response. All too often, educators respond only to the intellectual concerns of their students, and are unaware of the importance of the emotional and physical responses that may increase a person’s learning potential. Finally, knowledge can be developed as persons acknowledge and apply concepts in new behaviors. The participants acknowledged these behaviors as taking risks, improving communication and active listening skills, acceptance of diverse cultures and opinions, and building community relations.

Playback theatre action methods provide channels between information and insight. These channels are emotions, thoughts and actions that work simultaneously as each person creates new understanding. Young children acquire knowledge about the world through play (Blantner, & Blantner, 1988). One participant recalled that her childhood experiences and how the action methods reminded her of those experiences.

“I hadn’t thought about it a lot until we got into playing with the different materials. I mean little kids, what do they do? They get clothes, and they play dress up. And it really reminded me of childhood. My mom would go down to the garage sale store and bring home these god awful ugly dresses, but we had the most fun because we could play something different. And putting on that different outfit gave us the ability and the power to be something that we weren’t. And so I think that was a very important aspect for me, having the different materials and the different things to work with because you could construct things and you could pretend different things. Coming from social work and having been involved in peer education for two years on another campus, I had never imagined incorporating drama into it (Interview 6).”
As person grow and develop there are fewer and fewer venues where “play” is incorpated into daily experiences. Traditional forms of education are not likely to allow for the type of exploration that the young child experiences. From concrete experiences to abstract principles, early childhood educators recognise the importance of learning by doing.

Implications

Based on these findings, it seems plausible that playback theatre action methods are an effective tool for construction of knowledge through building an interconnected community. Data collected from participants indicated that even though some participants felt uncomfortable with a few of the exercises, they also believed that they were effective tools for learning. The processes used in this study involved emotionally charged material. Combined with the topics of a peer education curriculum, playback theatre action methods open the door to emotional vulnerability in the participants. Leaders using these methods should be prepared to respond to what ever stories emerge whether highly charged with emotion or not.

Unlike traditional forms of education which separate mind, body, and emotional responses by focusing solely on the intellect, playback theatre action methods encourage multiple intelligences to be engaged. These methods can be effective in many educational settings and would provide students with more than facts but would allow students to apply concepts and to personalise them.

While peer education programs may benefit from using action method which draw on personal stories, this study does recommend further research in the following areas:

1. Effects of these methods compared to the effects of other learning methods
2. Effects of these methods on specific types of groups or other subject areas

3. Effects of the leader’s relationship to the group

4. Long term effects of this method on group dynamics

5. Long term effects on the interaction patterns of the group.
APPENDIX A
Research Design Flowchart

Recruit peer educators

Get informed consent from subjects

Playback training sessions

self report data collected pre- and post-training

on-going data collection from participants through feedback sheets,

videotaped segments of focus groups transcribed

organization & analysis of data

qualitative analysis

quantitative analysis

Discuss validity, bias and limitations

Summay & Discussion of Results
APPENDIX B
HILL INTERACTION MATRIX (HIM)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>TOPICS I</th>
<th>GROUP II</th>
<th>PERSONAL III</th>
<th>RELATIONSHIP IV</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CONVENTIONAL</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>(1)</td>
<td>(2)</td>
<td>(9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ASSERTIVE</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>(3)</td>
<td>(4)</td>
<td>(11)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SPECULATIVE</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>(5)</td>
<td>(6)</td>
<td>(13)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CONFRONTIVE</td>
<td>E</td>
<td>(7)</td>
<td>(8)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

CELL BY CELL DESCRIPTION OF HIM

(1) I-B General interest topics; socialization
(2) II-B Information about the group that does not fit in cells 4,6, or 8.
(3) I-C Assertive about topics; argumentative; shuts down discussion.
(4) II-C Assertive about group operations.
(5) I-D Cooperative, task oriented, characterized by questions.
(6) II-D Information seeking, advice giving, speculation done in problem pretext.
(7) I-E Draws from what others have said to clarify. Offers potential resolution.
(8) II-E Group evaluation, confrontation, analysis, or diagnosis with documentation.
(9) III-B Information about individual, not in a problem context. Identification not socialization. Speaker not seeking help from group.
(10) IV-B Demonstration of relationship of individual to group.
(11) III-C Assertive about own behavior or another group member’s behavior.
(12) IV-C Speaker fights with person or the group.
(13) III-D Same as cell 6, but refers specifically to self or other group member.
(14) IV-D Explanation of relationship, individual-individual, individual-group. Feedback given in a manner that avoids conflict or confrontation.
(15) III-E Clarification of personal behavior traits by self or others with behavioral data. Feedback requested and volunteered freely.
(16) IV-E Specific feedback request. Meaningful feedback volunteered to individual or the group. Feedback and observations documented.

OUTLINE OF TRAINING SESSIONS

Pre-training (45 min.)
- Administration of GES Form E
- Videotaped Process group.

Session One-Communication & Listening
- Introduction & overview
- Warm-up Exercise, “Who is here?”
- Discussion of Story vs. Thought, Active Listening
- Guided imagery, participants imagine a person or experience from childhood where they felt safe and secure then imagine a person or event within the last year where they felt safe and secure. Ask them to consider how these two are similar. Then ask them to share these experiences in small groups of four.
- Post-action sharing. (What did it you experience as you notice the relationship between your two stories and the relationship between your stories and the stories of others?)
- Session feedback forms completed.

Session Two-Self Image
- Warm-up Activity, Build a story
- Discuss Self Image and Eating Disorders
- Introduce playback theatre stories & variations as techniques
- Teach Tableau stories
  - step one - body sculpture (learning to create a sculpture that captures an emotion using only participants)
  - step two- teller tells story, conductor pick three summary sentences, small group enact body sculpture for each sentence
  - step three - acknowledge the teller
- Post-action sharing (Was there a connection between the stories? What did the stories tell us about the tellers’ self image? How did each participant connect with the themes of the stories?)
- Session feedback forms completed.

Session Three-Stress & Relaxation
- Warm-up Activity, Review names & variation of children's game - Fruit basket
- Discuss stress and relaxation
- Discuss "Acting Process" in Playback Theatre (concepts: listening, visualizing, being flexible, following, and leading)
- Acting exercises
  - Breathing and awareness exercises
  - Sound/movement/emotion echo
Crossing the room: Variations of individual expression, group members follow a leader and when the group comes to a stop, someone new picks up immediately and begins to lead with a sound and movement crossing.

- Review Playback Theatre stories and process
- Do a Playback Story
- Post-action sharing
- Session feedback forms.

Session Four-Addictions

- Warm-up Activity, Exercise “What are you doing?”
- Discuss issues of addictions, giving feedback, and hearing the story
- Exercise- Norm and Other, a sociometric action to identify beliefs about self and others in response to alcohol and drug usage
- Do a Playback Story
- Post-action sharing
- Session feedback forms

Session Five-Sexual Health

- Warm-up, Story Song (have participants create new verses by changing the italicized words, hand out rhythm instruments)
  “Mama don’t allow no guitar playing here”
  “Mama don’t allow no guitar playing here”
  “Well I don’t care what Mama don’t allow, gonna play my guitar any how”
  “Mama don’t allow no guitar playing here”
- Discussion of aesthetics, cloth and music in playback action methods
- Use bodies, cloth, and objects in the room to make sculpture related to the subject of Sexual health; then give it a name.
- Discussion of sexual health
- Activity- "Capturing the Essence"
- Fluid Sculpture Training
  step one - body sculpture (one added at a time)
  step two - organic sculpture with movement and sound
  step three - Using one emotion from a group member's shared experience, fluid sculpture captures the moment in movement and sound.
- Post-action sharing
- Session feedback form.

Session Six- Relationships & Dating

- Warm-up - Balancing Exercises
• Discussion of taking on and releasing roles, Activity - Role Walk
• Pairs Training (1 event w/2 emotions, partners work together to create the effect)
  step one - getting the energy out, focus, direction
  step two - beginning, ending, duration
  step three - relationship of emotions
  step four - modulating the teller's experience
• Post-action sharing
• Session feedback summary.

Session Seven-Depression & Grief

• Warm-up - Awareness exercise, “What is your relationship to the following topics: grief, depression, death, and dying?”
• Discuss Depression, Grief stages, and Suicide Prevention
• Exercise “My relationship to IT” (in this exercise “it” is death)
• Do Playback Story
• Post-action sharing

Final Session

• Discussion of Closings, Saying Good-by
• Plan an enactment to say good-by or discuss using strength bombardment/car wash as an action method to say good by
• Do a Playback story
• Post-action sharing
• Good-by enactment -car wash
• Session feedback forms

Session Eight-Planning Peer Education Program

• GES Form R
• Videotaped process group

Post-training

• Individual Interviews
DESCRIPTIONS OF WARM UPS & TRAINING ACTIVITIES

1. Who is here? - Distribute sticky notes and have participants write on their notes one of the following: a value they hold, a creative idea or solution to a problem, a question that they have about peer education, a fact about themselves or the subject matter for this session, an experience that they have had recently. Stick notes on their clothing and walk around the room reading each other’s note. After that, have the participants negotiate a trade with each other based on wanting to experience a particular value, idea, experience or question for that moment. All trades are two way. After this activity reconvenes ask the participants to share what trades they made and why. For example, “I traded a note with Jeff because he has studied meditation for 10 years and I’ve just begun to practice;” or “I traded with Heather because she has traveled to Japan and I have ancestors from there.” (Weinstock-Wynters, 1996)

2. Build A Story - in small groups people tell a story to one another one word at a time (or one sentence at a time), going around, taking turns. The group senses the story coming to an end and stops. The goal here is to build each person's contribution into the story, building on it rather than canceling it out. (Ann Hale, 1993, personal communication)

3. Tableau stories- A teller without benefit of a conductor tells a story while everyone listens. Three actors sit facing the audience. The actor on the right enacts the beginning of a story, the actor in the center tells the middle of the story, and the actor on the left enacts the ending. Each actor prepares to work alone, capturing the essence of their portion of the story, either impressionistically or realistically. During the enactment the actors take turns in solo performances, coming to a freeze at the end of their enactment, or returning to their seat. The second and third actors need to be prepared to make adjustments in their plans based on what the first actor's conception of what is in fact the beginning of the story. (It may not be what the teller actually told). Following the third actor may choose to nonverbally indicate for the other actors to join in a closing moment or tableau. Following, the teller is free to comment. (Ann Hale, 1993, personal communication)

4. Fruit Basket or United Nations - choose three fruits or three countries and assign each person a name. Group sits in a circle with one person in the center. The center person finds a place to sit by calling the name of a fruit or country (depending on which version you're playing). Everyone who has that name must find a new seat. When the center person calls Fruit basket or United Nations, then all change seats. After loosening the group up with this game, introduce a variation that involves more personal sharing. Example- person in the center calls for everyone who teased someone this week or fill in the blank with whatever comes to mind. (variations of common childhood game)

5. Breathing and awareness activities - Participants sit in a chair with their backs straight or lie on the floor with their feet flat, knees bent. They should close their eyes and focus on the center of the chest. Next they breathe in filling their lungs completely and exhale slowly; focus on the breath going in easily and out slowly and completely. Next have them begin at either the head or
the feet and slowly flex then release each muscle group while continuing the deep breathing. Become aware of any tension in your body and let the tension escape when exhaling. As the participants become relaxed and centered, then move to a guided imagery story to encourage awareness of emotional and sensory responses (Dayton, 1990).

6. Sound/movement/emotion echo- the group stands in a circle. One group member starts by saying an emotion to the person directly across the circle. The person across the circle “echoes” the emotion in sound and movement. Then the whole group “echoes” the sound and movement in unison. (Fox, 1993, personal communication)

7. “What are you doing?” - This warm up begins with the group sitting in a circle. One actor begins a repetitive action in pantomime. Another actor enters the circle and asks the question, “What are you doing?” The first actor answers “I’m ______.” Then the second actor joins in the same repetitive action after doing it a few times the second actor transforms the action into a new repetitive action. The first person leaves the scene and a new actor enters. Then the whole sequence is repeated.

8. Norm and Other - Set up like a continuum with “Norm” at one end and “Other” at the other end. Discuss one set of definition for “norm” and “other.” Participants place themselves in relationship to both on the line and speak from these positions. Redefine “norm” and “other” with new contexts. Reposition and speak from these new places of relationship.

9. Capturing the Essence - A group member tells a story in three sentences. The member points to someone in the group to be the teller's actor. This person goes up to the stage and portrays in sound and movement the essence of the feeling at the end of the story.

Variation #1: Two actors seated on the stage, one to portray the teller's feeling at the end of the story. The other actor portrays the opposite feeling.

Variation #2: After the teller tells the story, they point to a group member who simply states a final soliloquy as if playing the teller's actor during a performance.

Variation #3: After the teller tells the story, the selected actor choose a musical instrument and plays or sings a soliloquy.

(Ass, Hale, 1993, personal communication)

10. Balance activities- Use dowel rod between partners’ fingertips and move about the room to background music with out letting the rod drop. Pairs balance back to back and move from standing to sitting and back. Enlarge to threes and then to family groups. Find a variety of ways to use counter weight to balance in interesting sculptures. Put together a series of balances that tell a story. (From chorus actor training with Briggette Brandon, 1993, personal communication)

11. Role Walk- This role focuses on taking roles and de-rolling (returning to self). The leader prepares a list of roles beforehand. Examples: businessman late for an appointment, child lost in a store, jealous sister, . . . . Group members move mill about to the beat of the drum. When the drum stops, the leader calls out a role and each individual immediate begins to enact the role,
moving about in physical ways to suggest the situation. The actors do not engage each other. The drum plays, and the actors return to self and mill. The drum stops and another role is called out. Following the completion of the list, the actors pair off and talk with their partners or small group about roles: (1) which were easy, (2) moments of difficulty, (3) roles evoking strong feeling. (Ann Hale, 1993, personal communication)

12. My Relationship to IT - Use a chair to represent “IT,” some concept or idea that is being explored. Set the chair in the middle of the room. Ask participants to position themselves in relation to “IT.” As the chair changes persons respond to the new image changing it to fit their perception. Background music is an effective tool so that this experience can be nonverbal. (Weinstock-Wynters, 1996)

13. Strength Bombardment - In small or large group, one person sits in center of the circle and remains quiet. The surrounding group members "bombard" the center person with as many of personal strengths as they can think of. It is beneficial to have a recorder write these down and give them to the center person. Each person takes a turn in the center. Variation for large group can be asking for persons to randomly say thank you or give best wishes to individuals in the group.

Carwash - this is a variation of strength bombardment where the group forms two lines facing each other as the each participant walks with eyes closed through the “carwash” the other participants guide them and offer a pat on the shoulder and/or a positive comment or wish (Canfield & Wells, 1976)

14. Discussions - information for discussions was taken from chapter one of this dissertation, the TCU Campus Mentor Manual (source), and the Bacchus/Gamma Certified Peer Educator Training Manual (source).
APPENDIX D
Informed Consent

Participation in Peer Education Research using Playback Theatre Action Methods

Playback Theatre is a form of improvisation devoted to the dramatization of personal story or stories. As a part of this study, you will participate in 8-10 peer education theatre training sessions. Peer education topics such as addictions, relationships, grief, sexual health, body image, etc., will be explored through action methods which use games, songs, warm-ups, stories, acting, and sharing.

Each participant will be asked to fill out self-report forms before and after the study and short session feedback forms at the end of each session that ask about group perceptions, personal experiences, and the learning process. The self report forms will be kept confidential; no individual's responses will be reported; and the individual report forms will be kept in a locked file to be destroyed after the study. The results will be coded and the names will be kept confidential. In addition, participants will be asked to participate in a videotaped process group at the beginning and at the end of the training. In addition, the participants will give a minimum of one presentation to be determined by the group. Finally, each participant will have an individual interview at the end of the study. These individual interviews will be audiotaped so that transcripts can be made of the data. Individuals names will not be used in the transcripts but will be coded in the same manner as the self report assessments and session feedback forms.

Participation in this research is strictly voluntary and you may discontinue the study at any time without penalty or prejudice. At the conclusion of the study, a summary of group results will be available for all who participated.

If you have any questions about this research, please contact Monica Kintigh, (817) 346-1348. A copy of this form will be provided for you.
I have read the description of the Peer Education research using playback theatre action methods. I agree to participate in the Playback Theatre research, and I plan to attend all sessions. I understand that participation in this research is strictly voluntary and I may discontinue the study at any time without penalty or prejudice.

____________________________________ _________________
Name date
Group Environment Scale
Form E (Expectations)

Instructions

Please think about the group you are about to work with. There are 90 statements in this assessment. They are statements about groups.

On the answer sheet, mark each statement to describe what you think the group you are about to join will be like.

If you think that the statement will be true or mostly true of your group, make an X in the box labeled T (true).

If you think that the statement will be false or mostly false for your group, make an X in the box labeled F (false).
Group Environment Scale
Form R

Instructions

There are 90 statements in this assessment. They are statements about groups.

On the answer sheet, decide which statements you think are true about your group and which are not.

If you think that the statement is true or mostly true of your group, make an X in the box labeled T (true).

If you think that the statement is false or mostly false for your group, make an X in the box labeled F (false).
Session Feedback Form

Session Number:

1. What were some of the concepts that we explored and discussed?

2. What emotions, thoughts, or physical actions emerged?

3. What questions were left unanswered?

4. Write a short phrase describing the community of this group.
Individual Interview Format

1. Describe your experiences and the learning that occurred.
2. What action methods appeared to be the most effective?
3. What could have been done differently?
4. Give your evaluation of the group project. (strengths and weaknesses)
5. How do you understand the process of constructing knowledge?
6. What, if anything, that you discovered in this training will be useful in your daily life?
APPENDIX H
Audience Feedback Form
Informed Consent

I understand that this feedback form is for use in a research project using playback theatre action methods as a vehicle for peer education. I understand that my responses, although confidential, may be discussed both verbally and in writing by those participating in the project. I understand that I can refuse to answer all or part of this form.

____________________________________ _________________
Name date
Audience Feedback Form

Please answer the following questions.
1. What were some of the concepts that we explored and discussed?

2. What emotions, thoughts, or physical actions emerged?

3. What questions were left unanswered?

4. How does this program compare to other presentations that you have seen?
APPENDIX I
Error! Not a valid filename.

Key
1 Cohesion 27%
2 Expression 31%
3 Independence 9%
4 Task Orientation 15%
5 Self-Discovery 10%
6 Anger & Agression 3%
7 Order & Organization 4%
8 Innovation 11%
REFERENCES


Fox, J. (1992c) *Defining theatre for the nonscripted domain*, *The Arts in Psychotherapy, 19*, 201-207.


