UNDERGRADUATE PSYCHOLOGY STUDENTS'

EXPERIENCES WITH CREATIVE DRAMA:

A QUALITATIVE MULTI-CASE STUDY


By

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Abstract: This qualitative multi-case study explored undergraduate psychology students' experiences participating in creative drama activities the instructor/researcher developed to teach psychological concepts. The study was conducted in three introductory and developmental courses in a mid-western community college setting. Participants (cases) included 13 students. Data sources included student-generated documents, researcher field notes and journal entries, and transcripts from individual interviews. Iterative inductive analysis informed by symbolic interactionism revealed a succession of complex, layered, interrelated themes pointing to salient interconnections among students' thoughts, emotions, physical selves, interactions with others, family and educational histories, and their experiences of the activities. The cases were first analyzed individually and then compared across cases, classes, and data sources. Cross case findings included a series of interconnected touchstones students used in making meaning from the activities; their bodies and thoughts, described sense of self, their experiences with family and education, their interactions with classmates, and their emotions. Students perceived the activities as agents for changing their class experiences, climate and learning. Students' prior family and learning experiences, particularly traumatic and highly stressful ones, seemed especially salient meaning-making touchstones. An alternative framing of student disengagement as struggles within the academy emerged. Findings suggested that certain pedagogical supports are necessary to implement the activities sensitively which related to the embodiment and relational teaching literature, Schon's (1983) model of reflective practice, and Huitt's (2003) Transactional Model of the Teaching Learning Process. These connections emphasized the need for a sense of safety, relational teaching, and reflection which changed aspects of implementing creative drama pedagogy. The document concludes with implications regarding instructor orientation to teaching, curriculum, supporting student learning, and undergraduate psychology education. The appendices include the activities used in the study and suggestions for pedagogical framing.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

# LIST OF TABLES

# LIST OF FIGURES

| Figure | Page |
|---|---|

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

*Teaching is not just lecturing ... it is the arrangement of opportunities for*

*learners to follow a natural human inclination to become educated.*

*Providing information, arranging access to information regularly, is a major*

*part of teaching, but two prior considerations are the selection of information*

*and/or experiences needed and the recognition of conditions that will*

*facilitate learning for learners individually and collectively.  It is important to*

*realize that, even though students do not learn all they are taught, they learn*

*considerably more than they are taught. They learn things that teachers do*

*not realize they are learning ... The competent teacher anticipates*

*unanticipated learning, even facilitates it.* (Stake, 1995, p.92)

Robert Stake wrote these words to aspiring case study researchers to explain the role

of case researcher as teacher.  His wording seems fitting to open the report of this qualitative

multi-case study of students' experiences with creative drama activities in undergraduate

community college psychology classes, as they speak to the case study researcher's role and

address some of the very issues in the teaching and learning process this study explores.  This

multi-case study increases understanding of students' experiences and meaning making with

instructor-developed creative drama activities in undergraduate psychology instruction. I began this study with a desire to better understand my own practice and its effectiveness. This form of teacher research produced changes in that practice, based on the findings and conclusions that I present in subsequent chapters.

I introduce this study in the remainder of this chapter. I first present a brief background to the problem followed by a theoretical and practical problem related specifically to the context of scholarship of teaching and learning (SoTL) in undergraduate psychology instruction. I discuss key aspects of methodology, including the theoretical perspective of constructionism and case study approach, in the conceptual framework section. I then present the purpose of this study, research questions, and a definition of terms section.

## Background to the Problem

This qualitative case study stems from the intersection of theoretical and practical issues in education reform, creative drama, and SoTL. These three educational areas relate to one another, affect students' experiences in undergraduate psychology classrooms, and educators' access to adequate SoTL literature in the area. Before I state the problem this study addresses, I offer background information in the areas of education reform, creative drama, and the teaching-learning process as they relate to the study.

### Education Reform

Policy makers appeal for school reform in both K-12 and post-secondary education by focusing on student academic performance. There is currently no federal school reform legislation affecting state and local public two and four-year degree granting institutions; however, national higher education reform emphasizes accessibility, affordability,

accountability (U.S. Department of Education, 2007), innovation in financing, models of delivery, public and private partnerships, and teaching and learning (Heller, 2009). These areas of concern echo those of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB) and share its reliance on test scores as indicators of teaching effectiveness.

Higher education reformers primarily address increased funding needs for students and higher education institutions with accompanying expectations for institutional accountability (Kallison & Cohen, 2010), and instructional assessment (Ewell, 2004). Further recommendations include increasing undergraduate engagement in research and creative activities (Boyer Commission on Educating Undergraduates in the Research University, 1998), and use of cross-disciplinary pedagogy to promote development of transferable skills (Dillon, 2008). In this qualitative case study I focus on one such interdisciplinary pedagogical method, creative dramatics, within a specific instructional domain, lower level undergraduate psychology, a key area within general education courses for developing students' reflective, critical understanding of human behavior. More specifically, the activities on which this study is based are those I developed and use to help increase students' reflective, critical understanding of key course concepts while providing them an opportunity to further develop their reflective abilities as defined by Schon (1983).

In this study, I sought to better understand students' experiences of creative drama, "… an umbrella term that covers playmaking, process drama, and improvisation" (McCaslin, 2006, p.7), as one instructional strategy in undergraduate psychology courses. I align the inquiry to address current calls for more innovative higher educational instruction. My findings build on existing research of creative drama use that indicate positive changes in affect and cognition, which I discuss in the next section, and delineate students' meaning

making touchstones to further illuminate pedagogical and content interests specific to implementing the activities and lower-level undergraduate psychology instruction.

**Creative Drama**

Scholars find emotionally-related changes in behavior from the use of drama methods in a variety of contexts. Participation in creative drama training correlates with reducing anxiety and hostility in elderly participants (Davis, 1985). Creative drama use with elderly adults in nursing home care increases self-confidence, communication skills, relaxation, and sense of accomplishment, while decreasing anxiety, boredom, self-centeredness, and attention to physical complaints (Davis, 1987). Drama as instruction with sixth-grade reluctant readers results in first-time enjoyment of literature (Brinda, 2008). Drama use with youthful offenders allows them to express concern and compassion for others, identify with victims of crime, and more successfully manage interpersonal conflict (Conrad, 2007). Interventions to improve imaginative pretend play skills in first and second grade children leads to significant increases in both cognitive aspects of play and positive affect expressions over both control and alternative intervention groups (Moore & Russ, 2008). The literature clearly demonstrates connections between positive affect and emotion with cognition across developmental stages when instructors use drama methods; however, none of these studies explore the meaning making process of participants as I do here. An additional gap between theory and practice when using creative drama in teaching and learning in undergraduate psychology courses relates directly to the problem I address in this study. I attend to both sets of concerns in this study's findings, conclusion and implications.

**The Teaching-Learning Process**

A number of conceptually-different models have defined and shaped the teaching-

learning process since the 1960s.  Early definitions and models explain and predict consistent

positive learning outcomes by focusing on variables of time, teacher characteristics, school

social climate, learning activities, and communication (McIlrath & Huitt, 1995).  Either

teachers or students serve as the responsible agents in student achievement in such models

(Huitt, 2003). Typically, these early models favor passing test scores, or pre-test/post-test

comparisons as objective measures of academic achievement. Biggs (2012) argues that these

limiting models assign blame to either teachers or students for failure to achieve learning

outcomes.

Defining learning outcomes in terms of understanding, applying and reflecting on

facts, concepts, and principles—as  I do with the activities I use in instruction and as the

basis of this study—invites a more systemic focus than previous models  on students' actions

and which teacher-planned activities lead to understanding (Biggs, 2012), and requires more

subjective data for analysis.  Huitt's (2003) Transactional Model of the Teaching-Learning

Process offers such a systems perspective alternative.  I found connections between the

touchstones students use in meaning making with the activities and the contextual elements

within the model, and challenges ways Huitt (2003) theorizes the order of importance of

elements that contribute to the model.  I suggest these connections signify differences in

learning outcomes for more holistic pedagogical strategies such as creative drama that

require more formative, subjective assessment measures.

What one considers valid evaluative evidence contributes to shaping the teaching-

learning process.  In turn, these patterns shape SoTL literature and theoretical and practice

problems. In the next section I present and discuss the central problem I addressed in this

study.

**Statement of the Problem**

In the current era of neo-liberal higher educational reform, insufficient in-depth, detailed understanding of students' experiences and meaning making with creative drama activities in undergraduate psychology is available for relational, reflective psychology educators to make informed decisions about how and when to effectively incorporate such creative, innovative activities into their pedagogy. Understanding students' experiences with specific activities or approaches provides important information for improving students' experiences through an individual, reflective, relational pedagogical practice in higher education. By implication continuing to view students' experiences as being less valuable in the SoTL of undergraduate psychology than pre-test/post-test product outcomes limits applicable reflective relational practice strategies for educators in the field.

Education reformers argue that when stakeholders do not include students' experiences of learning activities, such as creative drama, as valid evaluative information in the teaching-learning process, academic product (e.g., test scores) becomes the focus by default (Biggs, 2012). Teaching and learning is then defined as either student or teacher centered without fuller consideration of the experiential nature of the process (Huitt, 2003). Such a viewpoint echoes the "banking approach to education" (Freire, 2010) with its emphasis on knowledge transmission (Go, 2012) and memorization instead of critical thinking. Reformers argue this approach perpetuates oppressive practices within education and society (Freire, 2010) in direct opposition to higher education reform guidelines that emphasize increased critical thinking, deep knowledge and transfer, and civic engagement. Researchers link the product-focused model to students' orientation to extrinsic motivation and performance goals (Church, Elliot, & Gable, 2001; Summers & Svinicki, 2007) and less

creativity (Cole, Sugioka, & Yamagata-Lynch, 1999).

Using creative drama methods as a pedagogical strategy provides the kind of interdisciplinary, active learning activities that increase the depth and breadth of domain knowledge and generalizable thinking skills along with the experiential, critical knowledge construction higher education reformers strive to provide. Research supports use of creative drama in education as contributing to desired depth-breadth-transferability outcomes for students in a variety of academic areas (Aitken, Fraser, & Price, 2007; Appleby, 2005; Even, 2008; Gay & Hanley, 1999; Hardy, 1989; Mattson, 2008) with additional benefits for educators (Appleby, 2005; Waldschmidt, 1996). Studies of creative drama use in higher education upper division psychology courses (Erreck & Randolph, 1982; Lawson, McDonough, & Bodle, 2010; Lyons, Bradley & White, 1984; Poorman, 2002; Rabinowitz, 1989) found similar results; however there is no corresponding research base for introductory and developmental courses. Further, what researchers report (Erreck & Randolph, 1982; Lawson, et., al., 2010; Lyons, et. al., 1984; Poorman, 2002: Rabinowitz, 1989) focuses solely on cognitive processes and excludes understanding teachers' or students' experiences or meaning making. These upper-division undergraduate psychology studies document the students' academic and cognitive outcomes  when instructors use drama in instruction; however little is offered that furthers understanding of students' experiences within the teaching-learning process, students' meaning making, the dialogic problem-posing process (Freire, 2010), or supports modeling of reflective practice as it applies to lower level courses.

Introductory and developmental psychology courses are intended to contribute to critical thinking, communication, and human relations skills as part of the general education curriculum. For many students one or two lower level psychology courses may be their  sole

opportunities to further develop critical thinking and interpersonal skills related to understanding human behavior; however the literature (e.g., Atwood, Turnbull, & Carpendale, 2010) suggests that most classroom talk in introductory psychology classes is defensive, oppositional, and builds uncritical knowledge. Teachers often direct this talk at students. .

Researchers (e.g., Lawson, et. al., 2010) wonder how introductory psychology students fail to gain effective responses to human relations problems in their courses. Creative drama activities hold the potential for increasing student reflection, critical thinking, communication, and human relations skills; however the current approach to SoTL in the field may often restrict the student-experience-based form of inquiry needed to systematically, reflectively explore the phenomenon. The research appears to offer limited examples of integrating known theory into teaching practice. .

This gap in the literature points to both a theoretical and practical problem, what Ball (2012) refers to as the "knowing-doing gap" (p.285). An epistemologically-centered theoretical conflict for this gap in both the literature and between theory and practice has been suggested from a variety of domains. Without an understanding of students' experiences and meaning making, educators have incomplete information from which to more holistically, reflectively, and critically assess their practice strategies and the resulting meaning students make from those strategies. I explain the central arguments in the next section, as their premises are essential to this study.

### Conceptual Frameworks

Since creative drama is inherently a holistic activity (Emunah, 1994; Shweder, Haidt, Horton, & Joseph, 2008) it is appropriate for lines of inquiry to consider a point of view

which understands subjective experience as crucial to the validity of the inquiry (Columbetti & Thompson, 2008; Overton 2008). Qualitative methods are appropriate to the inquiry because they invite researchers to collect subjective, process-oriented holistic data, analyze it, and look for meaning (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2004) for the purpose of understanding perceptions and experiences of a phenomenon in depth.

Support for a holistic approach to SoTL inquiry can be found from literacy (Emerson, 1983; Emerson & Holquist, 2010; Noth, 2010; Stables, 2010; 2007), adult education (Merriam, Caffarella, & Baumgartner, 2007), and embodiment (Overton, 2007) circles. Summarizing greatly, the heart of the arguments from these diverse camps suggests that the theory and practice gaps between academic product outcomes and process exists because of a traditionally-held, dualistic, Cartesian approach to learning and mental activity that ignores the holistic nature of the teaching-learning process. This results in research and scholarship that is purely rational and cognitively driven, emphasizes academic product while deemphasizing the role of context and subjective experience, or process, thus perpetuating the mind-body split in approaches to learning (Amann, 2003). Critical and holistically-centered arguments further relate to the Kuhnian one (Patton, 2002) regarding the socially constructed nature of science and issues of power within the academy. I consider the stance that knowledge as a socially constructed process in the next section.

**Epistemology and Theoretical Perspective**

Crotty (2010) defines epistemology as "the theory of knowledge embedded in the theoretical perspective" which he further defines as "the philosophical stance lying behind a methodology" (p.3). Constructionism holds that all knowledge and meaningful reality is constructed from interactions between people and their world. Meaning is therefore not

discovered, but constructed and transmitted within social contexts, as people engage with and interpret the world. In the constructionist sense there can be no objective or absolute truth as positivist and post-positivist perspectives posit. I use the epistemology of constructionism to inform this study to examine students' experiences with creative drama.

One theoretical perspective that aligns with constructionism is interpretivism. The interpretivist approach "looks for culturally derived and historically situated interpretations of the social life-world" (Crotty, 2010, p.67). This perspective connects to Max Weber's ideas about *Verstehen*, the German word which translates to "understanding" in English. Weber's interpretivists seek to understand individuals and their actions, "the meanings and values of acting persons and therefore on their subjective 'meaning-complex of actions'" (p.69).

Symbolic interactionism, an American form of interpretivism, emphasizes the need for researchers to put oneself in another's place within the culture to try to find, as much as possible, the insider's perspective and meanings, and the interpretive process the person uses to make meaning from social interaction (Crotty, 2010; Patton, 2002). I conduct this multi-case study within an interpretivist theoretical perspective. I explore students' experiences with creative drama activities that I use as part of the teaching-learning process in my undergraduate psychology classes, to understand those experiences and meaning making from their point of view.

**Methodology**

Qualitative case studies allow for in-depth, context specific exploration of complex activities, events, groups, individuals, processes or programs from a constructionist perspective using a variety of data sources (Cresswell, 2009; Patton, 2002; Stake, 1995).

Using and analyzing data from multiple sources supports the multifaceted understanding of the case, a single entity bound by time, space, and/or components (Merriam & Associates, 2002). Case study allows researchers to investigate the complexities of human behavior and experiences, phenomena, events, or processes to develop in-depth, detailed understanding (Stake, 1995, 2005). The intricate interconnections among individual students' and teachers' experiences in the teaching and learning process requires an inquiry approach which honors complexity in findings, as do case studies (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2008; Cresswell, 2009; Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2004; Merriam and Associates, 2002).

Psychology uses case studies as the basis for theory, to document and describe clinical work (Arnett, 2012), and in education to evaluate programs and improve teaching practices (Bailey, 2010; Stake, 1995, 2006). To understand students' experiences of creative drama in depth and detail, I use a multi-case study approach, informed by symbolic interactionism, to uncover the meaning making touchstones students describe when reflecting on participating in the activities. These touchstones became apparent through "emergent design flexibility" (Patton, 2002, p.43); family and educational background, beliefs about self as learner, perceptions and stated value of education and learning, emotions, working with others, perceptions of classroom climate, and changes they experienced in each of these areas.

## Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this inquiry was three-fold: 1) to contribute to the SoTL in undergraduate psychology by exploring students' experiences with the creative drama activities to understand the meanings students associated with the activities; 2) to contribute an in-depth and detailed account of the activities and their implementation for psychology

11

instructors considering use of such innovative activities in their teaching, and; 3) to contribute to my own reflective practice as a relational teacher-researcher seeking to improve my own practice. The primary advantage and purpose for any case study is that it provides a deep, contextualized analysis of a complex phenomenon as it offers rich enough narrative descriptions that the reader can recognize and compare similarities and differences between the case and his or her actual experience and make naturalistic generalizations (Stake, 1995, 2005). With this final product I offer a more in-depth and detailed understanding of students' experiences, their meaning making processes, and a concrete set of creative drama tools undergraduate teachers might use within their own teaching practice. I confirm previous connections between positive affect and emotion with cognition from creative drama use (e.g., Moore & Russ, 2008) with qualitative depth and detail that exposes nuanced understanding of how students experience and describe those connections. I also extend the literature through detailing the various forces and experiences students used as touchstones in their meaning making process while engaging in creative drama activities.

The touchstones students noted in their descriptions include ways they describe Self, their family and educational experiences, emotions, interactions with classmates, and changes they experienced in themselves, the classroom environment, their understanding of the course material, and tolerating difference in others. Students' descriptions suggest embodied engagement with the creative drama activities and point to the importance of previous family and educational experiences, particularly traumatic ones, in making meaning of their class experiences. Finally, I point to several examples in which students described how creative drama activities enhanced their reflection on psychology concepts. With these findings I contribute further to studies of reflective, holistic, approaches to SoTL in

undergraduate psychology and the drama in education literature.

## Research Questions

In Stake's case study approach, the researcher proposes a variety of initial questions about the case which evolve as the study progresses. He argues that researchers formulate research questions in the field as they emerge and are refined as the researcher engages with the cases and the data through the research process (Stake, 1995, 2005). In that spirit, I began with several general questions formulated from previous teaching experience, literature reviews, and research which later evolved into:

- How do undergraduate psychology students experience creative drama activities?
- How do undergraduate psychology students' describe their experiences of learning with creative drama activities?
  - What do students seem to use as touchstones for making meaning during the activities?
  - Which aspects of the activities do students identify as important to their learning?
- What nuances in students' experiences emerge from the different activities?
  - In what ways do students characterize their activity preferences?
  - In what, if any, ways do students' meaning making touchstones seem to shift or change from activity to activity?

## Definition of Terms

**Case:** a single entity bound by time, space, and/or components (Merriam & Associates, 2002); "an integrated system (with) a boundary and working parts" (Stake, 1995, p.2)

**Case study:** a constructionist methodology that explores complex phenomena through a variety of data sources in a single, contextualized case, producing a multifaceted understanding of that case (Stake, 1995).

**Classroom climate:** a systemic, dynamic, interactive component of the teaching-learning process in which individual characteristics and responses interact with factors within the environment, influencing both the individual and the system (Gillen, Wright, & Spink, 2011).

**Constructionism:** a world view which posits that people construct all knowledge and meaningful reality from interactions between people and their world.

**Creative drama:** "… an umbrella term that covers playmaking, process drama, and improvisation; it refers to informal drama that is created by the participants" (McCaslin, 2006, p.7). Participants enact creative drama primarily for understanding rather than perfecting a performance product. There is no audience, in the traditional sense (Blatner, 2007; McCaslin, 2006).

**Experience:** " … a process of engaging the dynamic possibilities of the particular form or structure as it happens" (Zarilli, 2007, p.645).

**Improvisation:** unscripted, spontaneous enactment (Blatner, 2007; Emunah, 1994; McCaslin, 2006) typically following minimal instruction to the actors about setting or the action to be performed. Improvisation presents in creative drama based activities such as process dramas and play behavior (Blatner, 2007; Emunah, 1994; McCaslin, 2006). Sometimes used interchangeably with the concepts of spontaneity and play (Blatner, 2007; Emunah, 1994; McCaslin, 2006; Moreno, 1946), researchers link improvisation to increases in fluid thinking, creativity and a sense of subjective well-being (Blatner, 2007; Kipper & Shemer, 2006).

**Knowledge construction: social** sharing of individual experiences in a way that increases understanding, and allows the individual realities to fit together in a more mutually compatible view (Stake, 1995).

**Lower-level undergraduate psychology courses:** Those psychology courses intended for freshmen and sophomores as general education requirements such as Introduction to Psychology or Developmental Psychology.

**Process drama:** a term typically attributed to Cecily O'Neill (McCaslin, 2006; Weltsek-Medina, 2007) although not by all (O'Toole, 2009). Primarily, process drama is concerned with problem solving. The context for learning is created, on the spot, as participants work together to develop realistic models of behavior in specific fictional situations. Through improvisation participants experience roles from within a problem, rather than just discussing it and brainstorming solutions. There is no audience, as participants stay engaged in the moment. The point is experiential learning, not performance. In fact, the process may not produce a single enacted scene. Teachers can choose to become less directive and more facilitative by assuming a role. After setting the problem, teacher-in-role can shift from expert knowledge source to bystander or asker of provocative questions (O'Toole, 2009; Weltsek-Medina, 2007).

**Reflective practice:** a form of practice in which one problematizes and reflects on situations, themselves and their personal experiences in order to gain new knowledge and improve their practice (adapted from Rosin, 2015, p. 90).

**Teacher research:** "inquiry that is intentional, systematic, public, voluntary, ethical and contextual" (Mohr, Rogers, Sanford, Nocerino, Maclean, & Clawson, 2004, p.23).

**Teaching-learning process:** "a planned interaction that promotes behavioral change that is not the result of maturation or coincidence" (Banks, 2000, p.1)

### Summary and Overview

In this chapter I introduced this study, a form of teacher research which allowed me to reflect on my own practices by understanding my students' experiences of them while also contributing needed knowledge more broadly to the SoTL literature on undergraduate psychology. Initially I presented an argument supporting the need for this case study of undergraduate psychology students' experiences with creative drama activities. Within that argument I embedded a line of reasoning that supports a holistic approach to SOTL, constructionism as the epistemology, and symbolic interactionism as the theoretical perspective which guided this multi-case study and research questions. I summarized connections to existing literature (e.g., Moore & Russ, 2008) and describe ways I extend the literature through detailing various touchstones students use in their meaning making process while engaging in creative drama activities, and contributions to reflective, holistic, approaches to SoTL in undergraduate psychology and the drama in education literature. I offered working definitions of terms used in this study for the reader's frame of reference.

In Chapter Two I review the literature associated with this project. Sections relate to the historical and interdisciplinary context of the study (higher education reform including positioning of undergraduate psychology instruction within the liberal and general education curriculum, drama and education, drama and psychology), and theoretical considerations relevant to the teaching-learning process. This chapter represents a broad range of work I consider throughout the study.

In Chapter Three I delineate the methods I used in this study. I offer a rationale for

the choice of case study methods (Stake, 1995, 2005), description of Stake's (1995, 2005, 2006) approach to case study, and ways I applied these ideas in this study.

I introduce the cases through narrative descriptions of each student, their family and educational experiences, and experiences with the activities in Chapter Four. I describe each class to provide context for cases. Such layered context increases understanding of each case and the quintain.

Chapter Five turns to cross case analytic findings necessary for better understanding the quintain, students' experiences with creative drama activities in undergraduate psychology. Findings include what I refer to as 'touchstones', ways students relate to and make meaning from the activities. Students' descriptions indicated multidimensional engagement and reflected interconnections among their bodies, thoughts, emotions, interactions with classmates, and family and educational experiences. They described ways they used their sense of self during the activities. They discussed the activities as agents for changing how they saw themselves, understood course concepts, felt about working with others and being in the class, and tolerating differences in others. I reframed apparent disengagement as different forms of struggles two set of students experienced based on analysis of their described experiences.

. In Chapter Six I offer conclusions about important pedagogical elements related to implementation of the activities based on the findings, stressing the need for instructor reflection on the implementation process. I tie the data to the conclusions and relevant scholarship from embodiment, reflective practice, relational pedagogy, and the SoTL, and provide supporting evidentiary warrants (Erickson, 1986) from the data for those connections. I further present implications for implementation of the activities,

undergraduate psychology educators and the SoTL in undergraduate psychology.  I draw

particular attention to relational, reflective-practice concerns, assessment issues, and the role

of pedagogical goals and orientation to the domain for psychology instructors.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

In this review of literature I offer historical background from scholarship in the

areas of higher education and drama in education, summarize some creative drama in

education literature, and consider scholarship of teaching and learning (SoTL) pertinent

to student experiences of creative drama in undergraduate psychology.  I first focus on

the historical and cultural forces leading to the call for teachers to increase their use of

such innovative pedagogies as creative drama in higher education reform (Dillon, 2008).

Next I position the study and teaching of psychology within that context along with the

field's connections to drama.  Finally, I offer an overview of how scholars and teachers

have used creative drama in education, and theoretical issues related to the SoTL.

**Historical Background: Higher Education Reform, Psychology and Creative Drama**

Higher education, psychology and drama are each extensive areas of literature.  In

this section I draw from that body of literature to focus on the impetus for current (2000)

higher education reform, the place of psychology in the general higher education

curriculum, and historical connections between psychology and drama which led to the

drama in education movement.  These forces provide a backdrop for the development of

creative activities that educators use in teaching, including those I developed for teaching

a variety of concepts in my undergraduate psychology classes.

**Higher Educational Reform**

Since the times of Aristotle, the goal in liberal education has been to produce an informed, critically thinking citizenry, one capable of governing itself as in a democracy. Today, goals in liberal education include developing critical thinking that supports tolerance of diversity and inclusion within a global society (Baumann, 2013).

Support for public higher education is grounded in belief in its array of positive effects for individuals and the larger society; however in more recent times governmental support for higher education has waned (Kallison & Cohen, 2010). Neo-liberalism, a free market economic philosophy that originally emphasized personal freedom but critics have increasingly associated with producing a flexible work force has incrementally crept into educational philosophies since its inception in the late 1930s (Miller, 2014). Those aligned with neoliberal-enforced changes in education argue that including employers' perspectives in developing the goals of higher education makes logical sense. Findings from such discussions and higher education expectations research (Association of American Colleges and Universities, AACU, 2007, 2010) indicate that employers, in an ever expanding global economy, are looking to higher liberal education to produce graduates with broad skills and deep knowledge, capable of critically applying both in real life situations. Currently only one employer in four believes higher education is meeting these expectations (AAC&U, 2010).

Deep knowledge, higher level thinking, and transferable skills are some of the essential qualities employers believe new graduates seeking employment need (AACU, 2007, 2010). Active learning methods such as creative drama engage students in ways

that promote higher order thinking and increase chances that concepts and skills will transfer to other situations (Dillon, 2008).  Education reformers encourage college and university educators to incorporate more active learning activities into their instruction (AAC&U, 2008, 2009).  Liberal and general educators report they believe in the need for such experiential learning activities, but generally don't use them (AAC&U, 2009).

**Liberal and general education.**

The new millennium ushered in concerns about employment instability related to the fast paced technological changes of a global marketplace.  In 2005, the Association of American Colleges and Universities, AAC&U, initiated a ten-year campaign to address employers' concerns about levels of student preparation.  Liberal Education and America's Promise (LEAP), one of the leading higher education reform forces in the country, emerged from this campaign.  The group formed its own National Leadership Council comprised of representatives from AAC&U, various public and private higher learning institutions, businesses, policy makers and the president of the Council for Higher Education Accreditation.  This leadership team developed a set of learning outcomes they expected liberal education graduates to acquire focused on knowledge, application, and analytical skills.  These include:

- knowledge of human cultures and the natural world (sciences, social sciences, mathematics, humanities, histories, languages, arts);
- intellectual and practical skills (communication, inquiry, critical and creative thinking, quantitative literacy, teamwork in diverse groups, problem solving);
- personal and social responsibility (civic engagement, ethical reasoning, intercultural knowledge and action, lifelong learning);

- integrated and applied learning (the capacity to adapt knowledge and skills to new settings) (AAC&U, 2008, p. 2; 2009, p. 7).

AAC&U further defined general education as the "… part of a liberal education curriculum shared by all students" (2010).

General education courses comprise roughly one-third of the undergraduate curriculum in most colleges and universities. The curricular organization of these core courses has followed a variety of models, depending on the political and economic influences of the times, with some sharp divisions in the area since the 1970s (Brint, Proctor, Murphy, Turk-Bicacki, & Hanneman, 2009). A recent survey found that over half of higher education administrators (AAC&U, 2009) perceived general education as an increased priority. Approximately three-fourths of those responding to the survey further emphasized the need for increasing levels of student engagement; however 60% of all respondents characterized their programs as "global courses". Only about a third (38%) characterized their programs as incorporating engagement activities, or civil, service, or experiential (36%) learning opportunities.

Liberal education reformers developed detailed curricular expectations in response to employers' concerns about undergraduates' levels of knowledge and skills upon graduation. These guidelines relate closely to those for both general education and undergraduate psychology majors. The social sciences play a key role in the mission and goal of general education (Brint, et al, 2009), including introductory and developmental psychology courses, offered at both two and four-year colleges.

**Psychology in liberal and general education.**

Psychology, as a field of study, has evolved sporadically with wide variations in

departmental organization and curricula across the academy.  Psychology departments

formally organized in the early 1900s.  Studies of department curriculum did not begin

until the 1950s.  One recent analysis (Brewer, 2006) found policy and theme trends

similar to those in general education curriculum studies (Brint, et al, 2009).

Psychology is a popular major in the U.S.  The American Psychological

Association (APA) has long held standards of expectations for graduate degree programs

in the U.S. and acted as their accrediting agency (Brewer, 2006).  APA first published

official guidelines for undergraduate psychology programs in 2007 (American

Psychological Association, APA, 2007).  As Table 1 reveals, APA guidelines easily

translate AAC&U liberal education guidelines for critical, applicable content knowledge

that supports ethical, sociocultural awareness and personal, professional and social

development.  Comparisons are offered in Table 1.

Liberal education, undergraduate psychology and general educators seek to

develop learning environments that provide the deep and transferrable skills and

knowledge while developing the kind of critical-thinking skills which enhance

employability and civic engagement. Interdisciplinary approaches to teaching and

learning support the analytical and integrative-thinking skills needed for knowledge

transfer (Dillon, 2008).  For deep learning to occur, educators need to provide students

with opportunities for active engagement (Knotts, Henderson, Davidson, & Swain, 2009).

Psychology courses provide one rich avenue for students to experience such an

interdisciplinary, engaging, interactive approach because of the field's inherent tie to

drama.

**Table 2.1. AAC&U Learning Outcomes and APA Guidelines**

Table 1

*Comparison of AAC&U Essential Learning Outcomes and APA Guidelines for Undergraduate Psychology Majors*

| AAC&U Essential Learning Outcomes* (LEAP) | APA Guidelines for Undergraduate Psychology Majors: Learning Goals** |
|---|---|
| • Knowledge of human cultures and the natural world<br>  o through study in sciences, social sciences, mathematics, humanities, histories, languages, arts<br>• Intellectual and practical skills:<br>  o communication,<br>  o inquiry,<br>  o critical and creative thinking,<br>  o quantitative literacy,<br>  o teamwork and problem solving<br>• Personal and social responsibility:<br>  o civic knowledge and engagement on local and global levels,<br>  o ethical reasoning,<br>  o intercultural knowledge and competence,<br>  o foundations and skills for lifelong learning<br>• Integrated and applied learning:<br>  o synthesis and advanced accomplishment across general and specialized studies | • Knowledge, Skills and Values Consistent with the Science and Application of Psychology<br>  o General knowledge base (major concepts, theories, research and history of the field)<br>  o Research methods<br>  o Critical thinking<br>  o Application of principles to real life situations (personal, social, organizational)<br>  o Values (weigh evidence, tolerate ambiguity, act ethically)<br>• Knowledge, Skills and Values Consistent with Liberal Arts Education Further Developed in Psychology<br>  o Informational and technological literacy<br>  o Communication skills<br>  o Sociocultural and International Awareness<br>  o Personal development<br>  o Career planning |

Note: * Adapted from "Executive Summary with Employer's Views on Outcomes and Assessment Approaches (2008 Edition): College Learning for the New Global Century", by Association of American Colleges and Universities, 2008, p.7. Copyright 2008 by Association of American Colleges & Universities. ** Adapted from "APA Guidelines for the Undergraduate Psychology Major", by the American Psychological Association, 2007, p. 9-21. Copyright 2007 by the American Psychological Association.

**Drama and Psychology Connections**

Approaches to acting include historical and cultural assumptions about the mind, the body, their relationship, the nature of self, the actor's inner experience and emotions, and the relationship between actor and audience. The dramaturgy literature has not always articulated these connections. The medical and neuroscience literature only contributed to such discussions after 1990. Psychology scholars and practitioners have long recognized the value of children's dramatic play for healing (Erikson, 1950), for cognitive development (Piaget, 1962), and for assimilating social-emotional information including a sense of identity (Courtney, 1968); the dramaturgical literature only recently proposed embodiment and the enactive approach as viable theories for acting (Zarilli, 2007). Current research in the cultural psychology of emotions used a 3$^{rd}$-century A.D. Sanskrit text, a book of drama, as one of its primary sources in its comparative analyses of emotional categories, stressing that the holistic nature of drama communicates subtleties and nuances of meaning not possible through language translation alone (Shweder, Haidt, Horton, & Joseph, 2008).

Drama, considered to be the art form from which all others emerged, involves the willingness to suspend disbelief and enter into the unknown. Two related but different conceptual sources diverge into the term theatre, what we now commonly refer to as drama. Each of these sources, dramatic ritual and dramatic play, serves a specific purpose in human development (Emunah, 1994).

Drama, in the form of rites and rituals, has been inextricably linked with healing since the earliest of societies. Theatre originated in early shamanic rites and rituals and their symbolic representations of individual and community struggles in seeking healing

and wholeness. These rites and rituals, holistic in nature, conducted to express the mental, emotional, and spiritual aspects of human experience, connect and unify them and participants and observers, in personal and universal ways. The seeds of what we now call theatre, the art form that emphasizes role and scene development for an audience, grew from these rituals. Dramatic ritual is a primary source of theatre and the development of civilization as we know it (Emunah, 1994).

Dramatic play is to individual human development what dramatic ritual is to a larger community. Even more primary to human development than theatre (Emunah, 1994), dramatic play is the type of play young children use to explore their environment, including the actions and traits of others (McCaslin, 2006) involving a dual level of consciousness (Emunah, 1994). It is not undertaken for the sake of performance, as is dramatic ritual; rather players enact as a way to master reality and for sheer enjoyment. (Emunah, 1994; McCaslin, 2006). Many (Blatner, 2007; Emunah, 1994; Johnson, 2000; Landy, 2000; Sternberg & Garcia, 2000, 2000a, to name but a few) credit Jacob Moreno with first identifying and linking drama and role play to serve therapeutic, educational, and social change..

**Moreno: Therapeutic use of dramatic play.**

Moreno developed his interest in the interaction between theatre and human behavior while a medical student specializing in psychiatry (Johnson, 2000) at the University of Vienna. From 1908 -11 he explored dramatic play and its use of roles with children in parks of Vienna, telling them fairytales then enacting the stories together. Eventually he encouraged them to enact stories from their own imaginations. As he watched them he hypothesized about the educational and therapeutic benefits of role

playing (Sternberg & Garcia, 2000).

While still a student in 1913, Moreno became aware of the social plight of sex workers in Vienna's red light district by a chance encounter. After he witnessed the arrest of a woman for wearing bright colored clothing, a cultural symbol marking her as a sex worker, he searched for and found the woman after she was released. He learned of the legal and social service inequalities for sex workers from her. He publicized their plight, helped them to receive needed medical care, and organized them into a kind of social support club he later referred to as the beginning of group psychotherapy. He extended his interest in and ideas about role and role playing in these group sessions to include the concepts of collective and private aspects of the role (Sternberg & Garcia, 2000). The group psychotherapeutic work further developed into psychodrama and sociodrama, the precursor to creative dramatics in education.

**Moreno: Founding drama therapy, psychodrama and sociodrama.**

During the early 1920's Moreno developed and ran the Theatre of Spontaneity and with it founded the field of drama therapy (Johnson, 2000; Sternberg & Garcia, 2000) through psychodrama, a form of psychotherapy that allows people to enact rather than simply discuss personal issues (Emunah, 1994). Typically psychodrama proceeds as part of a group process. One client or main role player, the protagonist, explores a particular problem of personal relevance with help from selected group members, auxiliaries. Remaining group members serve as the audience. The therapist or facilitator serves as director, offers support, analyzes group dynamics, and helps to produce the enactment. Enacting roles enhances protagonists' problem solving (Blatner, 2007) and focuses on the private role components (Emunah, 1994).

Concurrently Moreno further founded sociodrama, a group enactment that examines aspects of social roles (e.g., student, partner, citizen) people share (Sternberg & Garcia, 2000). The process focuses on finding commonalities within the collective (Blatner, 2007; Emunah, 1994; Sternberg & Garcia, 2000), and collective role components (Emunah, 1994; Sternberg & Garcia, 2000a). The entire group explores a particular hypothetical problem of interest or concern to the group. Cultural and systemic factors that can shape individual responses emerge, increasing understanding of these influences within the hypothetical problem context (Blatner, 2007; Sternberg & Garcia, 2000a).

When Moreno immigrated to the United States around 1930 he established the Impromptu Theater in New York, brought drama therapy to this country (Johnson, 2000; Sternberg & Garcia, 2000), and trained actors in spontaneity work and in sociological research. The troupe of trained actors invited audience members to join them on stage to enact current events, examine social problems of concern, and develop possible solutions. Performances were held at Carnegie Hall. Moreno further used sociodrama to work with children in New York schools and deal with racial issues in Harlem (Sternberg & Garcia, 2000).

Moreno contributed to developing role theory by applying the concept of role as a complex sociological phenomenon into every day practice. As Landy (2000) states, "…his message was that life is not *like* theatre; life *is* theatre" (p.50). The aspects of private roles in psychodrama remain an intervention that some in the psychotherapy community practice today. Business, industry, religion, spirituality, theatre and education use sociodrama's ideas about collective roles (Sternberg & Garcia, 2000). The

term "applied theatre", used in the United States since around 1990, describes the emerging use of interactive and improvisational drama methods in education, business, therapy, and for social action (Blatner, 2007) that essentially began as sociodrama.

There are many differences among psychodrama, psychotherapy, sociodrama and education. Psychotherapy and psychodrama restores and reintegrates an individual's psyche from private wounds, while sociodrama aligns with education's focus on supporting human development through collective communication, information and inspiration (Sternberg & Garcia, 2000a). Applying sociodramatic methods to education has its own varied history.

**Drama and Education Connections**

Educators within and from outside of the field of drama heatedly debate the place and use of drama within schools and the curriculum (for a thorough but concise account, see O'Toole, 2009). The main dispute centers on who deserves enacting entitlements, professional actors or those without training.

One side favors the use of professional actors or actor-teachers to present cognitively-challenging material for educational rather than entertainment purposes. The Theatre-in-Education (T-i-E) movement emphasizes formal theatre skills and acting abilities, specifically tailoring lesson content to the student audience who then problem solve and make decisions about the eventual drama the acting team enacts (McCaslin, 2006; O'Toole, 2009).

The drama-in-education (D-i-E) movement, introduced in England during the same 1960's timeframe as T-i-E, allows regular classroom teachers to use drama as a method for teaching other subject material (McCaslin, 2006; O'Toole, 2009). When this

movement reached the United States and became part of the applied theatre movement, practitioners used a combination of creative drama and process drama. Both forms rely heavily on participants' improvisation (McCaslin, 2006; Weltsek-Medina, 2007). This is the orientation I used in this study. Nellie McCaslin, considered by many to be a leading innovator and writer in the field of creative drama (e.g., Blatner, 2007), defines creative drama as "… an umbrella term that covers playmaking, process drama, and improvisation; it refers to informal drama that is created by the participants" (2006, p.7). With creative drama participants create and enact a story for the purpose of understanding rather than perfecting a performance product. Teachers do not intend to share it with anyone outside the group or classroom. In other words, there is no audience, in the traditional sense (Blatner, 2007; McCaslin, 2006).

The term *process drama* is typically attributed to Cecily O'Neill (McCaslin, 2006; Weltsek-Medina, 2007) although not by all (O'Toole, 2009). Process drama concerns problem solving. Participants work together to develop realistic models of behavior in specific fictional situations, creating the learning context. Participants improvise to experience roles from within a problem, rather than just discussing it and brainstorming solutions. The point is experiential learning, not performance; the focus is on asking problems and seeking solutions rather than developing products. Participants may never create or enact a product such as a scene from the process. Teachers can choose to become less directive and more facilitative by assuming a role. Once the teacher or group sets the problem they will explore, teacher-in-role can shift from expert knowledge source to bystander or asker of provocative questions (O'Toole, 2009; Weltsek-Medina, 2007).

Improvisation is defined as unscripted, spontaneous enactment (Blatner, 2007; Emunah, 1994; McCaslin, 2006). Formally performed before an audience for entertainment purposes, typically in comedy clubs or on television shows such as *Whose Line is it, Anyway*, improvised enactments involve minimal advance instruction to actors regarding the setting or actions they will perform. In work not intended for audience performance, improvisation appears in creative drama based activities such as process dramas and play behavior (Blatner, 2007; Emunah, 1994; McCaslin, 2006). Researchers sometimes use the term interchangeably with the concepts of spontaneity and play (Blatner, 2007; Emunah, 1994; McCaslin, 2006; Moreno, 1946), and link it to increases in fluid thinking, creativity and a sense of subjective well-being (Blatner, 2007; Kipper & Shemer, 2006).

I have provided background pertinent to broad use of creative drama as a pedagogical strategy as I use it in this study. Before delineating the outcomes scholars have detailed regarding creative drama use in undergraduate psychology instruction, I further explore the context for such pedagogical decisions in an overview of creative drama use in higher education.

### Creative Drama in Education

The literature supports creative drama in education instruction as increasing academic achievement and knowledge of a variety of course content (Aitken, Fraser, & Price, 2007; Appleby, 2005; Hardy, 1989; Lawson, et., al., 2010; Lyons, Bradley & White, 1984; Poorman, 2002; Rabinowitz, 1989; Waldschmidt, 1996), cognitive functioning (Aitken, et. al., 2007; Appleby, 2005; Even, 2008; Karakelle, 2009; Mattson, 2008; Waldschmidt, 1996), and transfer of knowledge and skills (Appleby,

31

2005; Erreck & Randolph, 1982; Even, 2008; Hardy, 1989; Lawson, et. al., 2010; Lyons, et. al., 1984; Rabinowitz, 1989; Waldschmidt, 1996). Some of these same studies also report such affect- and emotion-based outcomes as increasing empathy (Poorman, 2002), increasing perceived group cohesion (Even, 2008; Lyons, et. al., 1984), and perceived increases in personal and social responsibility (Aitken, et. al., 2007; Appleby, 2005; Mattson, 2008; Waldschmidt, 1996). This body of literature does not always include details about the drama activities on which the research is based, nor analyzes students' experiences or meaning making.

Several studies of creative drama in higher education provide a glimpse into varied content domains and learning outcomes. Karakelle (2009) found participation in a 10-week creative drama course increased flexible and fluent thinking skills. In a pre-test/post-test experimental design utilizing post-graduate-student participants, those in the experimental (creative drama) group showed significant flexible and fluent thinking gains, as researchers assessed through participants' performance on circle drawing and alternate uses of objects subtests, over control group participants with no creative drama training.

Creative drama activities in second language learning help increase learners' communication and interaction competencies, according to one teacher-researcher. Even (2008) used a series of creative drama activities to help undergraduate German language learners interpret, enact, and understand elements of a German children's book. Even (2008) describes the activities and her perceptions of students' enaction, but does not report any student's perceptions. She characterizes the social, emotional, and kinesthetic aspects of the activities as liberating, stimulating and challenging learners'

communication skills, knowledge and use of grammar, and understanding of literary texts used in the course.

Teacher-educators in a variety of studies report benefits beyond content knowledge from creative drama professional-development training. Studies share a common focus on teachers' experiences or student learning outcomes, but none emphasize the experiences of those taught. Some utilize creative drama projects intended for performance; others process dramas. Further, some studies position teachers (or teacher candidates) as objects of study; as co-researchers in others.

A semester-long performance-focused creative drama project with 150 second-year teacher-education majors enrolled in a sociology of education course increased individual and group political development as students increasingly connected concrete personal experiences with abstract theories presented in the course (Hardy, 1989). In the first few weeks students, in groups of five to nine, developed dramatic presentations that would answer several key questions --What is school? Teaching? Curriculum? How might these be different?-- related to the course. Students utilized their own concrete, personal experiences to develop their presentation. Class tutors helped students connect and balance concrete experiences and abstract theory. At the end of the semester students better articulated their own educational and social positions, demonstrated increased knowledge and understanding of major concepts, and voiced better preparedness and willingness to politically engage than they had at the beginning of the course. They further voiced increased understanding of the need for group unity for social change.

A qualitative study (Waldschmidt, 1996) focused on benefits teachers gained from learning about creative drama. Narrative analysis of four bilingual teachers' stories

about their learning processes during creative drama courses for professional development uncovered implications inside and outside of the classroom. The researcher constructed narratives from taped study sessions, participant journals, observations, and individual interviews. This collaborative research allowed participants to analyze their teaching and learning as they developed their own analytic templates. All teachers reported positive benefits from the course that they could implement in their classrooms. All further reported the need for long term support in using creative drama with second language learners. All increased self-expression and reported experiencing positive personal and professional growth (Waldschmidt, 1996). The researcher's focus on study methodology overshadowed details of their experiences.

Another study explored learning benefits for students and their teacher. A case study (Appleby, 2005) paired an environmental education teacher, interested in learning to use puppetry and creative drama with her elementary students, and a drama/environmental educator and researcher. The researchers used sustainability education along with multiplist and evaluativist meaning making to guide the study and analyze the data. Developing the environmental education unit stimulated complex, deep levels of teacher-content meaning making, along with raising practice level discussions related to student engagement, power dynamics and authentic assessment. In implementing the lessons, the teacher observed a range of achievement outcomes, along with students' deeper understanding that demonstrated multiplist, evaluativist meaning creation.

A two-year collaborative research project between generalist elementary-school teachers and university researchers explored the use of creative drama as relational

pedagogy in elementary classrooms (Aitken, et.al., 2007).  Analysis of multiple case studies found that process drama appeared to increase students' concept knowledge through social engagement.  The dramatic strategy of "teacher in role" seemed influential for disrupting the usual power structure through giving teachers the option to assume a role within the process drama and students some agency in directing the scope and sequence of the evolving drama.  This strategy, as viewed from the teachers' and researchers' perspective, increased engagement, positive changes in individual student behaviors and focused participation.

Process drama in secondary history teachers' professional development training elicited deep content knowledge and sense of civic engagement from participants, and subsequently their students (Mattson, 2008).  The training, collaboration between two secondary-history teachers, one a graduate student in educational theatre, the other the researcher, asked groups of participants to recreate photographic images from the Civil Rights Movement through tableaux, simple, silent, motionless scenes.  The researchers provided groups time to decide the nature and structure of their tableaux before constructing it for performance.  Those viewing the performance knew nothing about the original photo.  The instructor asked viewers to consider what might be happening in the scene, where power in the scene was located, and how they felt about the image.  The discussions that followed evolved into deep and complicated historical conversations about issues key to past and present debates, with relationships between how bodies were arranged within the tableaux and the subtle ways civil disobedience transformed power structures and individual lives. Those participants who applied the same activity to their own classes reported increased student engagement and curiosity about history.  The

teacher/researcher team further noted increased participants' awareness and interest in matters of social justice and civic engagement. They did not document or analyze student experiences.

The viewpoint taken in all of these productive studies remains focused on the teacher or researcher or on students' improved content knowledge rather than understanding their experiences with the strategy. This pattern continues in studies of creative drama use in undergraduate psychology, which I discuss in the next section.

**Creative Drama in Undergraduate Psychology Instruction**

Others have used forms of creative drama in undergraduate psychology instruction (Erreck & Randolph, 1982; Lawson, et. al., 2010; Lyons, et. al., 1984; Poorman, 2002; Rabinowitz, 1989). Those studies differ from this one as they considered the impact of formal, performance-focused role playing on students' achievement, primarily in counseling or upper division courses. All studies concentrated on content-related outcomes, utilizing mostly quantitative methods. All but the first one I discuss appeared in the APA Division 2, Society for the Teaching of Psychology's *Teaching of Psychology.*

Role play was significant in improving students' response skills in consultant interviews (Erreck & Randolph, 1982). Students in the experimental group received lecture, viewed a video demonstration of consultant-interview skills and participated in role-playing-practice activities. These students demonstrated a higher mean number of appropriate interview responses than did those in groups with no role-playing practice.

Students' role plays of a suspect with multiple personality disorder added to class understanding of the dynamics of the disorder, deepened the quality of follow up

discussions of various ways mental health and legal communities consider this disorder, and clinical uses of hypnosis (Rabinowitz, 1989). The teacher-researcher selected three abnormal psychology students from a class of 27 based on scores they obtained on a teacher-designed questionnaire of imagination potential. After consenting to participate in the class experiment and receiving private instructions from the teacher, each separately played the role of an accused serial killer being interviewed by a psychiatrist. The interviewer script, based on trial transcripts of Kenneth Bianchi, the Hillside Strangler who feigned multiple personality disorder as his defense, suggested the possibility of an alternative personality. All enacting students incorporated this suggestion into their role play while further feigning a hypnotic state. . Reported study outcomes reflect the teacher-researcher's summary of the content of post-enactment debriefing and discussion.

Role playing increased students' knowledge of diagnostic criteria and empathy for those with psychological disorders, their family members, and professionals who diagnose them for one group of abnormal psychology students (Poorman, 2002). Students wrote brief biographies of someone with a psychological disorder, as defined by the *DSM-IV* and class content, which the instructor reviewed and returned. . A week later they role played their characters in a variety of instructor-prescribed contexts in class. Students took the Interpersonal Reactivity Index (IRI) before and after writing the biographies and enactments. These quantitative results indicated students felt less emotional distance between themselves and those with mental disorders after completing the assignments. Post-assignment focus–group-interview findings aligned with the quantitative results, meeting the instructor's goals for increasing relational elements and

course content.

Abnormal psychology students in a related study reported that videotaping role plays of various psychological disorders (and watching the videotaped performances of their classmates) increased their understanding of the various disorders, facilitated more meaningful connections than reading or lecture, facilitated discussion, positively contributed to a more cohesive class climate, and increased observational skills that transferred to other areas (Lyons, et. al. 1984). Dyad teams of students produced videos of role-played clinical interviews between a clinician and a patient living with a preselected psychological condition of interest to the pair. The teacher-researchers provided instruction on working the video equipment, interviewing techniques and case history or diagnostic information on the disorders. Students developed their scripts and filmed outside of class. Class discussions followed video viewings. Study findings came from analysis of end of the semester course evaluations.

Researchers found role play effective in teaching students to generate critical responses to prejudiced comments heard from others (Lawson, et. al, 2010). Using a pre-test/post-test design, researchers found that students in a social psychology class who participated in a role-playing exercise about dealing with prejudicial comments produced significantly more effective post-test responses than did students in either a police and society or introduction to psychology course who had not participated in the role-playing exercise. In the experiment, researchers asked social psychology students to keep a log of prejudicial comments they heard in their everyday lives. The exercise included such comments and followed direct in-class instruction about prejudice and administration of the pre-test. Each member in a group of four selected from five different comments (a

total of 20 different comments was available to each group) to elicit responses from other group members. Post-activity discussion included distributing a handout of possible response suggestions. Students implemented responses in at least one or two real life situations involving prejudiced comments outside of class, and recorded those incidents. Post-testing occurred within two to three weeks to all groups.

These studies further support the interrelated and multidimensional impact of drama in instruction, specific to upper-division psychology courses; however, all utilized performance-based role plays, not spontaneous, improvisational creative drama activities. Most relied on quantitative research methods. None explored students' experiences of the activities. Also missing were researchers' examinations of the multidimensional aspects of students' background and context that shape their experiences with creative drama in different settings as is possible with qualitative and case study methodologies. Without deeper understanding of students' experiences, one cannot appreciate their meaning-making process, reflectively assess the effects on instruction, or make needed changes to pedagogical strategies that aid in addressing the gap between theory and application apparent in SoTL literature related to undergraduate psychology and creative drama use.

This study adds to these bodies of literature and practice with depth and detail of individual students' descriptions and experiences of participating in primarily improvisational creative drama activities in undergraduate psychology classrooms in a community college setting. I orient the study as reflective teaching practice. I considered such contexts as students' life experiences in and out of the classroom; their views, values and beliefs about education; experiences of class climate; experiences of

interacting with others classmates, and; their expressed attitudes about the value of psychology. All hold implications for implementing the activities, lower level undergraduate psychology pedagogy and the SoTL.

## Theoretical Considerations in Teaching and Learning

In the remainder of this chapter I focus on theoretical considerations relevant to students' experiences with creative drama from areas of the teaching-learning literature. I begin with a brief discussion of philosophical views of education consistent with this study and then turn to contemplate the more socially constructed aspects of the teaching-learning process relevant to this study.

### Educational philosophy

In a democratic society educators and citizens value learning that develops higher-level-thinking skills for an array of important reasons. "We call on our schools to purposely impart to their students the learning necessary for an informed, reasoned allegiance to the ideals of a free society … Education for democracy is not indoctrination" (Albert Shanker Institute, 2003, pp. 10, 12). Critical thinking is an important aspect of a democratic teaching and learning process leading to "creation of a deep and lasting civic engagement" (p. 9). Some higher-education reformers concerned with non-indoctrinating civic-engagement practices (e.g., Ramaley, 2000) rely on John Dewey's educational philosophy of honoring individual experience within the context of social experience, fostering learning environments to construct knowledge through multiple connections between the intellectual and experiential knowledge base of the individual and the group.

While approaching educational reform from a slightly different, more critical

40

viewpoint, Paulo Freire offers some similar ideas in his discussions of banking education

and method, contrasting this with problem-posing education and method.  These

opposing methods place teachers and learners in very different roles and produce very

different outcomes.  In the dichotomizing system of the banking model, teachers prepare

lessons and lecture to students who "are not called upon to know, but to memorize the

contents narrated by the teacher" (Freire, 2010, p.80) in an attempt to keep the

consciousness of all parties submerged.  They emphasize and value a particular product

form, such as passing test scores. By contrast in the problem-posing model, students and

teachers "are now critical co-investigators in dialogue" supporting "*emergence* of

consciousness and *critical intervention* in reality" (p.81, italics from the original).  This

relational model values process.  These examples demonstrate that how one

conceptualizes education's purpose determines pedagogical practice.  I offer models

consistent with my views in the next section.

**Teaching and Learning**

More relevance exists in the holistic nature of creative drama as pedagogical

strategy than merely increasing students' content knowledge.  The approach evokes

particular orientations to teaching and learning, forms of praxis, and practitioner values.

In proceeding subsections I discuss particular models of the teaching-learning process

(Huitt, 2003), reflective practice (Schon, 1983), knowledge, classroom climate as

conceptualized in this study and as it relates to relational teaching.

**Huitt's (2003) Transactional Model of the Teaching-Learning Process.**

Huitt developed the Transactional Model of the Teaching-Learning Process from

a systems-theory perspective.  The model illustrates the elements and their variables

41

which Huitt identified as contributing to academic achievement.  Figure 2.1 represents

the model and its parts as I use it.  I adapted the model to include student experiences and

perceptions of applicability of course content related to the creative drama activities.

**Figure 2.1. Transactional Model of the Teaching-Learning Process**
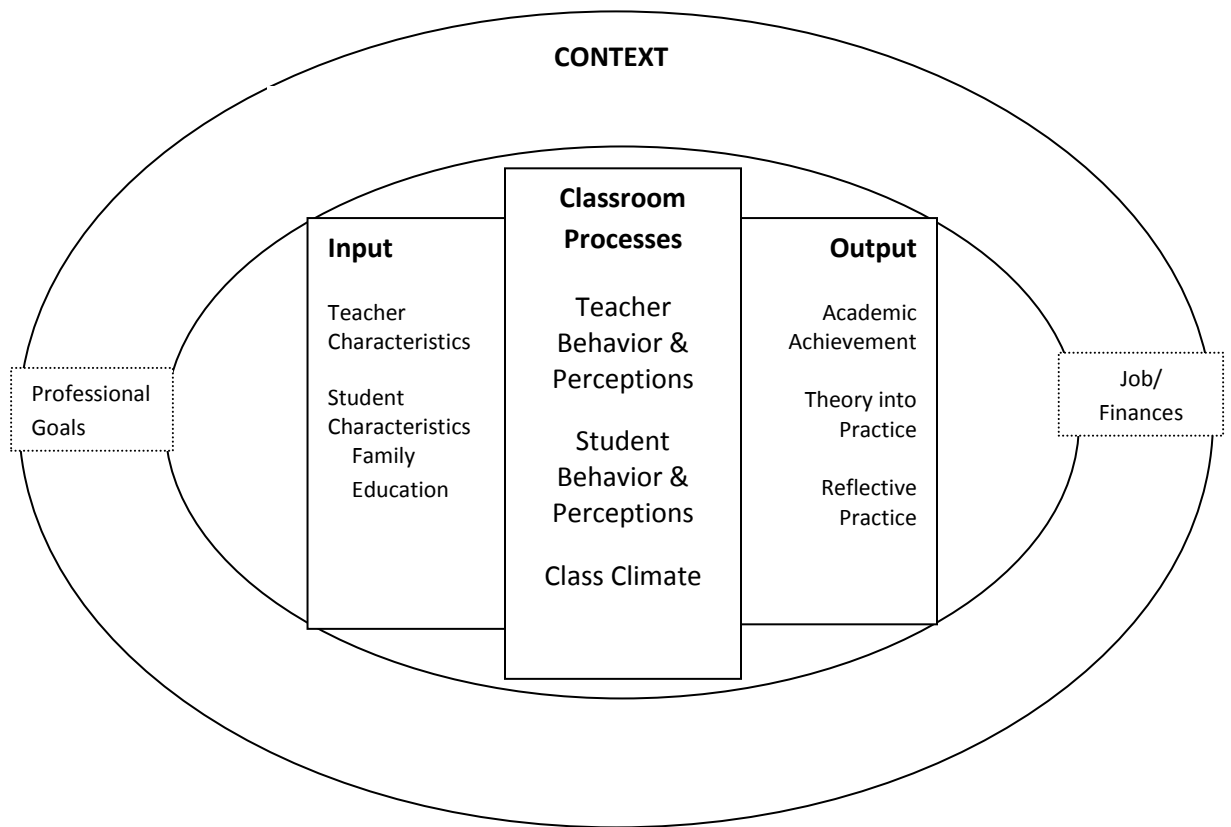


*Figure 1*.  Huitt's (2003) A Transactional Model of the Teaching-Learning Process.
    Adapted from "Transactional Model of the Teaching-Learning Process", by W.
    Huitt, 2003, *Educational psychology interactive*. Valdosta, GA: Valdosta State
    University. Retrieved from
    http://www.edpsycinteractive.org/materials/tchlrnmd.html

The model presents the teaching-learning process as Input, Classroom Processes, and Output (Huitt, 2003). All occur within various Context categories. Context influences both teachers and learners, as these categories involve the social influences (family, work, religion, community, friends, media, etc.) at work in people's daily lives. Input, the descriptions of what teachers and students are like before they enter the classroom, includes a wide variety of teacher and student characteristics. Huitt (2003) considers this the third factor of importance in the teaching-learning process; of secondary importance, Classroom Processes. This set of factors includes teacher behaviors related to planning, classroom management, and instruction; student behaviors within the classroom related to the amount of time they are actively engaged, covering material on which they will be evaluated, and successfully completing assignments, and; other factors, namely student opportunity for leadership and classroom climate, known to support student achievement.

Huitt considers Output, and how it is defined, of primary importance. Traditionally Output is labeled as "student achievement", meaning the score a student receives on an exam or standardized test; however Huitt suggests that teachers and scholars could define Output in a variety of ways, each directly affecting all the other variables and how they relate to Output (Huitt, 2003). The ways in which I, or any educator or an educational system, considers what Huitt terms Output is at the heart of the problem statement of this study. The adapted model includes students' reflections on pedagogy and experiences with course content as a source of evaluative information.

As an educator, I am not only concerned with students' ability to answer questions correctly on an exam of content knowledge; I am concerned that they

understand how various psychological theories, concepts, and principles might apply to their personal and professional lives. I am further interested in how students' experience pedagogy in my classes, since I want to develop and maintain a relational, reflective approach towards my pedagogy, model such practice for students, and encourage them to develop reflective skills of their own. Such concerns focus more on students' learning needs than what Go (2012) considers teaching malpractice, simply finding new ways to "cover the material" as occurs with knowledge transmission. Creative drama activities provide opportunities for students to deepen understanding of concepts by applying them within the classroom, reflect on their experiences, and their meaning afterwards. I applied this idea to Huitt's (2003) model by focusing on students' experiences related to the creative drama activities, exploring students' experiences of those activities in an individualized and contextualized way, including experiences of possible changes in classroom climate, as part of Classroom Processes. Additionally, the case studies explored ways students discussed applying course content to their personal and professional lives as reflective Output. I discuss Schon's model of reflective practice, which I retrospectively realized frames my own reflective practice and the structure of the activities, in the following section.

**Schon's (1983) Model of Reflective Practice.**

Schon developed his model (1983) as "an alternative to the traditional positivist epistemology of practice" (Schon, 1989, p.8) that demands separation of means and ends, knowledge and action. He believed practitioners actually face many unique, context specific situations "in which knowing and doing are inseparable" (p.8). His model follows people's behavior in everyday practice situations, especially those of educators

and clinical practitioners. Schon recognized that "through transaction with the situation, the practitioner shapes it and becomes part of it" (Kinsella, 2007, p. 106).

Practitioners bring their own histories and multifaceted existing knowledge with them into their classroom and work situations. Schon (1989) calls use of prior experience and knowledge knowing-in-action, use in practice situations knowing-in-practice. Without reflection uncritical automaticity sets in, perpetuating possibly harmful practices, further contributing to and shaping the practice situation. Reflection allows the practitioner to "make new sense of the situations of uncertainty or uniqueness" (p.6).

Reflection-in-action occurs as one considers past knowledge and experience and other contextual, in-the-moment pieces of information while pondering how to make decisions, define and solve problems, and respond to others (Schon 1983, 1989). Schon equates this kind of thinking-on-one's-feet to the kind of experimental research that occurs instantaneously in classrooms as educators "invent new methods and … endeavor to develop … the ability of discovering them" (1989, p. 7) in response to students' struggles.

Afterwards, practitioners may think about the event, weigh what worked or didn't and consider possible actions they may use in the future. Schon calls this reflection-on-action. This level of reflection further informs the preceding two. At this stage the practitioner reflects on what Schon (1983) refers to as problem setting, considering which situational aspects s/he focused and which s/he ignored. The practitioner further considers the sources of automatic responses, challenges those, and considers alternatives.

Education and training in many health care (e.g., Kinsella, 2007), and health care

related fields such as social work (e.g., Mirick & Davis, 2015), and education (Wieringa, 2011) use Schon's model. Some in health care and medical education (e.g., Harris, 1989) have criticized the model as further dichotomizing practice-focused research and downplaying the importance of technical and theoretical knowledge. Others in the same field (e.g., Kinsella, 2007) respond to such accusations of divisiveness with reminders that the model focuses on the practitioner, not science, and renew his original calls (Schon, 1989) to recognize the legitimacy of reflective practice research. While considering the various criticisms from educational circles, Grimmett (1989) positioned the model within the educational perspective on reflective practice research.

Grimmett (1989) conceptualized and categorized reflective practice research in education by considering the source, mode, and use of knowledge as it relates to reflective practice. Under this framework, rather than directing or informing practice, Schon's model potentially transforms it, as the practitioner enters into a dialogue with the presuppositions that guided action and the situation itself. As educators consider ways they have constructed their professional knowledge and problematic features of their teaching settings, they reconstruct the experience, potentially finding new meanings and ways of seeing problems and transforming their practice responses and knowledge.

The teaching-learning process in formal education constructs knowledge. In Huitt's (2003) model, teachers and learners come together to construct knowledge during Classroom Processes. What constitutes knowledge and how that is demonstrated is central to the teaching-learning process. In the next section, I present the concept of knowledge that I apply to this inquiry.

**Knowledge.**

Stake (1978) reminds that theorists categorize knowledge as propositional or tacit, consisting of naturalistic or formal generalizations. Propositional knowledge verbalizes "observations of objects and events" (p.5). Tacit knowledge consists of everything other than symbols individuals remember, including words, "a multitude of inexpressible associations which give rise to new meanings, new ideas and new applications of the old" (p.6), producing understanding. Tacit knowledge can lead to propositional knowledge if one verbalizes naturalistic generalizations, "recognizing the similarities of objects and issues in and out of context and by sensing the natural covariations of happenings" (p.6). Naturalistic generalizations form knowledge which differs from formal, scientific generalizations, known in positivist circles as Truth. Schon's (1983) model helps practitioners explore the presence of naturalistic generalizations and critically select formal generalizations in practice settings.

Connelly and Clandinin's foundational work (1988) relates to Schon's and Stake's ideas about knowledge and knowledge construction. Connelly and Clandinin re-conceptualized curriculum as emerging from classroom teachers' "personal and professional knowledge, rather than through the top-down conduit of policy, documents, and standardized measures" (Ciuffetelli Parker, Pushor & Kitchen, 2011, p. 4). They consider the importance of the point of view of those involved in the teaching and learning process, including the experiences, personal practical knowledge, that teachers and learners bring to the teaching and learning experience. They define personal practical knowledge as the knowledge found in one's past experiences, present thoughts and body, and in future plans and dealings (Ciuffetelli Parker, et. al., 2011). In this view,

knowledge for teaching, and by extension that which is taught, is based on meaning

people construct over time, inherently tied to relationships among those involved, and

which outsiders cannot script (Craig, 2011).  This relational view of personal, practical

knowledge appears to align with the concept of class climate I consider in the next

section.

        **Classroom climate.**

For the purposes of this instrumental case study, I consider classroom climate as a

systemic, dynamic, interactive component of the teaching-learning process in which

individual characteristics and responses interact with factors within the environment,

influencing both the individual and the system (Gillen, Wright, & Spink, 2011), the ways

in which teacher-learners "experience the psychological and physical characteristics of

the classroom" (p. 66).  Researchers and practitioners have long pondered the

conceptually-elusive notion of Classroom climate.  Scholars do not share a common

definition (Gillen, et. al., 2011).  Scholars attribute part of this definition difficulty to the

various research methods and measures used to try to identify specific components

(Chavez, 1984; Meehan, Cowley, Finch, Chadwick, Ermolov, & Riffle, 2004) of what

has been "described as perceived quality of the classroom setting" (Gillen, et. al., 2011, p.

65).  Social psychologists, not educators, pioneered research in the area with specific

interest in interactions between students, and students and teachers (Chavez, 1984).

Some (Chavez, 1984; Meehan, et. al., 2004)  credit John Withall with considering

classroom climate as the social-emotional climate of the classroom, including individual

(one's inner world, goals, and activities) and group (morale, sense of meaningfulness,

problem solving, kind and extent of interpersonal interactions) components.  Others

consider specific teacher behaviors and physical attributes of the learning environment as aspects of classroom climate worthy of study (Chavez, 1984; Meehan, et. al., 2004).

Studies of classroom climate in higher education focus on students' perceptions of community in traditional-lecture or cooperative-learning classes (Summers & Svinicki, 2007); students' perceptions of classroom climate, achievement goals, and outcomes (Church, Elliot, & Gable, 2001); the role of socio-emotional climate in freshman learning (Beard, Clegg, & Smith, 2007); case study of a higher-education classroom that supports creativity (Cole, Sugioka, & Yamagata-Lynch, 1999) and; the influence of teacher spirituality in classroom climate (Shahjahan, 2009). Undergraduate students in cooperative classrooms perceived a greater sense of connection to others and adopted a mastery-goal orientation when they engaged in interactive-learning activities which they found personally meaningful than did those in traditional-lecture classrooms (Summers & Svinicki, 2007). When students found the lectures interesting and the professor deemphasized grades and did not utilize harsh grading policies, mastery-goal orientation, grades, and intrinsic motivation increased in traditional-lecture classrooms (Church, et. al., 2001). Additionally, when freshmen were given the chance to reflect on their emotions and how their emotions impacted their level of engagement in learning, they seemed better able to understand and improve their own learning process, suggesting the need for a more affective, holistic approach to the SoTL in higher education (Beard, et. al., 2007).

In a case study of an advanced-level graphics-communication course, researchers found personal teacher-student relationships, teacher de-emphasis on grades with use of non-standardized assessments, openness and freedom of choice, direct instruction about

activities involving divergent and convergent thinking as important supportive

characteristics of student creativity (Cole, et. al, 1999). Each characteristic stemmed

from conscious choices the teacher made based on his values and beliefs about creativity

and the teaching-learning process. The combination of these choices related directly to

students' perceptions of increased comfort in the learning setting, freedom to offer ideas,

ask questions or take risks, and trust the instructor and classmates. Students further

reported they developed new conceptualizations of creativity, and felt encouraged in their

own creativity. The teacher-researcher considered these as important characteristics in all

classroom settings, as "creativity is an essential element necessary for learning" (p.277).

Further, this teacher valued interpersonal connections with students as essential to

creating knowledge. Others (e.g., Shahjahan, 2009) refer to this interconnection of

beliefs about relationship, knowledge, and creativity as spirituality.

In a developing area in the literature, at least one study (Shahjahan, 2009)

illustrates ways teachers' spirituality influences pedagogical choices which support a

classroom climate conducive for developing relationships, openness, and freedom in the

teaching-learning process. A case study of four "spiritually minded activist-scholars in

the Canadian university context" (p. 121) demonstrated specific ways teachers' spiritual

beliefs influenced interactions with students within a pedagogy of hope, encouraged

expression of oppressive student world views in a respectful and supportive way, so that

students might more critically reflect upon and transform them. These teachers' beliefs

helped them overcome their own initially negative responses to some students'

comments, allowing them to consciously interact with these students from a more caring

and loving place, encouraging critical thinking and civic engagement. Findings

suggested spirituality provides a different knowledge base, building trust, and including

embodied learning activities which allow for students' critical self-reflexivity.

Researchers refer to this kind of critical, dialogical learning, a re-imagining of

"how things might be different for both themselves and the other" which develops

"greater insight into differences and possibility" as "the will to potentiality", believed to

require trust between teacher-learners as it involves risk (Curazon-Hobson, 2002, p. 267).

Curazon-Hobson (2002) suggests that trust relates to students' perception of care and

challenge, and their experience of care and community within and outside the classroom.

Risk, inherent in this view, develops knowledge through interpretation of others' stories,

histories and perspectives, along with one's own; considers alternative realities, as

teacher-learners share their stories, listen to others' stories and provide meaningful

feedback in respectful and caring ways.  Curazon-Hobson's ideas seem to relate directly

to Cole, Sugioka, & Yamagata-Lynch's (1999) findings about classroom characteristics

which support creativity, Shahjahan's (2009) findings regarding the influence of

teachers' spirituality on classroom climate, and findings from the pilot study (Wilcox,

2011) connecting perceptions of classroom climate and knowledge construction.  Another

study relates the poor quality of interpersonal relationships and uncritical knowledge

construction in undergraduate psychology classrooms (Atwood, et. al., 2010) and offers

further consideration of the pilot findings connecting classroom climate and students'

learning experiences.

Atwood, Turnbull, & Carpendale (2010) found distinct differences in classroom

talk between teachers and students, and students with one another, in first and fourth year

undergraduate psychology courses, which produced distinct differences in the type of

reasoning students achieved and knowledge students developed. Researchers recorded, transcribed and analyzed classroom conversations. Atwood, et. al. (2010) used Mercer's categories--exploratory, cumulative, or disputational--to analyze the classroom talk. The researchers contend that only exploratory talk fits the Piagetian notion of cooperative relationship (one based on mutual respect and understanding, characterized by reciprocity, discussion and a positive emotional climate) making it the only way to develop deep knowledge. Exploratory talk constituted the majority of fourth year classroom interactions between teacher and students and between students. The researchers characterized first-year classes as cumulatively or disputationally driven, defensive, and oppositional, particularly in teacher-student interactions. When considering results, they noted differences in the physical arrangement of the teaching-learning environments, teaching goals, curriculum, evaluation methods, and teacher perceptions of levels of knowledge of the first and fourth year classes as important contextual information (Atwood, et. al., 2010).

Wang (2012) considers student and teacher characteristics, the culture and climate of the class and institution, and the knowledge product of instruction as the bases for relational teaching. I presented these previously in Huitt's (2003) model and discuss this more fully in the next section.

**Relational teaching.**

Attention to interpersonal, relational dynamics is important for developing the level of emotional safety people need to willingly participate in creative drama activities, no matter what the setting (Blatner, 2007). In the discussion of relational teaching and ways it contributes to building this climate which follows, I suggest the tie between this

teaching philosophy and orientation and using creative drama as a pedagogical strategy.

In 1998, M. E. Bosniak declared that teachers in the new millennium "will have to be a psychologist. Schools of psychology and education will create … teachers who can clear cognitive blocks by deeply listening and drawing out the emotional self of the learner" (p. 5). Bosniak presented a model of relational teaching, a list of 12 interpersonal and intrapersonal characteristics and skill sets needed in addition to domain knowledge and pedagogical proficiency. This list (authenticity, safety, joyfulness, modeling, open-mindedness, validating, attentive, responsive/detached, in relationship with self, in relationship with student, negotiative/flexible/empowering, and risking) (Bosniak, 1998, pp. 5-9) represents the core of a pedagogical approach now recognized in SoTL in K-12 education (Butler, 2012; Lievow, 2006), higher education (Hobson & Morrison-Saunders, 2013), teacher education (McDonald, 2013) and social work (Konrad, 2010; Wang, 2012).

Central to all relational teaching theories and pedagogy is the importance of the relationship between teacher and student to learning. McDonald (2013) considers this connected teaching as "student whispering", wherein the teacher "deals exclusively with the affect of the individual learner" (p. 335) while respecting the student's existing knowledge, providing appropriate experiences for additional learning, and opportunities for students to access others' perspectives. Butler (2012) found that only relational teaching goals predicted teacher social support, K-12 students' perceptions of such support, and mastery-instruction strategies as teachers report and K-12 students confirm. Further, students indicated that relationally-motivated teachers did not sacrifice academic rigor.

Social work education emphasizes relational teaching is associated with developing reflective practice in adult learners.  This literature (e.g., Konrad, 2010; Wang, 2012;) discusses the importance of teacher authenticity and use of self, in building a learning environment that feels safe to learners, simultaneously modeling interpersonal skills, balancing theoretical and practical knowledge, while facilitating the group.  Such modeling and facilitation increases students' level of presence, listening skills and cultural sensitivity, while decreasing their overall anxiety about dealing with emotionally-charged situations, and their need to deflect emotional experiences by rushing through or feeling pressure to fix situations (Konrad, 2010).  Relational practice further encourages student self-reflection and authenticity by requiring teachers to model reflective practice (Wang, 2012).

**Synthesis of relevant teaching and learning considerations.**

Using creative drama as a pedagogical strategy necessitates creating a classroom climate conducive for initiating and supporting creativity and holistic learning.  Higher-education classroom-climate literature suggests that teacher beliefs influence practice choices (e.g., Shahjahan, 2009), decisions and behaviors related to instruction (e.g., Atwood, et. al., 2010), which then influence students' perceptions of connection and community within the class (Cole, et. al., 1999), thus affecting levels of motivation and goal orientation (Church, et. al., 2001; Summers & Svinicki, 2007), risk taking (Curazon-Hobson, 2002), and self-regulation (Beard, et. al., 2007), which further influence classroom climate.  Educators primarily concerned with developing relationships with and among students, by developing a safe, welcoming classroom climate, using interpersonal skills as basis for a relational pedagogy (Bosniak, 1998) engage in mastery

instruction (Butler, 2012), create more effective student learning environs, and encourage students to develop their own reflective abilities (Wang, 2012).

Traditional approaches to teaching and learning focus on the characteristics, processes and behaviors of individuals involved, continuing to support a more Cartesian orientation to teaching and learning, with heavy emphasis on cognitive processes above all others. Such approaches stress product-based outcomes (e.g., test scores) andutilize content memorization as a primary learning strategy, while ignoring individual experiences within the social context. Huitt's (2003) Transactional Model of the Teaching Learning Process offers an alternative conceptual frame for better considering the interactive contexts within which knowledge construction takes place during holistic approaches to learning. While Huitt originally developed this model to illustrate the systemic way elements interact to improve academic achievement scores, the model supports and scaffold an in-depth and nuanced analysis of students' varied contexts and their interplay with various kinds of teacher-determined desired-learning outcomes. I use the model to consider Huitt's claims of the order of importance of the models's elements when instructional goals differ from traditional achievement outcomes, as may occur when relational, reflective educators use creative drama as a learning strategy.

Schon's (1983) model of reflective practice offers a way to reconstruct and learn from practice situations which teachers can use and model for students, particularly those in courses tied to potential practice areas such as psychology. I utilized this approach when implementing drama activities I created for my pedagogical practice, and while exploring students' experiences with those activities. Considering instructional effectiveness from this standpoint includes students' propositional, tacit and personal,

practical knowledge (Ciuffetelli Parker, et. al., 2011; Connelly & Clandinin, 1988) as relevant in better understanding and assessing students' abilities to apply psychological concepts and theories, and developing their own reflective practices.

 With this background and conceptual ties to the SOTL literature relevant to this study established in this chapter, I set the stage for methodological considerations presented in the next.

CHAPTER III


METHODOLOGY


The  purpose of this instrumental multiple case study was to increase

understanding of undergraduate psychology students' experiences with instructor-

developed creative drama activities in order to contribute to the scholarship of teaching

and learning (SoTL) in undergraduate psychology instruction while informing my own

practice.  Since creative drama is inherently a holistic activity (Emunah, 1994; Shweder,

et., al., 2008), involving body, emotion, cognition, and creativity, associated with spirit

(Piirto, 2004), it is important that research methods incorporate subjective experience to

increase the validity of the inquiry (Columbetti & Thompson, 2008; Overton, 2008).

Qualitative researchers use subjective, process-oriented, holistic data, analyze it, and look

for meaning (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2004) to understand perceptions and experiences of a

phenomenon in depth.  In the remainder of this chapter I delineate the research design,

methodological choices, and analysis I used to conduct this instrumental case study,

drawing from Robert Stake's (1995, 2005) approach to case study research.  I present and

discuss specific applications of Stake's ideas to this study.  Within this discussion I

summarize a pilot study I conducted in 2010 that informed this study.

**A Short Review**

Before delineating specific methodological considerations, I present a brief review of the problem this study addressed and research questions to refresh the reader's memory, and follow with detail about the epistemology, theoretical perspective and methodology that grounds the study.

**Statement of the Problem**

In the current era of neo-liberal higher-educational reform, insufficient in-depth, detailed understanding of students' experiences in undergraduate psychology is available for relational, reflective psychology educators to make informed decisions about effectively incorporating creative, innovative activities, such as creative drama, into their pedagogy. Understanding students' experiences with specific activities or approaches provides important information for improving those students' experiences through an individual, reflective, relational pedagogical practice in higher education. By implication, continuing to view students' experiences as less valuable in SoTL of undergraduate psychology than pre-test/post-test product outcomes limits practice options for educators in the field.

**Research Questions**

Stake leaves the specifics of the number of questions, their content, and which set, issue or topic, ultimately structures the study to the discretion of the researcher as the study demands. He ultimately suggests that the researcher develop "a flexible list of questions, progressively redefines issues, and seizes opportunities to learn the unexpected" (1995, p. 29). Several researcher-driven issues focused my initial interest in conducting this study, among them:

- What are undergraduate psychology students' experiences of learning with creative drama activities?
    - What factors seem to influence their experiences?
- What nuances in experiences emerge from the different activities?
    - Which activities seem to work better than others? What factors seem to influence these experiences?
- What are students' experiences with embodiment within the activities?
    - What are the implications for higher education reform?
- How might students' experiences of creative drama activities better inform undergraduate psychology pedagogy?
    - How do creative drama activities seem to facilitate understanding of psychological concepts?

These questions later evolved into the research questions posed in Chapter One:

- How do undergraduate psychology students experience creative drama activities?
- How do undergraduate psychology students' describe their experiences of learning with creative drama activities?
    - What do students seem to use as touchstones for making meaning during the activities?
    - Which aspects of the activities do students identify as important to their learning?
- What nuances in students' experiences emerge from the different activities?

- o   In what ways do students characterize their activity preferences?

- o   In what, if any, ways do students' meaning making touchstones seem to shift or change from activity to activity?

**Epistemology: Constructionism**

Constructionism developed as field of thought, a counterpoint to the theoretical perspective of post/positivism and the natural sciences' search for objective explanations used to predict and control.  Constructionism posits that the context of human interaction in the world constructs all knowledge and meaning as a social phenomenon.  Meaning is not discovered, nor does absolute truth exist, as claimed by positivist and post-positivist perspectives.  Constructionism values subjective experience in developing an interpretive understanding of the social action of interest (Crotty, 2010) through constructionism or constructivism (Patton, 2002).  While some scholars use these terms interchangeably, others (Crotty, 2010; Patton, 2002) distinguish constructionists, who focus on meaning making in relation to the enculturation process and the group, from constructivists, who focus on individual cognitive processes in making meaning.  In this study I focus on students' meaning making from interactive activities within the social setting of a class, making constructionism the epistemological basis for the work.

Constructionism relies on ontological relativity, the belief that "all tenable statements about existence depend on a worldview, and no worldview is uniquely determined by empirical sense data about the world" (Patton, 2002, p.97).  This belief helps explain how two people can participate in the same event, yet have different experiences of it, with both views being "as valid and worthy of respect as any other" (Crotty, 2010, p. 58).  I use this view of knowledge and the knower to focus this inquiry

into understanding students' experiences with creative drama activities.

**Theoretical Perspective: Interpretivism**

Research conducted from a constructionist perspective seeks the complexity of experience, rather than reducing findings to generalizable truths as is the goal in post/positivist research. The interpretivist focus relies on participants' constructed meanings, as the researcher interprets those meanings through understanding of their context (Cresswell, 2009). Symbolic interactionism (SI), an American form of interpretivism, emphasizes the need to put oneself in another's place within the culture, to try to find, as much as possible, the insider's perspective and meanings, and the interpretive process the person uses to make meaning from social interaction. SI understands the meaning of objects and events fluctuates based upon and in relation to context. Scholars (Crotty, 2010; Patton, 2002) credit Herbert Blumer with developing pragmatist George Herbert Mead's ideas into the three fundamental SI premises: 1) people base their actions towards things on the meanings they give those things; 2) those meanings come from the interactions the person has with others; 3) meanings adjust and change as the person interprets, encounters, and deals with things (Blumer, 1969). I utilize a symbolic interactionist approach to qualitative case study. The work focuses on uncovering students' meanings and their processes in meaning making in order to more profoundly understand their experiences with the creative drama activities.

**Methodology**

I chose case study, one methodology aligned with constructionist, interpretivist research (Baxter & Jack, 2008; Stake, 1978; 1995), as the methodology for this study as it allows in-depth exploration "of a program, event, activity, process, or one or more

individuals" (Cresswell, 2009, p.13) in context, using a variety of data sources (Baxter & Jack, 2008). Case study is particularly appropriate when "the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident" (Yin, 2009, p.18), as happens when considering students' experiences in a classroom, and when there is "a sincere interest in learning how (people) function in their ordinary pursuits … with a willingness to put aside many presumptions while we learn "(Stake, 1995, p. 1). Part of my rationale for conducting the study comes from my sincere desire to better understand students' experiences with these activities as part of my own reflective practice, while further informing other undergraduate psychology educators about creative drama use as a possible instructional strategy for their practice. An era of higher-educational reform that calls for innovative, engaging pedagogical strategies supported by research that bridges the "knowing-doing gap" (Ball, 2012, p. 285) needs approaches to SOTL that utilize approaches beyond pre-test/post-test statistics to focus on students' learning.

For Stake (2005), case study is more concerned about what the researcher will study than choosing a study method. In this study I considered students' experiences with the creative drama activities I created and use in my courses to identify touchstones, what students used and how they used them, to make meaning from the activities. I drew on multiple data sources, in context, to support a multi-faceted understanding of the complexity of the case, or single entity bound by time, space, and/or components (Merriam & Associates, 2002; Stake, 1995, 2005; Yin, 2009) under analysis. I describe specific data sources used in this study in subsequent sections.

The psychological literature makes extensive use of case studies. Texts used in undergraduate introductory (e.g., Weiten & Lloyd, 2010), developmental (e.g., Arnett,

2012), and educational psychology (e.g., Moreno, 2010) courses routinely recognize case studies as research methodology within the field.  Case studies in psychology are used as existence proofs (demonstrating a particular psychological condition or phenomenon actually occurs), ways to study rare, unusual or atypical phenomena, and for generating hypotheses to test concepts (Lilienfeld, Lynn, Namy, & Woolf, 2014).  As Arnett (2012) notes, "Some of the most influential studies in the history of human development research were case studies" (p.32).  Educational psychology uses case studies to understand approaches to teaching and learning in depth and detail (Moreno, 2010).

With this study I sought to explore students' experiences with creative drama activities in undergraduate psychology instruction, with the instructor acting as teacher-researcher.  I focused data collection on students in my courses, considering the background of individual students, the physical classroom setting, my role in activities, and class and college climate as potentially contributing to their experiences.  The complexity of the students' experiences, the lack of clarity in boundaries between context and the experiences, and the desire to understand this approach to psychology teaching in depth and detail make a case study approach appropriate to the inquiry.  The following sections discuss the particular approach to case study I used in this inquiry before I delineate the application of the approach to this study.

**Stake's (1995) Approach to Case Study with Applications for this Study**

Two researchers, Robert Stake and Robert Yin (Baxter & Jack, 2008) take different approaches to case study methodology.  Yin (1981) takes a more post-positivist approach (Stake, 1995) used in a variety of contexts, including health science (Baxter & Jack, 2008).  Stake (1978, 1995, 2005, 2006) provides an interpretivist approach (e.g.,

Cresswell, 2009; Merriam & Associates, 2002; Patton, 2002), and a long history of case study in educational research and evaluation. His work changed the shape of participant-oriented program evaluation through the development of responsive evaluation, which uses case studies as key components (Fitzpatrick, Sanders, & Worthen, 2004). Guba and Lincoln rejected all other program evaluation methods in their 1981 review of major program evaluation approaches, and later adopted Stake's ideas in their approach to naturalistic evaluation (Fitzpatrick, et. al., 2004). Stake's interpretivist approach holds a firm place in the qualitative educational literature.

According to Stake (1978, 1995, 2005, 2006), the biggest advantage of case study research over other qualitative research forms is that it provides an opportunity to examine a phenomenon of interest in depth and detail. Case study offers a multifaceted, contextualized approach to understanding the case and its issues. Through diverse methods and narrative description, case study seeks to explore and understand the case while providing vicarious experiences for readers of the study. "As the reader recognizes essential similarities to cases of interest to them, they establish the basis for naturalistic generalization (1978, p. 7) … recognizing the similarities of objects and issues in and out of context and by sensing the natural covariations of happenings" (p.6). This approach further adds to the reader's "existing experience and humanistic understanding" (p.7), becoming important "because of its embeddedness in the experience of the reader" (1995, p. 86). The researcher's level of personal experience with the case, what Stake (2005) calls its embraceability, has direct implications for the level of understanding the researcher brings to the reader.

Stake's approach further meshes with Donald Schon's ideas on reflective practice.

64

My awareness of this connection came after conducting the study rather than informing

its initial design.  Through data analysis I came to realize the parallels to reflective

practice as Schon conceptualizes it.  In many ways, how I have implemented Stake's

approach to case study is what Schon refers to as reflection-on-action.  After enacting the

activities, students reflected on their experiences through class discussions, interviews

and writing.  During data analysis patterns emerged concerning what worked, what

didn't, and what needs to change instructionally to maximize the potential of the

activities.  This level of reflection is necessary for understanding student experience, and

improving instruction and student learning outcomes.  Considering these patterns informs

me, as a reflective, relational teacher-researcher, and other psychology instructors

considering using creative drama in their pedagogy, adding to the contextualized, deep,

detailed, practical knowledge needed in the field to bridge "the knowing-doing gap"

(Ball, 2012, p. 285).  I provide details of Schon's ideas in relation to my positionality and

to Stake's concept of embraceablity in subsequent sections.  I discuss Stake's approach in

the remainder of this section.

Stake advises potential case study researchers to consider Anticipation,

developing a list of practical matters such as scholarly preparation through literature

review of both the focus of study and case study methods, and anticipating study-specific

problems, events, and people as they consider and identify the case.  Considering and

anticipating the roles inherent in the case study research process have implications for the

study and the meanings of the case (Stake, 1995).  Such roles form consciously, by

prescription, or by default; all carrying potential implications for the case and it issues.

He warns the potential case researcher that the "literature offers lots of examples but not

clear guidance" (p. 104) about roles and advises the researcher to try to anticipate which ones they may need beforehand and rely on experience in decision making. He emphasizes the importance of researcher experience in determining the source, type, and form of data he or she collects for the study and a data-gathering plan containing "definition of case, list of research questions, identification of helpers, data sources, allocation of time, expenses, intended reporting" (1995, p.51). He offers guidelines, rather than mandates.

Stake (1995, 2005) suggests that key steps in research design involve selecting the type of case study the researcher will conduct and the case. The case is "an integrated system" with "a boundary and working parts" (1995, p.2). Intrinsic case studies inform the researcher's intrinsic interest in and desire to learn about a particular case. Instrumental case studies enhance general understanding through studying a particular case. Collective or multiple case studies coordinate understanding across individual cases. More important than the type of case, the level of interest, intrinsic or instrumental, shapes methods used in a given study. "The more intrinsic interest in the case, the more we will restrain our curiosities and special interests and the more we will try to discern and pursue issues critical to (the case)" (1995, p.4).

Stake (1995) emphasizes that the case study researcher's primary obligation is to understand the case, with the most important criteria in case selection involving the opportunity to learn. He suggests that researchers identify cases they can easily access, that welcome study, and are willing to participate. He declares, "Case study research is not sampling research" (p.4). Even in instrumental or collective studies, he warns against selecting participants by sampling attributes or becoming overly concerned with

representing or defending the typicality of the case.  The goal remains to explore the phenomena of the case in depth.

Stake (1995, 2005) reminds that particularization, not generalization, is case study's focus, although a certain form of generalization is possible when readers extrapolate study elements they consider similar to their own settings or circumstances. The goal of particularization relies heavily on the researcher's ability to interpret observations, refine or corroborate meanings while refocusing observations in a reiterative process.  A case remains open to change at all levels of the design as the study dictates.  This includes developing research questions which Stake relates to issues.

Issues provide the conceptual structure for organizing the case and should increase understanding of the complexity of the case.  Issues suggest the problem, the conflict, and the social, political, historical and personal contexts of the case.  When an issue statement or question interests the researcher more than the case, this signals an instrumental case study.  Stake encourages prospective case study researchers to routinely revisit the research questions that emerge from issues throughout the course of the study, refocusing them as needed, stating frankly, "The best research questions evolve during the study" (1995, p.33).

Case study analysis differs from other qualitative inquiry approaches and depends in part on whether the case is intrinsic or instrumental.  Analysis balances direct interpretation of individual instances or categorical aggregation of instances with the manner and extent determined by the type of interest, intrinsic or instrumental, driving the case (Stake, 1995).  Intrinsic case studies emphasize direct interpretation; instrumental case studies rely more on categorical aggregation.   Multi-case studies

balance emphasis between in-depth analysis of each case and what that analysis reveals about the quintain, the overall phenomenon explored across cases (Stake, 2006). Case study researchers analyze "correspondence" (1995, p.78), patterns or consistencies within specific conditions. . Correspondence emerges through either coding or direct interpretation, in single instances or in meanings that repeatedly reappear. Stake suggests analyzing data considering etic and emic issues to insure "getting everything of interest" (p.81).

Finally, Stake describes the flexibility of presenting case studies, leaving the presentation form to the researcher's discretion, provided the case is accessible to the audience. Researchers often present case studies descriptively and holistically. With that background, I focus the remainder of this chapter on presenting the specific ways Stake's guidance manifested within this particular study.

**Anticipation: Embracing the Case through Previous Researcher Experience**

As I put Stake's (1995) concept of Anticipation into practice in this study, I realized that many of my professional experiences contributed to the value and embraceability of the work. The following subsections present such professional experiences, the development of activities in my teaching practice, and a summary of a pilot study I conducted that each relate to the current research. Contemporary qualitative research acknowledges and honors that the researcher's relation to the topic under study, or positionality, shapes the approach, data collection, and analysis, and is therefore important to describe (Patton, 2002).

**Embraceability and positionality: My previous professional and experiential knowledge.**

I began my professional career in 1980 as a secondary-public-school special-education teacher. My training focused on the importance of building relationships with students to help them engage with learning, and reflecting on one's teaching to improve student outcomes. When I quickly burned out in this setting I returned as a non-traditional pre-med student to the very community college campus where I have taught as an adjunct since 1999. I am therefore familiar with the course load that many of my nursing/health-care related students bear. I also know the campus climate well.

In 1991 I completed a master's program in social welfare, followed by several years in clinical practice working primarily with children and their families. My social work education and training further emphasized the importance of relationships and reflection within practice, and exposed me to what I now recognize as Schon's model of reflective practice. Schon developed his model (1983) in response to the more post/positivist notion that practitioners should rely heavily on professional, theoretical knowledge to inform professional decisions. He held that practitioners actually face many unique, context-specific, in-the-moment decisions that don't lend themselves easily to applying theoretical knowledge. His model follows more closely to what people do in everyday decision-making situations, in specific contexts, especially educators and clinical practitioners. Schon recognized that "through transaction with the situation, the practitioner shapes it and becomes part of it" (Kinsella, 2007, p. 106).

Practitioners bring their own histories and multifaceted existing knowledge with them into practice situations. He calls this use of experience and knowledge knowing-in-

action.  They use this and other contextual, in-the-moment pieces of information to make decision, define and solve problems, and respond to others.  He calls this reflection-in-action.  Afterwards, practitioners may think about the event, weigh what worked or didn't and consider other actions they may use in the future.  This he calls reflection-on-action.  This model, used in education and training in many health care and health care related fields (e.g., Kinsella, 2007), such as social work (e.g., Mirick & Davis, 2015), and education (e.g., Wieringa, 2011), helps practitioners increase awareness of the knowledge they use in action, the process they use when they reflect-in-action, as they reflect-on-action to question and improve their practice.

My clinical experiences provide helpful examples in illustrating certain concepts; however, for many years in my current academic position, I longed for more engaging, alternative-instructional methods to enliven my teaching.  Existing instructional methods to that point included lecture with a Socratic flair and class discussions.  I wanted strategies that focused on holistic student learning and invited students to consider important psychological concepts in deeper, more personally meaningful ways.

Prior to entering OSU's doctoral program in educational psychology, I discovered creative drama as instruction during an intensive alternative training in drama therapy (DT) at Kansas State University.  I gained valuable experience learning with such activities.  I returned to the classroom committed to developing what I'd learned into an instructional strategy for my undergraduate psychology courses.

**Embraceability: Activities under study.**

I designed the activities used in this study, basing them on and adapting many from Emunah's (1994) work and those used in the alternative drama therapy courses in

70

which I participated at Kansas State University during the summer of 2006.  My own experience with a process drama enacting the limbic system's functioning under perceived threat inspired me to provide similar opportunities to my students.  I began by incorporating that specific activity into my practice, hoping it would help students grasp more readily the functions of and connections among individual parts of the brain.  When I noticed students' level of enjoyment and engagement with the activity, their spontaneous comments ("Wow! I get it!") during and after the activity, and increase in overall student participation in class following the activity, I constructed and implemented more activities over a period of several years.  Appendix F contains written instructions for all the activities used in the classes from which I gathered data for this study.  These diverse activities range in complexity and purpose from very brief, movement-oriented improvisations without dialogue, to more involved process drama constructions.  Below, I describe the Traumatic Brain process drama as an example of the types of activities students experienced and clarify the terms "creative drama", "process drama" and "improvisation" through the example.

The purpose of the Traumatic Brain activity is to help increase students' understanding of processing within the limbic system according to a particular theory, or the story (Leavy, 2009) the theory tells.  The theoretical material includes a specific explanation of how the thalamus, amygdala, hippocampus and frontal lobes of the brain work together in processing information leading to action in both non-stressful/traumatic and stressful/traumatic circumstances.  Typically I introduce this activity within the first three weeks of the 16-week semester when we discuss the brain and its functions.  I first review the functions of each part of the brain.  Then, students voluntarily take on the

roles of the parts (thalamus, amygdala, hippocampus, frontal lobes, and cortisol, in the stressful/traumatized version) to enact in stories (non-stressful/traumatic, stressful/traumatic versions) that other class members create. The class co-creates the stories on the spot as the enactors listen. The actors spontaneously enact their role based on the story line and their knowledge of their part's function.

This student-created story enactment, intended to increase understanding, fits the definition of creative drama used in this study. Because students work together to develop and enact a behavioral model that matches their imagined stories, the activity also fits the definition of a process drama. The teacher is free to be more or less directive in instructing the actors, while giving as few instructions as possible. Students spontaneously enact their role in front of the class. There is no script. In other words, students must improvise their actions and dialogue, and solve problems in-the-moment.

The exact nature of participation among students varies by activity and by class. Typically, five or six students enact roles for this process drama while the other class members develop the story they will enact. Some activities focus on story development in small groups. Others rely on enaction between dyad teams. Regardless of the exact nature of participation, all activities in this study require that students make something happen spontaneously or create a story to increase their understanding of concepts with minimal instruction and no script.

The teacher's role from expert knowledge source to bystander shifts depending on the timing of the activity (before lecture to introduce new concepts or after lecture to clarify them) and throughout the activity. Either teachers or students initiate the role of asking questions to clarify connections to theory and assess that the connections have

been made.  This role is a vital component to discussion following the activity.  Data

from the study reflects that students were aware of the activities' pedagogical

components, their timing, steps in enactment, my role during the activities, the

spontaneity required in enactment, collaborations with others during the activities, and

post-enactment discussions in addition to links to conceptual material from class lectures.

### Embraceability: Doctoral studies.

I began doctoral work in the fall of 2007.  Early in my program I searched the

literature for studies detailing the use of creative drama in undergraduate psychology

teaching.  The few dated studies I found focused primarily on effectiveness as

demonstrated by pre-test/post-test measures of content knowledge, with little practical

information for instructors, and even less insight into how students experienced the

activities.  Since this realization, my doctoral studies revolved around developing this

area of inquiry.

I utilized my course work to increase and refine my knowledge and understanding

of the literature pertinent to developing this study.  I served as an ArtsBridge Scholar and

educational psychology research assistant for the University in an interdisciplinary, arts-

infused project in elementary schools of a local school district.  This experience

broadened my knowledge of the arts-in-education literature and further supported my

belief in the value of interdisciplinary pedagogies such as creative dramatics.  I gained

experience as a qualitative, ethnographic, case study researcher as a member of that

project's research teams (Bridges, Wilcox, & Montgomery, 2010; Wilcox, Bridges, &

Montgomery, 2010).  I further received more supervised assistance and training while

teaching undergraduate educational psychology courses for the university as a graduate

73

assistant than I had in previous years as an adjunct instructor at the community college. I

developed a resource booklet of the creative drama activities for undergraduate

psychology instructors as a Preparing Future Faculty in Psychology Program fellow

project. I postponed disseminating the resource booklet, in part, to allow for a

preliminary, systematic field trial of the activities. I conducted a pilot study (Wilcox,

2011) as part of that field trial and to prepare for this study. I provide details of that study

in the next section.

**Embraceability and validity: The pilot study.**

In the pilot study (Wilcox, 2011) I explored how undergraduate psychology

students' perceptions of learning with creative drama activities were similar to or differed

from traditional models of learning, such as Zimmerman's (2000) Self-regulation Theory.

I recruited 12 student participants from one developmental course using purposive,

criterion-based, convenience sampling (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2008) to identify

participants who engaged in at least one of the creative drama activities used in

instruction. I conducted 11 individual interviews lasting between 45 to 55 minutes each.

I further conducted one focus-group interview with 11 participants, which lasted for

about an hour. I audio recorded all interviews. I transcribed four individual interviews,

summarized and partially transcribed another individual interview and the focus group

interview. I focused analysis on these transcriptions.

I collected additional, supporting data from participating students' papers or in-

class written activities. Phenomenological techniques provided a broad, inclusive and

encompassing analytic view of students' perceptions of learning with the activities.

Students described shifts they perceived in classroom climate (lowered individual anxiety

74

and that of the class as a whole, introducing elements of fun and humor, "breaking ice" between individuals, increasing a sense of class community, "thawing out" theoretical concepts, fostering creativity), increased interpersonal understanding of the instructor, ways they perceived the activities helped them participate more fully in subsequent creative drama activities, increased their overall enjoyment in the class, and helped them better understand and retain key psychological concepts..

The pilot study (Wilcox, 2011) fruitfully prepared the current study in several ways. I conceptualized the study from start to finish, rather than joining a project following approval. I gained practical knowledge, comfort and confidence in interviewing that I took with me into the interviews for this study. Based on that experience, I also modified interview protocol questions for the current study. I realized I needed to free myself and students from questions aimed at any particular theoretical orientation to be able to focus more broadly on listening to students' stories about their experiences with as few preconceived ideas as possible. I analyzed the pilot data with peer and instructor feedback, which allowed me to practice analytic techniques and surface the key themes about relationship and class climate relevant to the symbolic interactionism approach in meaning making the current study. It affirmed my perceptions that students found the activities helpful and valuable to their learning beyond increasing conceptual understanding and raised questions about the touchstones students use while making meaning with the activities that I considered in designing this study. While a general qualitative approach with some ethnographic methods and phenomenological analysis were productive, the process clarified that case study was most suitable for my purpose of more deeply understanding my students' experiences

with these activities because of the complexity of thematic elements the pilot suggested. In addition, the experience of conducting research with my own students opened my eyes to the extent that the researcher can become biographer in case study research. I had no way of knowing if actors in this study would be as forthcoming with biographical stories as were their pilot study counterparts.

Those who volunteered for this study were more racially diverse as a group than those participating in the pilot. The number of students recruited was close to that of the pilot (13 in the current study, 12 in the pilot); however that number was spread across two consecutive introductory and one developmental course. This allowed for cross case analysis that extended across classes. Over half the students in this study detailed at times graphic accounts of trauma and high life stress as part of their past family or educational histories, more than those in the pilot, making this a new analytic focal point. I entered this study better prepared to represent this group of students having sought additional methodological and analytic resources, such as Stake and Wolcott, because of my pilot study experiences.

The current study built on this productive pilot study by exploring students' experiences as a bounded entity using additional data sources. Conducting a multiple case study extended some findings from the pilot, and added new layers of complexity and cross case comparisons within and between classes. The pilot study and previous educational and professional experiences I discussed in this section all contributed to and prepared me for undertaking this current multi-case study. In the remainder of this chapter I present specific ways I applied Stake's form of case study to this work.

**Case Type and Selection**

In this study student's (individual) experiences with creative drama activities were "studied to learn about their self-centering, complexity and situational uniqueness" (Stake, 2006, p. 7) in order to increase understanding in depth and detail of "an object or phenomenon or condition to be studied, a quintain, (pronounced kwin'ton)" (p.6), students' (plural) experiences with creative drama activities, in their "commonality and differences across manifestations" (p.40). Stake (2006) considers this arrangement a multi-case study. Because the study functions as part of my own reflective process, it contains intrinsic elements and interest; however, because I intended the study to inform practice decisions of other undergraduate psychology educators, provide specific activity guidelines, connect with the existing literature and add to the SoTL in undergraduate psychology, and raise implications for the SoTL in undergraduate psychology and higher education reform, this is an instrumental study.

**The Case**

Each case, or specific, functioning system or body with boundaries, working parts and purposes (Stake, 2005), in this study involves understanding a particular student's experiences with the creative drama activities. Figure 3.1 offers a representation of the individual cases and the contextual features. The case (represented by the central ring in the figure) focuses on specific experiences of individual students in a specific context (an undergraduate psychology class where the teacher is also the researcher and includes interactions with other students and the instructor). This reflects the understanding that class dynamics and climate could both influence individual students' experiences (prior and current) and be influenced by them. To paraphrase Stake (2005), it is not always

possible to say where student experiences with creative drama ends and where class

climate begins (and vice versa). I represent this possible overlay by placing the student

experiences' ring within the larger ring of potential contextual factors that could include

classroom climate. Those elements on the classroom climate ring are those outside case

features known to influence classroom climate and potentially shape students'

experiences.

**Figure 3.1.  The Case and Contextual Features**
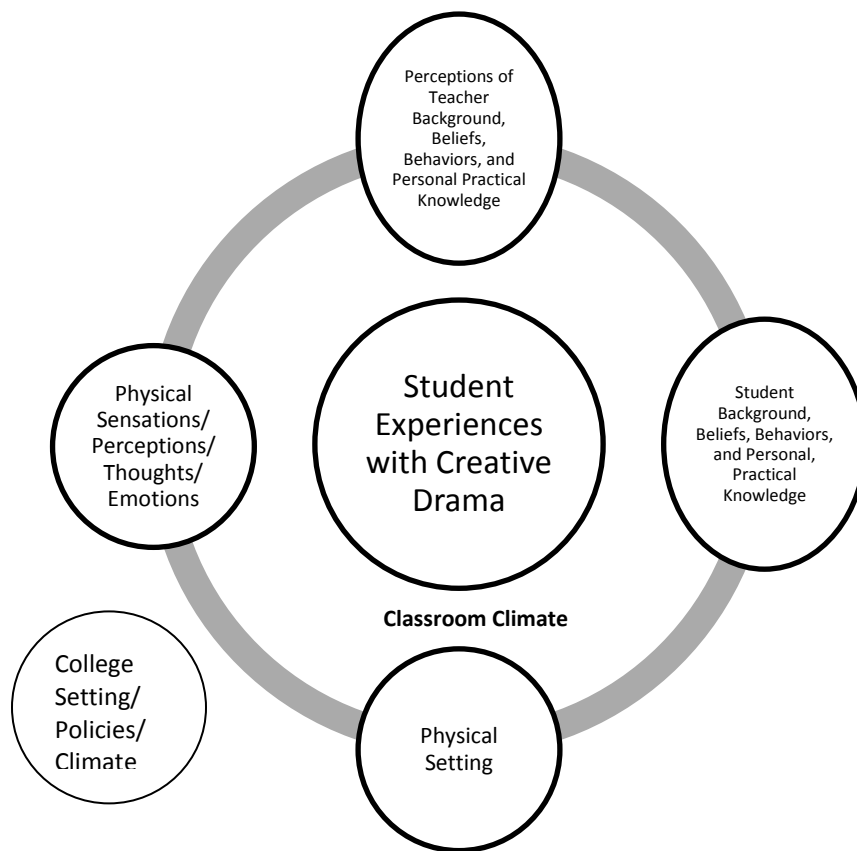


*Figure 2*. Features of the Case and Contexts illustrates possible interconnections between
the case and related elements.

Six out of 37 students volunteered from Class One. Two out of 25 students

volunteered from Class Two. Five out of 32 students volunteered from Class Three.

Students ranged in age from late teens to early 40s in all classes. Most participants were

female; one male from Class One and Three. I introduce individual cases in Chapter

Four.

Figure 3.2 represents the quintain. Each smiley face denotes a case, as

represented in Figure 3.1. The shading on each smiley face points towards the label for

the class in which the student participated. Those without shadow in Class One represent

two cases that stood out from the others in ways discussed in Chapter Six. Those with

**Figure 3.2. The Quintain**



*Figure 3*. Diagram of the quintain, students' experiences with creative drama activities,
including class divisions.

shadows clustered together near the intersection of the classes represent the seven cases who reported a history of trauma or high life stress. The two shaded faces represent two cases from Class Three that disappeared from the class before the end of the semester. Quintain findings are presented in Chapter Five.

**The case setting.**

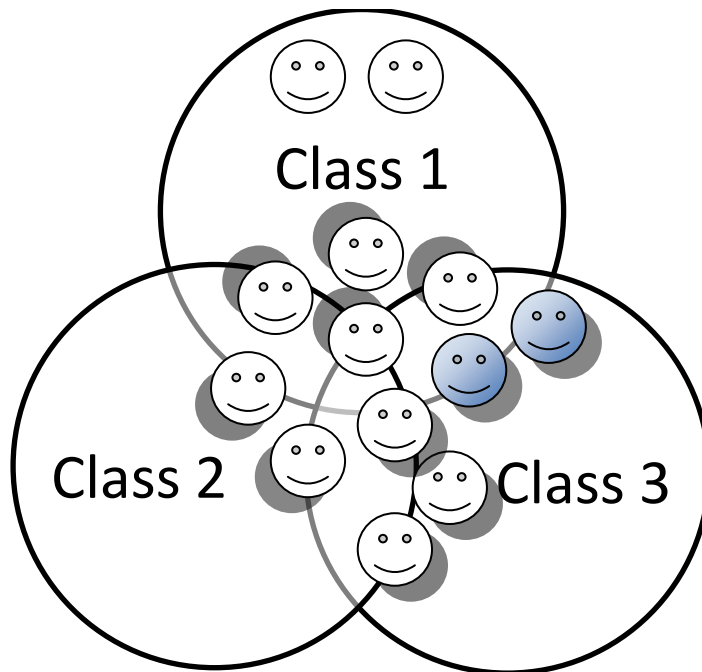Understanding the setting is important to understanding the case. I teach for a local multi-campus community college system serving over 20,000 students, offering over 200 different associate degrees and certificates of completion. The college is currently in the Top 35 of 1,150 community colleges nationwide which offer such degree and certificate programs. While all campuses offer general education courses, each also has its own specialized areas of emphasis and student base. My "Home Campus" was developed first in the system, and is located in the heart of downtown. Its specialty areas include computer, international language programs and a variety of health sciences; however I routinely encounter students from a wide variety of majors in my classes.

Official college diversity statistics from 2013 report 8,449 students, or 28.7%, self-report as belonging to a racial or ethnic minority. Of these, 3,093 (10.5%) self-report as Black or African American; 2, 506 (8.5%) self-report as American Indian or Alaska Native; 1,830 (6.2%) self-report as Hispanic or Latino; 1,569 (5.3%) self-report as more than one race; 975 (3.3%) self-report as Asian; 45 (0.15%) self-report as Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander. No official diversity statistics which classify students by sex, age, country of origin, socioeconomic level, or educational or employment history are readily available to faculty.

I have noticed consistent demographic trends in my classes over the years. My

class sizes range from 15-40 or more, with 30-40 students enrolled on average in introductory or developmental psychology courses. Typically, female students outnumber males. This pattern varies with the type of course. For instance, introductory classes are more likely to have a more even male/female split. The ratio in developmental classes may be much lower, probably due to the high number of women in the college pre-nursing program, which requires developmental psychology. Students who follow a traditional track from high-school graduation immediately into college are the minority in my classes. A varying percentage of traditional students receive local and/or state tuition assistance. Few of these students are totally financially self-supporting. Most of the remaining, nontraditional students however, work outside of school to support at least themselves. Some non-traditional students are female heads of households receiving federal and state assistance for educational and child rearing expenses. Many of the non-traditional students are 30 years old or older and have returned to school to change careers.

Typical demographics include at least one student whose country of origin is outside the United States and for whom English is not their primary language. At least two or three students per term will self-identify as having some form of learning difference, such as ADHD or dyslexia, beyond those connected with the college's student disabilities office. I have noted a higher percentage of racial and ethnic minority students in my classes than the official statistics indicate. I have encountered these same demographic trends in this context since I began teaching at the college in 1999.

The physical size of each classroom and the number of seats available dictates enrollment. In anticipation of attrition, maximum enrollment often exceeds the

supporting physical capabilities of the space. Sometimes this administrative gamble backfires, leaving students to scramble for a place to sit and me to plead for the same on their behalf with the administration. The physical setting varies. Some classrooms in the older, original part of the building, located along the building's perimeter, have windows which allow natural light into the room. Other interior classrooms, resulting from building renovations including conversion of former faculty offices and storage rooms, offer no windows or natural light, and are often oddly shaped or have structural elements such as supporting columns which break or segment the instructional space. Some older classrooms have small, movable desks which make the learning space more flexible; others with heavier rectangular melamine tables and chairs encourage a traditional lecture instructional delivery. None of the rooms allow for individual temperature control. All classrooms have land-line phones and computer access, with overhead projection and sound capability for instructional use.

**Recruitment**

The main criteria for participant inclusion in this case study were student status, enrollment in an undergraduate course I was teaching, and participation in the creative drama activities included in the study. Recruitment began as soon as possible following IRB approval for the study during the first semester of the study and within the first two weeks of subsequent semesters, following class discussion of research and methods used in the field. In order to be sensitive to the inherent power dynamics of the teacher-student relationship, as in the pilot study, I asked students to volunteer rather than directly soliciting individuals. I recruited through a script and flyer I developed and the IRB approved (see Appendices B & C) which described the study, what I was asking from

students, and informed participants that they could earn extra credit points for the class/interview as an incentive.  I distributed the flyer and read the script at the end of a class period.  I offered alternative extra credit opportunities of equivalent point value for those students that did not wish to participate in the study.

A couple of students responded immediately after I dismissed class following reading of the script and distribution of flyers.  Most waited and talked with me either before or after subsequent classes, sometimes weeks later.

**Data Collection**

Qualitative case studies rely on a variety of data.  For this study I collected data from student/actor generated documents, field notes and jottings, my journal entries, and student/actor interviews.  These are preferred methods of data collection in case studies (Crotty, 2010; Merriam and Associates, 2002; Patton, 2002; Stake, 1995).  Although observations typically count as key data sources, to understand participant experiences I primarily relied on interviews as the basis of this case study, using student/actor generated documents and my journal entries for comparison, corroboration or to question students' reports or themes that emerged during analysis.  I provide more detail about the interview and transcription process, researcher and student/actor generated documents in the next subsections.

**Actor generated documents.**

Actor generated documents from routine in-class assignments included short answer written feedback I requested about the Neuron Impulse, Neuron Script, and Detective (sensory memory) activities.  I used feedback about these early activities to make adjustments in presentation and monitoring discussions for subsequent activities.

Students provided this feedback before any interviews began.  I asked all students to complete a form for each of the activities with the following prompts:

- What were your experiences of this activity?

- During the activity I felt ….

- What stood out the most for me about this activity was ….

- I think this activity was meant to …

I distributed forms to students after the activity, before the end of class, or at the beginning of the next class as part of a review.  They had less than 10 minutes to complete the anonymous forms which they turned in before they left class.  I removed identifying information if students provided it accidentally, to protect confidentiality.  I kept hard copies of documents in files in the locked cabinet in my home.  I used this data as an analytic starting point and later utilized to corroborate and compare to emergent themes from transcript analysis.

**Interviews and transcriptions.**

The IRB approved an interview protocol prior to recruitment (see Appendix E). The pilot study protocol shaped initial questions for this semi-structured interview protocol, further informed by Huitt's (2003) Transactional Learning Model.

Part of the interview process involved finding an adequate, appropriate, comfortable, private, and easily accessible place to meet.  A meeting room adjacent to the adjunct faculty work area was such an available place; however support staff had to schedule use to avoid scheduling conflicts.  This led to a kind of appointment dance for scheduling interviews.  After students volunteered to participate in the study, we talked about where to meet.  I \offered the meeting room as a possibility.  If a student was open

to this, we set a tentative date and time.  I then checked with the adjunct support staff

about scheduling the room.  If the room was available at the requested day and time I

booked it and confirmed with the student.  If not, we'd begin the dance again.  I handled

two interviews with students from Class Two differently.  A campus fire and subsequent

displacement to another campus within the system meant the room was not available, nor

did our host campus have a counterpart.  Those two students and I met at their chosen

alternative spaces, an empty classroom on another college campus for one and a public

coffee house for another.

Interviews began during the last weeks of class for Class One, half way through

the term for Classes Two and Three.  Some interviews occurred immediately before or

after class.  Some were scheduled at other times.  Upon their arrival I offered students

water or a cup of coffee.  No one ever accepted the offer.  Most brought something to eat

or drink with them.  We reviewed the informed consent (see Appendix D) together.  I

asked if they had any questions (none did) and if they wanted to continue with the

interview.  All indicated they did and signed the form.  I asked permission to record the

interview before turning on the recorder.  All agreed.  While scheduled to last for an

hour, interviews actually lasted between 35 minutes (for the shortest) and an hour and 15

minutes (for the longest).  I conducted a total of 13 interviews.  I used an Olympus digital

voice recorder (model WS-802) to record interviews, purchased from Best Buy for under

$200.

While I appreciate Stake's (1995) concerns about the investment of time or

expense related to audiotape transcription, I find the transcription process helpful in

increasing my understanding of participants and their stories.  Additionally, this process

contributes to data immersion and incubation (Bailey, 2010), theoretical insights, and data analysis (Poindexter, 2002). I downloaded Expresscribe transcription software for free from the internet. I purchased a foot pedal and headset bundle from AltoEdge (AltoEdge USB foot pedal FPAEUSB2-S and Spectra transcription headset SP-USB) for $110 from the AltoEdge web site. Using this hardware and software, I transferred the digital files from the recorder to my home computer as soon as possible after each interview, then burned electronic copies onto CDs. I kept the electronic copies of the interview audio until I burned the CDs. Sometime after I burned the last CD my computer crashed. Whatever traces of the purged audio files might have remained in the system were lost in the crash. CDs are kept in a locked file cabinet in my home when I am not using them, and will destroy those following IRB guidelines. I transcribed using Microsoft Office Word 2010 for word processing. I began transcription as soon as possible after each interview and completed each transcription within a month of the interview. Transcriptions exist in electronic and hard copy form. As I work best when I have both hard copies of interview transcripts and e-copies of files which I can access simultaneously, I used both forms throughout the project. Hard copies were kept in a specially designated notebook apart from audio data. E-files were stored on my home password protected PC.

**Teacher-researcher generated data: Field notes and journal entries.**

I made jottings while observing in class in order to remain available to students should they need assistance and to be as unobtrusive in observing as possible. I began the study using a small (approximately 3" X 6"), bound journal for jottings as I wanted something that would keep notes together but would be small enough to be unobtrusive

and fit into my purse. Even this proved unwieldy, quickly, in a fast-paced classroom environment. I switched instead to using whatever was readily available at the time something of interest prompted me to jot. File folders where I kept my lecture notes, extra blank pages in those files, scrap pieces of paper left on the lectern all held isolated words or phrases written on the fly. I used those jottings to construct fuller written descriptions of the observation event in journal entries as soon as I could. I kept a journal throughout the data collection phase, recording thoughts, feelings, and plans related to the work. As time constraints tightened, journaling became more of a peripheral means for processing critical incidents when they arose. I considered unexpected events that made me think or feel more deeply as critical incidents. I saved e-files to the password protected system on which they were written (unless a public computer on campus) and to a study-dedicated portable storage device. I kept this device in a restricted place in my home when not in use. I utilized Hughes (1994) suggestion of labeling notes to delineate those written as observations, or theoretical or methodological concerns in titling the files. I further kept separate, handwritten notes of all meetings with my dissertation director. This served as another kind of journal within which I could further process case issues, consider particular aspects of various cases, consider visual representations of case concepts, and track feedback over the course of the work. I kept these pages together in a file folder, and then transferred to a notebook.

**Data Analysis**

Stake (2005) emphasizes the need for analytical balance between individual cases and across the quintain in multi-case studies. This balance considers correspondence, the patterns and consistencies emerging through analysis, as the goal of data analysis in case

study (Stake, 1995). He suggests analyzing data with and without issues the researcher identified in advance of the study, either through coding or direct interpretation to better insure "getting everything of interest" (p.81). The researcher must simultaneously consider the role of interpreter to help readers understand the case through newly-discovered connections, matching them with ones already known to the reader. This role closely relates to teacher, as often teachers must explicate connections, helping students make the covert overt (Patton, 2002). This study required me to utilize various analytic tools to understand the actors and their stories while increasing understanding of the quintain. In the remainder of this section I delineate my analytic process and techniques.

### Initial stage: Student generated documents.

Data analysis began with reviewing student-generated documents to consider adjustments necessary for teaching subsequent activities. I noted overall patterns of students' words, phrases or concerns. In later analytic stages, I revisited these documents, using modified techniques (described in the next section) to identify the range of responses that addressed emotional, physical, social and cognitive references, to compare with patterns emerging from interview transcript analysis.

### Interviews and transcript analysis.

I began analysis during interviews (Emerson, et. al., 1995) as I mentally noted patterns in how students responded to questions and the content of those responses. Interviews functioned reflectively for students as they relayed their experiences. Transcription afforded another layer in this process while helping me to immerse myself in this data source. I first analyzed each individual interview transcript inductively for themes that emerged organically from the data. I printed and reviewed each transcript,

underlining words and phrases in pen which caught my attention, making jots in the margins. I used Luttrell's (2009) suggestions from her work on life-story analysis to note recurrent images, words, phrases and metaphors that emerge from actors' descriptions of their experiences. Themes of family, past and present learning experiences, relationships with teachers, and direct discussion of the activities emerged from jottings. I purchased a set of colored highlighter pens and matching gel pens for use in further analysis. I made a legend assigning each emergent theme a color and returned to the transcripts with the highlighters, marking thematic material where present, according to the legend assignment. I generated individual descriptions of each actor/case and a series of relational memos for each case considering students' experiences with family, past and present education based on the data. I then compared these across cases. Further thematic elements involving both the value of learning and age emerged, generating a series of "So what?" memos which compared themes I previously identified against students' descriptions of their experiences with the activities.

Themes relating corporeality, social and emotional issues and cognition appeared throughout the interviews. I similarly color coded these. I developed correspondence tables from color coding for corporeal/physical and socio-emotional references across the interviews. In additional line by line analysis I used color coding to consider the cognitive, emotional, corporeal and social ways students related to the activities. I color coded each element within each statement, revealing interconnections among elements. Table 2 (Appendix G) summarizes the emergent themes from this analytic layer.

Another iteration explored participants' reported thoughts during the activities. Themes emerged related to ways students perceived themselves, others, connected

89

activities to other experiences, and valued the activities.  I compared individual cases

against other data sources and each other, within and across classes.  This final layer of

analysis produced the final findings reported in Chapter Five.

I used phenomenological reduction (Moustakas, 1994) tools to help consider as

many individual perspectives as possible with student generated documents and at

various stages of transcript analysis.  In this process, data is read and re-read numerous

times, looking for emerging "big ideas".  Significant transcript statements related to

corporeality, social, emotional and cognitive aspects of students' experiences with the

activities, and the value of learning were noted electronically in corresponding Word

files.  I recorded all significant statements in tables, similar to Stake's (1995, pp. 82-83),

representing the range of perspectives (Moustakas, 1994) to note those that repeated or

overlapped, considering correspondence in a line-by-line analysis.  I modified this

procedure with the documents students generated by hand writing a list of non-repetitive

major themes found in the written statements.

Finally, I focused on verbal content, "linguistic units, sequencing, pace, tone, and

phrasing" (Poindexter, 2002, p.62), and silences or gaps or what was not said (Feldman,

1995), in later analytic stages of outlier cases.  Noting starts and stops, repetitive use of

"like", and shifts in meaning midsentence in those cases helped bring a new level of

understanding to those cases, presented as the final finding in Chapter Five.

### Trustworthiness and Triangulation

What researchers refer to as reliability in quantitative research has a preferred

qualitative counterpart, dependability.  Dependability suggests the extent to which

another can track the researcher's data collection and analysis process and procedures

(Bloomberg & Volpe, 2008). In previous sections of this chapter I detailed data sources, collection, and analytic techniques, and the iterations of the analytic process.

Qualitative research addresses concerns about validity through a variety of techniques depending on the project purpose (Patton, 2002), including discourse on credibility. Simply stated, this refers to how closely the researcher's portrayal of participant's perceptions matches what participants actually think, feel and do (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2008). Researchers can enhance credibility through methodological, investigator and theory triangulation, member checks, and researcher experience with the setting and phenomenon of interest.

Methodological triangulation, a common qualitative choice, uses multiple data forms. In case study these consist "principally of observation, interview, and document review" (Stake, 1995, p.114). I used transcription data from interviews as the primary data source for this study. I used my journal entries to compare experience perceptions and student generated documents to compare and corroborated thematic elements of the activity descriptions from student interviews.

Investigator triangulation seeks input and observations from colleagues to support or refute researcher interpretations and provide additional data. While I am a teacher-researcher within the study, Stake (1995) refers to the teaching role common to all researchers, in that case study researchers seek to teach their readers about the specific case, using familiar words, finding experiences that may connect with readers' experiences. Taking his suggestion of utilizing real life readers for feedback throughout the writing process, I relied on feedback from my dissertation adviser and committee, and other colleagues, to better insure that what is taught from this study is what I meant to

teach, to help me keep true to the cases, and ensure I included systematic attention to understanding those discrepant cases found in this study.

I designed the study to include member-checking, asking actors to provide feedback about transcription accuracy and appeal of researcher interpretations; no student wanted to see their transcript. While some researchers point out the limits of member checking (e. g., Harvey, 2015), having opportunities to discuss transcripts and emergent findings with students, might have offered additional insights.

Additionally, my experience with the phenomenon under study, previous experiences related to it and in the classroom in the setting under study add to my credibility as a researcher.

While qualitative research is not generalizable in the quantitative sense, others can potentially apply findings to similar settings or contexts (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2008). I have increased the potential for transferability through detailed descriptions of the case setting, the individual participants, the activities, and the findings. Such description is the strength of case study research (Stake, 1995).

**Ethical Considerations**

As with any educator-researcher wishing to include their students as participants, obvious ethical matters of concern arise in this study. In this section I outline steps I took to address these concerns and raise others which developed during the study.

In keeping with University policy, I successfully completed online Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative (CITI) training (https://www.citiprogram.org/ ), including the responsible conduct of research (RCR) module (http://gradcollege.okstate.edu/faculty/RCR_grad_students.htm ). Once my proposal was

accepted, I sought and received approval from the IRB at both the University and the community college where the study took place.

In order to be sensitive to the inherent power dynamics of student/teacher research, I used the general recruitment approach delineated in the previous recruitment section. I only asked for volunteers and did not directly solicit specific students. Consent forms and the recruitment flyer clearly stated that participation was purely voluntary and might end at any time a participant chose, without penalty. Contact information for supervising faculty at both the University and community college was clearly and prominently given on the consent form.

I kept consent forms, original digital recordings and interview transcriptions in a locked file cabinet at my home. Only my advisor and I had access. Any identifying information from interviews or written assessments was removed for reporting purposes. As stated in the consent form, I informed actors of the possibility that research oversight staff might observe the consent process and data collection as they are responsible for safeguarding the rights and well-being of people who participate in research.

Participants had a chance to review representations of their stories, offer corrections, request changes or deletions of sensitive or inaccurate information, and clarify meaning through member checking (Merriam & Associates, 2002). None chose to do so.

During the course of the study, two students from Class Three dropped out of the class within a week or so of their interviews. Both students interviewed immediately after class enactment of the Mirroring and Gibberish activities, in which they both experienced intense anxiety. Both further have histories of trauma and life stress. While I

cannot definitively state that any or all the above circumstances are related, as the drama activities can generate a range of feelings for many students, and student turnover is not unusual at the community college where I teach, I wonder whether the activities and the interview contributed to their attrition. I took a number of steps to reach out to these students. At the time of the interview, one asked me for names of community mental health resources she might consult. I shared a list of providers with which I was familiar before the next class meeting. I further made several attempts to contact each of them through school email; neither responded.

This experience, along with realizing that many students have trauma and high life stress histories, further caused me to more deeply consider the realities of teaching and conducting research with students with similar backgrounds. I discuss implications in greater detail in Chapter Six.

## Limitations

All research has limitations. Careful consideration has gone into trying to account for these inevitable aspects of the research process in the current study. One key consideration is my role as a teacher-researcher. My intrinsic, vested interest in the study would be viewed as a major limitation of the study in a quantitative study. I have made great effort to be transparent about my roles in developing the activities, and teaching and reflecting on their use, expounding my positionality throughout the work and using that to enhance embraceability of the case. I have relied on feedback from my advisor and committee members in overcoming potential blind spots and assisting me in better articulating the obvious.

My relationship with students who participated likely shaped the interchanges.

Students might have been willing to participate because of our positive relationship in the classroom. They may have also tried to meet what they assumed were my expectations, either providing information they thought I would like to hear, or became more guarded or less candid in their responses. To account for these possibilities, I acknowledged early in the study the research agenda, and during interviews, tried to create an open atmosphere and monitor actors' reactions during the interview. However, the teacher-student relationship remained both a strength, and potentially a limitation, of this study.

The clearest limitation of this study is that the primary data source comes from transcription of one interview with each participant. Though I drew from other data sources, this study was not thoroughly triangulated as Patton (2002) champions. In most cases the interview occurred well after the activity enaction. Conducting a general background interview with follow up interviews immediately after each activity might have generated fresh in-process data; however, allowing students to set the pace for volunteering and scheduling interviews made such extensive interviewing impossible.

Additionally, there are limits to what interviews can capture about students' experiences as many corporeal and daily activities are beyond words. There are limits to language as a communication vehicle, and for individuals in their attempts to use it to try to express their experiences or understand the expressed experiences of others (Bakhtin, 1986). The interview process may have encouraged students to reflect on their activity experiences in ways they may not have without the interviews. Post enactment discussion may then be particularly important to another useful outcome: incorporating end of class pedagogical take-away points from activities.

Further, the research sample is restrictive. By asking students to volunteer rather

than selecting strategically due to power differential concerns, I may have left out potentially important informants; however, by utilizing case study those cases that did agree to participate have been presented in depth and detail. The possibility that those volunteering may represent a specific subgroup within each class may limit the study's applicability for the reader. The cases may thus reflect primarily those most affected by creative drama activities or most willing to engage in research. Inclusion of detail and rich description of the study's context and students' backgrounds should assist readers in assessing applicability to other contexts.

Students' disinterest in member checking transcripts and emergent analytic themes further limited my ability to verify meanings and interpretations with these original sources. While such steps do not guarantee validity, these responses would have provided additional insight. I did welcome and use ongoing feedback on analytic approaches from advisors and peers.

I further needed additional observations to better meet expectations of case study methodology and use of symbolic interactionism's perspective.

### Summary

In this chapter I presented a description of the research methods used in this study. I utilized case study methods as delineated by Stake (1978, 1995, 2005, 2006) to explore students' experiences with creative drama activities in undergraduate psychology class instruction. In Anticipation I considered those previous experiences I used to inform my approach to the study, including a pilot study, and my positionality. I explained recruitment strategies. The sample contained 13 purposive, criterion-based, convenience sampled (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2008) students from my community college psychology

classes who participated in the activities.  I collected data through individual student

interviews, student-generated documents, and my journal entries constructed from

jottings.  I transcribed and inductively, iteratively analyzed interview transcripts as the

primary data source utilizing a variety of supported analytic techniques. I used student

generated documents and journal entries to compare or corroborate emergent themes

from transcript analysis.  I addressed credibility, dependability, ethical concerns, and

limitations.

CHAPTER IV


INTRODUCING THE CASES


This chapter honors Stake's (2006) view of multi-case analysis as a way to understand the phenomenon under study, the quintain, by studying each case to "gain understanding of that particular entity as it is situated. The Quintain is studied in some of its situations." (p. 40). I first situate individual cases within the quintain, students' experiences with creative drama activities in my undergraduate psychology classes, through describing my initial impressions of the classes and context. (The reader is directed to "The Case Setting" section of Chapter Three for a description of the community college system and physical classroom space.) I present each case in a narrative format, drawing from participants' background information and their experiences with the activities. This approach contextualizes students' experiences based on the information they provided.

**Classes and Participants**

I begin introducing both the classes and the participants with my initial impressions of each class. Brief narratives about each participant follow which illustrate aspects of their family and educational history as well as experiences with the activities.

**Class One: Introduction to Psychology**

I entered this introductory class with some trepidation. It met soon after the lunch hour, a low energy time for me and often for students as well. The college regularly set enrollment for the intro courses in this room for over 40, despite providing less than 40 seats. This class was no exception. Students seemed exceptionally quiet and reserved as they strolled in, one by one, to take a seat. A few acknowledged my nod or smile. I had a hunch this would be an exceptionally challenging nut of a class to crack when even the opening Introduce Your New BFF (Best Friend Forever) activity fell flat. During this activity students find a partner, find out some basic information about the other person (name, major, reason for taking the class, some interesting and unusual fact about self), and then introduce their new "BFF" to the rest of the class. Many students barely interacted beyond the perfunctory exchange of basic information. Few interacted across the class during introductions, which differed markedly from other classes' responses. It was therefore somewhat surprising to me that six students from this group volunteered to participate in this study. They seemed to fit the usual demographic mix I have found in previous classes, representing a wide range in age, socioeconomic status, race/ethnicity, country of origin, and ratio of traditional to adult/non-traditional learners. Their individual stories and backgrounds were however uniquely their own.

**Case 1: SM.**

SM was among the first to volunteer to participate and was the first to schedule an interview for the study. Now in her mid-20s, raised with white privilege, she attended private Christian schools during her K-12 years and her first attempt at college some years ago. She had recently returned to higher education, ready to follow in her parents'

footsteps into the medical field.  She dropped out of college years before when she felt

she was wasting her parents' money on tuition since she couldn't decide on a major and

lacked motivation to study.  Shortly thereafter she entered and completed a tech program

in the health and beauty field, which appealed to her creative nature; however the daily

grind of the profession appeared to be a mismatch for her giftedness, quickly leaving her

feeling unchallenged and bored.  She credited marriage and motherhood with helping her

to become more serious about her education so she could provide her children

"everything they want and need".  Because her initial college grades had been poor she

opted for an academic renewal, erasing her prior credits and GPA to increase chances of

being accepted into nursing school.  She reentered two semesters before our course.

Among those who discussed life stresses and previous trauma, SM stated "I

miscarried, which was a very traumatic experience for me."  That miscarriage took place

amidst a two-year span in which SM got married, became a full time step-mother and

took on "the stresses of being a blended family", and returned to college all while feeling

"like I'm not doing a very good job … I'm just too hard on myself."  Additionally, SM

described her daily experiences "like 10 trains of thought going at once … like a constant

collision … My brain just never freaking stops. I just cannot shut off my brain."  During

the interview she referred to difficulties with focus and losing her "train of thought" and

asked me to repeat questions.   "Lectures are such hard work for me. I have to constantly

tell myself almost out loud, 'pay attention … pay attention'."  These issues had been

going on long enough that "My parents have wondered … that I have a couple of

(psychological) disorders myself … from observing me my whole life."  Her struggle

with focusing, her descriptions of her thought processes, and the resulting distress were

strikingly similar to those of my own son (diagnosed with inattentive ADHD).  I

wondered if she might have gone undiagnosed.  Clearly, such repeated asides as "I drive

myself nuts" suggested the high stress she experiences from these struggles, from which

she has not found relief.

SM's statements suggest she values relational aspects of learning:

I don't know that instructors know how important the relationship that you have

with your professor is to learning.  Like that accounting instructor.  He took extra

time to work with me and set me up with one of the people that work in the field.

I felt like they were investing themselves in me so I could do well.  Not like that

chemistry prof.  I'm so angry at her for not believing in me and talking down to

me like that.  Don't use your PhD to talk above us.  Engage us!  Get me involved.

Show me something that's not in the book, what's important and how it applies to

my life!  Get us to think and really question things!  I want to think for myself and

not be a societal puppet.  I've loved my psychology classes.  Psychology is very

complex.  There's a million different things to know about.  I'm always wanting

to understand people, how this applies to my life. Relationships are extremely

important to me.

During the interview she wove content from class into her corporeal descriptions

of the activities.  For instance, she said "I can feel my autonomic (nervous system) … I

get butterflies in my stomach" at the start of activities.  She gave descriptions of the

Detective, Neural Impulse and Traumatic Brain activities by naming body parts and

actions that occurred in each.  She stated she found value in the latter as "learning parts of

the brain and how they affect your body" and the activities as a whole as they "give me a core to build off of" since "metaphors and stuff just burns it in better".

She seemed to describe a general, scripted pattern within all the activities, including how she perceived my roles within them.  "We did them and then we all sat down.  Then you asked 'So what do you think that was all about?'"  She relayed that engaging in, then reflecting on, the activities "was beneficial".  She further appeared to find that the "open" nature of the discussions affirmed individual ideas and opinions, promoting student thinking and engagement "instead of shoving the answers in our face".  She seemed to view my roles as question starter ("You made us really question"), difference accepter ("You were very open … didn't bash anybody"), and the one who "tried to tie it all together".

S referred to the sensory memory activity (Playing Detective) twice during the interview.  She first mentioned it spontaneously, connecting it to a prior learning experience with observation, then brought it up again after I asked which activities stood out for her. She said

> It was kind of exciting cause I didn't really know why I was doing this but I was working really hard to do it and it was just fun ... 'cause it was kinda like a puzzle, too.  I like stuff where you have to fit concepts and ideas together to figure out what works best for you.

In describing this activity, she did not report feelings of anxiety as she had with other activities.  She said "it was kind of exciting" and labeled the meeting of hard work and the unknown as "fun".  This description together with previous statements (e., g., "You got us to think and engage instead of (sigh) shoving the answers into our face.")

suggested she linked the activities with critical thinking.  When asked she immediately

affirmed, then added,

> If you give me the concept and then build … If you give me a core to build off of,
>
> even if we go here, here and here (motioning with cupped hands) I can always
>
> come back to that core and then work through the different steps to reach the big
>
> picture.

In contrast, she detailed some anxiety during the Neural Impulse activity.

> I was thinking of how I hate relying on other people because if I take their word
>
> for it like where they touch me on the back, I'm gonna mess up telling the next
>
> person because  … this person behind me screwed up.

In this example, S seemed to remember previous negative experiences of working with

and relying on others, causing her to anticipate a way that she might not be able to "be

the best".

**Case 2: CC.**

CC, a 40-something year old non-traditional student, was the first volunteer in this

study.  CC grew up on another continent, a member of a minority group in a system

which legally discriminated against its citizenry by race.  He rather jokingly referred to

having "a seventh grade teacher that kept beating me up" and went on to describe the

system's practices.  "If you turned in bad work or you did not turn in your work you

would get six on the back or on your hands … wonderful teaching techniques

(laughing)."  He wondered if he "may have suffered from a form of lead poisoning" from

lead paint exposure in childhood.  The beatings, humiliation and poor grades he'd

received at the hands of his K-12 teachers taught him he had no academic ability, despite

his teacher-father's attempts to encourage him and explain the system's realities. The treatment he received formed his view of himself as "stupid and dumb" which kept him from pursuing higher education for over 20 years.

He originally immigrated to the US to attend Bible college. When he did well in classes, he reasoned that God must be somehow enabling him to understand the Bible and course content. Somewhat ironically, the more he studied at Bible college, the more he questioned basic tenets of the more conservative, fundamentalist denomination in which he was raised. He eventually left that group in favor of a church with a more liberal, academic viewpoint. Friends within this group convinced him he should attend college and earn a degree. He had successfully completed his first year as a pre-pharmacy major when he entered our class.

Despite or perhaps because of his earlier educational experiences, CC seemed to value education and learning for the potential for improving society:

It's been a whole lifetime since I was in high school. I could easily have a kid, fully grown, and here I am, just starting. I am thankful I discovered that I have the ability to learn and can continue to study in an environment that is so much better for learning. Learning is life, makes our lives better, better for the people around us and those to come after us. The career I've chosen in health care services makes a difference, can make society as a whole better. I've always assumed speaking to a psychologist is a weakness rather than a strength. (Now) I think psychology has a HUGE part to play in our lives. People can try to figure out how people tick psychologically and it's not just all biology … there's a lot we still have to uncover. We still have so much work to do. I definitely have a

104

new enhanced viewpoint of psychology and the need for it in society.

CC attributed "just being able to get up and move around" as a helpful component of the activities.   He described all of the activities using body and movement allusions. He offered that "There was a couple of good activities."  In his description of these I recognized the sensory memory (Playing Detective) and visual spatial (Sociogram) activities.

Of the Detective activity, C summarized, "We got up and stood back to back, then facing each other.  (We) had to remember things about each other. That really helped in showing how little you remember in some cases about what you see."  Of the Sociogram, he recalled

> We got up.  You gave us a set of things, what we are like.  One of the questions
> (was) "Are you always on time?"  That showed that not a lot of people had wild
> swings from one end to the other, most people actually were in the middle.
> Although for some reason I did have a lot of wild swings.  It provided good
> learning opportunities to understand who you were.

C seemed to suggest that these activities were "good" for him as he came away from them believing he understood the point behind the activity, or with something he found personally meaningful.  C seemingly made conceptual connections to course material from the first activity and more personal meaning from the second, assessing self in comparison to others in the class.

C tended to focus on his experiences of working with others in the activities during the interview.  He compared his group for the Neuron Script with others.   He attributed the lack of interest in his Neuron Script group to "no incentive to coming up

with something". While he reported being engaged and offering suggestions, "nobody else seemed very interested in talking about it. I remember distinctly sitting there and thinking, 'How do you come up with an answer because nobody's showing interest?'" In contrast he found "things went better" with other activities when people "had a great deal of interest".

C seemed to find the most value for the activities when applying the material to exams. The activities seemed to allow him to rehearse the process of applying theoretical information and practice thinking in this way.

> I've noticed that a lot of your exams have to do with actual situations, taking the knowledge and applying it to actual situations. In that respect it (activities) helps greatly because it takes the knowledge you're getting and applies it to particular situations … showing you how to take knowledge and apply it to a particular situation.

When compared to his earlier educational experiences in which "rote learning, you learn it you regurgitate it" was the norm, his appreciation for the opportunities to move and to actively apply the drama activities offer a unique perspective among participants.

**Case 3: PD.**

PD grew up within the community college city, attending three of the four major, affluent school districts in the metropolitan area. While she shared little information about her family she described various moves within each district that suggested some transience in her childhood. At the beginning of our course she was into her second year of college, having already completed a two-year tech program in the health and beauty industry during high school. Strikingly beautiful with her pale skin and meticulously

made-up blue green eyes, she sat quietly in the middle of the class.  Her views of education and learning seemed to focus on self-improvement.

I'm not like a super outgoing person.  It takes me a while to actually get to talking to people.  I'm not good at tests.  I second guess myself.  I like if there's like a definite answer like with history but I also like to get to express my thoughts and basically your answer is the right answer like with English.  I can't listen at all sometimes, like I don't know what to focus on or I'm still trying to think about things the teacher said before that and understand that and then it just throws me off.  I like it when the teacher is visual and definite and helps me grow like that comp teacher did.  He really helped me grow as a writer.  He was challenging, like it was a struggle but a good struggle.  Not like that other comp class.  That felt like gain more confidence in school but I didn't learn anything from it.  I like things pretty straight out than just everything goes or find out it's wrong when you do it.  Psychology has been one of my favorite classes.

She did not seem to be a particular fan of the activities.  Her descriptions focused on superficial corporeal elements with few conceptual connections.  She said she thought the activities "would've been better if it had been done at the end of class because it seems like the class is more comfortable with everyone by then … but I think it helps to break the ice".  She freely discussed feeling "nervous" at the beginning of each activity "but it was helpful.  If it was my choice I wouldn't have done it but I'm glad we did do it."  When asked if she had known she could have opted to observe all the activities she said "As a group it's better.  I wouldn't have wanted to sit out either."  Despite her ambivalence, P seemed to ultimately conclude the activities were "helpful" and she was

"glad" she participated.

She said that despite not being "a super outgoing person, (it) takes me a while to actually get to talking to people" she believed that "watching everyone else and just the experience of doing it made me remember.  It helped me think about it later."  She further said "not knowing … why we were doing it and then hearing those things made me like 'oh!'", suggesting that the discussions following the activities sparked moments of conceptual insight.  While she could not recall the reason we engaged in the Nerve Impulse activity, she described activity elements clearly and remembered my reference to the "telephone (game)"-like nature of the activity.  When we reviewed that activity at the end of the interview, she said "makes sense now".

**Case 4: KM.**

KM came into our class in her second college semester, the first in her family to go to college.  Raised primarily by her father and uncles in a rural suburb, she attended "a farm school" where she came to believe that college was beyond her academic ability. She settled for enrollment in a technical school program in the health and beauty industry and quickly found that she hated it and dealing with the "girls" in the program with her. There was something about her demeanor, despite her honey-blonde hair and carefully made-up blue eyes, which I could not picture in a salon.  Her step-father talked her into trying college.  She enrolled as a declared psychology major and hoped to counsel children someday.  She used the last several minutes of the interview to ask about the research process and various options for graduate study.

She seemed to find value in learning and education for those practical and utilitarian aspects that she believed would benefit her future.

Psychology … it's cool to learn about people and how they work. Schizophrenia and bipolar and all that stuff. That's very, very interesting to me. I think I came across those kind of people before. I've been through a lot and my favorite thing that I've learned so far is how to cope and how to move on. Learning is exciting for me. It depends on the professor. My biology professor … he's very, very, very, very intelligent. He doesn't dumb stuff down so it's hard for me to learn anything from him. It's all lecture. I wish all my classes would do what my humanities teacher does, writing stuff on the board and going over those Power Points together and fill in the blanks so I'm able to see it, write, fill stuff in, and hear it. I'm not a photographic learner. I have to read it, read it, read it over and over. I feel accomplished and excited to learn new things so I can get further down the road. I can't wait until I got out of school and I learn more.

K referred to the Neural Impulse and Sociogram activities when I asked if any activity stood out for her. She thought the Neural Impulse activity helped "just understanding (what) you were talking about" but did not believe it helped her with the exam.

K discussed the Sociogram activity with another student at the time the activity took place.

I said this to her. It was cool to see how different people were, as so many people would be on the other end and then you'd just have a few on the other side of the room. We always seemed to be the ones that were on the little side. I thought that was cool.

She said she thought the sociogram "helped with what we were learning at the time" and

didn't "think they (activities) were distractful at all".

**Case 5: SI.**

SI entered our class as a first-semester freshman, over six years after graduating from high school. There was something about her tall, thin frame, long straight light brown hair, quiet demeanor and flowing mannerisms that reminded me of a willow tree. She had long associated school with fear. When I asked her about any bad experiences she'd had in learning, she began crying softly and said, "Whenever I was put in foster care they took me from school … they made me take all my clothes off to see if I had bruises and stuff. That was really, really hard." She was seven or eight at the time. An event that had taken place nearly 20 years prior obviously still caused her great pain. These events continue to cause her stress, both in and out of school. She has financially supported herself since she aged out of the foster care system at age 18.

Following high school graduation she relocated to our current area to attend a local Bible college, fulfilling what she believed was a call to destiny heard when she was only 14 when a representative spoke at her local church. She attended the college, not to become a pastor; rather, to learn more about what she had been "programmed to believe my whole life". She completed the program in two years, supported herself as a nanny, setting money aside to return to college at a later time. She enrolled at the community college as a psychology major, wanting to work with children in the foster care system.

Her views of learning and value of education seemed to emphasize relationship and value in helping others.

Going into this field is the only thing that makes sense for me. I just can't see myself doing a normal job. I would go crazy, be late to work every day. I have to

110

make a difference.  That's what I need to do to be happy.  That's why I've worked

as a nanny all these years.  (Teaching should) be more on a personal level, like a

teacher actually caring for her students.  That could really make a big difference

in learning.

SI relayed the main action points of the Sociogram ("you had everyone move

around to the middle or the sides of the room") and stated it stood out for her because she

"found it interesting" and she could "identify myself with … what you were talking

about".  She could not remember specific feelings during the activity but imagined

"probably a little uncomfortable because it's not something you normally do in class and

I get uncomfortable in class sometimes".  She went on to explain that "anything new I am

always apprehensive but I keep pushing myself because I know that I can do it."

The Detective activity "made me really uncomfortable because I didn't know the

person that I was standing with".  She recalled "it being a really (good) example of what

you were explaining", "noticing what had changed" and "I instantly know what is

missing."

During the Neuron Impulse activity "nobody on my side had gotten their hand

touched and I guess you thought we did."  Of that activity she said "that information

really did help me on my test because I remember thinking back about that … the visual

part of it", even though it did not work as intended.  She described the part she played in

her group's process of the Neuron Script.

Group activities are always difficult for me.  I think our group had a bunch of

leaders.  It was a little difficult trying to understand what they were meaning by

what they were saying.  It just didn't make sense to me.  Communication is really

the thing. I don't want to be overbearing so I just stay quiet sometimes. It keeps me from really understanding what everybody is meaning.

In addition to conceptual connections, S suggested the activities "helped everyone to be more comfortable around their classmates. I think that really helps me to be able to learn more in class." She described the atmosphere in the room during activities. "People were laughing and joking … I remember people laughing and smiling so I guess that's a good thing." She attributed her recent decision to contact her biological father, who abandoned the family before she was put in foster care, to better understanding some of her prior family and life experiences "since I've taken this class".

**Case 6: DJ.**

DJ's earlier educational story is similar to those of some minority students reported in the gifted and talented (GT) literature. Identified for GT placement in early elementary school, she attended a half-day program with other GT students, where she felt she "fit in more" and was "actually learning". When she transitioned to middle school her GT involvement stopped, as her new school did not offer GT services. The school had a reputation as a "bad school". She was bullied, retaliated by standing up for herself and fighting back, costing her days in detention. By the time she attended high school she took a few advanced placement classes but no longer wanted to "push" to excel, something she said she now rather regretted. D worked to support herself while also attending school full time. She concurrently enrolled in our Intro course and another development psychology course, both required for nursing majors.

Learning and education appeared to be valuable for her to further clarify self and increase her level of functioning.

I like classes like academic strategies where we learn stuff about life and ways to better ourselves. I wish we could shadow classes before we get into them, see it before you get into it. Learning is important. It's important to broaden your horizons, to get to learn other stuff than just what your parents taught you, be open to different options, learn what works for you.

DJ spontaneously stated her belief that the activities "helped me better understand than just sitting down and listening to a teacher". The Emotional Greetings activity stood out for her; she was the only participant to mention this activity. She said she liked the activity "because we didn't know what you were gonna say and it was kinda spontaneous". She further explained,

My partner was like "You're really good at this". I was more dramatic than she was so I thought that was fun. I didn't know the person so I could be shy if I wanted to but then that wouldn't be any fun. It kinda helped me get to know the girl and later she sat by me in class and we switched notes and stuff like that so it kinda helped me.

D seemed to link her decision to not "be shy" as increasing the experience of fun from the activity, and viewed her decision in relational terms ("It kinda helped me get to know the girl") which then had an academic pay off ("we switched notes").

She believed the Neural Impulse activity benefited both her knowledge and the class climate:

I liked that one because you could just kinda see how we would start out with touching somebody maybe on their shoulder but then it ended up somewhere else like maybe on the lower back. I thought it was kind of comical. It helped

because instead of just seeing it on the board or drawn out we actually got to see it
… the cause and effect of it.  I liked how it was a project with not just two people
but the whole class.  Nobody could be shy.  If you see everybody is doin' it then
people will want to participate more.  At first everybody just kinda got up and
they were standing by each other but then like "This person's doing it, they're
having a good time. I'm not gonna be shy.  I'm gonna have a good time too."

She thought the activities helped the material to "make more sense … if I did get
confused I went back to the book (to) connect what we did."

The first day Introduce Your BFF was the "only" activity she "really didn't care
for".  She attributed her dislike to "it's the first day of class and you don't know anybody
and you're like 'Ahhhhhh! I don't know what to say'."  Apparently my willingness to
introduce myself first made a difference for her, as she stated, "We should be able to do
it, too.  If you're not shy then why should we have to be shy about it?"  She indicated the
value of the effort in saying, "I think that stuff like that is important so everybody can
kind of get to know each other."

D suggested that others perceived the activities positively as well.  She offered,
I think they enjoyed them, too.  One of the girls I sat by wasn't a good note taker.
I think the activities helped her better understand too.  She'd get confused and
then she'd be like "Well, OK. That activity makes sense.  I can connect it to … "

Overall, she perceived the activities "just connected the information and made it like 'Oh
yeah! That's what that means'".

**Class Two: Introductory Psychology**

This class began in the same room as Class One.  While the physical setting was

114

initially the same I immediately noticed the differences in this group from the previous one. This group seemed as outgoing and gregarious as Class One had seemed quiet and contemplative. During the first evening's Introduce Your BFF activity students self-identified as aspiring musicians and dancers, ministers, Harley enthusiasts, cross-country bicyclists … the list went on. Those with similar or allied interests seemed to connect. For example, three musicians who serendipitously joined as the only triad in the room and the dance instructor across the room connected around music and performance. Some class moments were tense as those with very different points of view aired their conflicting ideas. For example, one student, J, whose stated goal was to become a substance abuse counselor while he talked as if he was still actively abusing substances, and another self-confessed recovering student had a fairly heated exchange about their ideas on recovery. Two sets of sisters were among the group, a first time dynamic for me. The energy seemed high, people laughed freely, and a nearly continuous, ongoing dialogue seemed to unfold.

This group smoothly made the post-fire transition to our new campus and classroom. We easily made up for the lost instructional time while continuing to build on the overall inquisitive and gregarious nature of most of the students. Over the course of the term I continued to witness increased connections among students, even those that at first seemed at odds with one another, and between students and me. A stellar example of this comes from the evening I had a flat tire on my way to class.

I realized the tire was going flat on my way to Sketchy Campus. I stopped at the convenience store across from the campus to try to air up the tire. Unbeknownst to me, the air pump was broken. Instead of filling my tire it depleted what little air was left in it.

After calling roadside assistance and learning I would have at least a 30 minute wait,  I

called the adjunct office to let them know my situation and to ask them to post notice that

I would be late.  The next thing I knew three vehicles with over a half dozen of my

students pulled up next to me, including those two who had been at odds with one

another that first night.  They all began helping me change the tire and getting drinks for

us from the convenience store.  I wanted to pay for the drinks as token of my appreciation

for their kindness.  They refused to let me do this.  As the ladies fetched the drinks, J, the

would-be drug counselor, and another older male student changed the tire and explained

they had tracked down my location, what had happened and shared with the others who

then came with them to check on me.  They further explained that I did not need to buy

them drinks because helping was a privilege.  "You don't understand. You're helping us

get our education. That's payment enough."

One of the students attending that night volunteered for this study.  I consider

both participants to be extremely high achievers.

**Case 7: RO.**

RO repeatedly stated desire for "balance" during the interview.  Her fast paced

current life marked by apparent high achievement seemed to have launched a couple of

decades earlier, following a pivotal, traumatic experience during high school.

When I was 16 I had a love interest … he committed suicide … he hung himself

… I would wake up and think he was at the front door or on the phone and I

would get up and literally go to the phone or the door and not realize until after

I'd opened the door or picked up the phone, "You're dreaming."

His death occurred immediately after she ended their relationship.  He left a

suicide note for her that she said she kept but never read.  With her family too focused on

her siblings' substance abuse to help her work through her trauma and grief, she left

home while trying to complete high school.  The school system was equally

unsupportive.  She moved and changed schools to escape from painful memories.  The

district refused to allow her to remain in the new school as they considered her parents'

address as the one of record.  She dropped out at that point, opting instead for a GED

which she easily achieved, while simultaneously becoming financially self-supporting.

She attributed the trauma and guilt she felt over the young man's death as a critical force

in her involvement in a series of abusive relationships.   Her life choices seemed to

prevent her from achieving the education she desired.  "My biggest regret was getting a

divorce instead of a degree years ago."  Leaving an abusive marriage meant also placing

her undergraduate degree on hold, reentering the workforce as a single parent.  She

discussed the value of learning and education in terms of empowerment, "freeing people

from chains", and community building.

She seemed to continue to function at the same high energy level she needed to

propel herself away from that event and the years that followed.  As a current full-time

40-something-year-old non-traditional adult student she was also a full-time business

owner, employee, and dealt with blended family issues in parenting adult children with

her current husband.

While she was one of the more corporeally-expressive participants during

interviews and her transcript was rife with corporeal references and metaphors, her

corporeal references about the activities were few and concrete.  She referred to the shape

formed as students lined up around the room, identifying the Neural Impulse activity as

"the u-shaped exercise", and used other corporeal references to identify those around her during that activity ("the girl that went to the wrong"; "the guy that had to hold my hand").  This hints at a possible connection RO seems to make between the corporeal and the social elements which appeared to dominate her discussions of the activities and the value of learning and education.

She seemed to use her group's experience with the Neuron Script to illustrate her points about the activities' inclusive qualities ("The more involved people are the more they feel important. ") and to further illumine the potential for learning with them even when mistakes are made.

> Then we got up there and nobody really understood what we were saying.  It was just dead silence.  And when we came back they were both "I don't care that was the best!"  I loved that.  The whole diagram showed me I was giving one portion control when really I had mislabeled it so that was good.  I made it a little too complicated but that's good because if I fail, if I make a mistake then that's another opportunity to say, "Here you go."  It clarified.  I just felt so like on a high when I left.

Of the Neural Impulse, she offered,

> It was awkward at first to hold hands with a stranger.  The guy that held my hand at first KILLED my hand (laughing).  That's OK.  I think that's good.  Intimacy … people need to be able to feel comfortable with each other more than we do. We live in a society where we're so isolated all the time.  That was fun.  It kinda pushed the perimeters a little bit.  It was interesting.  It definitely made me want to learn more about the brain.

Her opinions about the activities highlighted aspects of community building and class climate.

I think that's good for morale.  It forces them to come out of their shell, to embrace the unfamiliar.  It promoted goodwill, humanity, you know?  Fellowship. I think that's real life.  Sometimes things are a little scary but that's OK if we just give people a chance.

**Case 8: LH.**

LH, a traditional student, began classes the semester after her high school graduation.  In many other ways, however, she fit the profile of an adult learner.  She had married and started a family while in high school, and worked full time within the medical field.

It was visually obvious L came from Asian roots.  Following the end of the interview I learned her family had immigrated to the states during the diaspora following the Viet Nam war.  Her parents speak limited English and have limited education.  It was not until I began analyzing the interview's transcript that I saw the word order in some responses (e.g., "That a help was") suggested English might be her second language.

I experienced LH as a bright, motivated, and invested student.  She admitted competing for grades with her sister, also in the class, and stated she'd "always taken AP classes".  She listed her favorite classes as algebra ("It's really easy"), history and art. She said she began painting in high school "and people tell me I'm a good artist".  She attributed experiences with an online composition teacher as changing her opinions of her abilities in that area.  "I hate English … I thought I was a good writer but I just feel like I'm not that good at English.  It was my teacher.  She was very strict in the grading

guidelines." She felt that an academic strategies course was "a waste of time … not really useful". She further seemed to value collaborative learning.

Group work helps socialize and understanding what other people think. It helps give more ideas about what the subject is about. As an individual you just have to listen to your instructor. You'll just have your own idea and your knowledge from the book. When it's a group you have resources from other students.

L stated that the Neuron Script "worked for me personally because I pretend that the axon and the dendrites they were like real humans, like a little story. They worked together to get something done." She described her group process during the activity.

We had agreements and disagreements over what part did what and how did it relate to reality. My sister and I just had to keep on explaining to J what it was and then it seemed like other people weren't really understanding so K and I tried to explain over and over how this report relates to this other worker and what the messages were.

She further compared and contrasted the various groups' interpretations of the activity with her own group:

I think the group that was similar to us (was) the one that was about the store. I thought they were way off at first. All I could think at first was … the one with, is it D? and the two Pakistani girls? They were really good. They were the one who did the little dance. That was good. The navy thing was way off. The first one helped a lot.

L stated that the activity "was helpful because it's a little different from the way I thought of it." She explained, "I went in and thought in my head 'That's a little wrong' and I

tried to correct it myself in my head. I'd consider what's right and wrong." She described the experience as positive for her learning. "It's nice to agree and disagree. It makes my brain function, helps my brain work."

She also discussed an activity I had not even considered, "like the dream, how Freud interprets it and how the other female and the other guy interpreted it". After reflecting on her interview, I realized we indeed created stories and then assumed the role of each theorist to explore their explanation of the dream's storyline when we compared/contrasted Freud's, Hobson's and Cartwright's dream theories, an exercise I had not tried previously with other classes. We used one of her dreams as a story the theorists analyzed.

She appreciated the social benefits of the activities and described a feeling pattern heard from others. She relayed,

> It allows us to participate and learn about each other. Some of my other classes we don't do that kind of participation so I don't know anyone in my class. I get a little nervous at first. I don't really wanna talk to others. I don't want others to think my idea or whatever is wrong or my answer is wrong. But then they get together and then it works perfectly. At the end it was like "Oh! That was fun!" I thought they were all fun.

**Class Three: Developmental Psychology**

This class differed from the others in instructional space, climate and content. Class Three met in the old Home Campus' main building. Developmental psychology course sections tend to be heavily populated with pre-nursing students, as the college's nursing program requires the class for admission. Students in these classes seem to be a

bit more focused and approach their learning more seriously than some in the introductory classes.

Class Three students' openness and willingness to engage seemed to fall between the other two; neither as quiet, reserved, and challenging as Class One nor as vocal, outgoing, or easily connected as Class Two. While students participated readily in the activities, they did not seem particularly eager to interact with one another. I did not observe the numbers of developing friendships in this group that I have in others or either of the other two groups.

This class further participated in an additional set of activities I did not use during the research period in the other two classes. The Mirroring/Gibberish activities link and demonstrate interconnections among aspects of social, emotional, and language development in infancy and early childhood suggested in the literature. Typically these are among the more challenging activities for students. This class was no exception; however those participating in this study have provided some of the richest experience descriptions to date. Three students from this class further related extensive family and educational histories they found to be traumatic and abusive to their experiences with the activities.

**Case 9: BW.**

Just before Christmas, following her sixth birthday, a fire at B's family home "changed everything. Everything was different after that." B's mother unsuccessfully tried to save both B and her infant sibling. B's sibling died in the fire. B was seriously burned over half of her body and her mother experienced severe second degree burns … "because she picked me up out of the fire". The physical and emotional scars from that

incident continue to profoundly affect every aspect of B's life.

B spent nearly a year in a private, nonprofit hospital in another state, undergoing painful treatment and skin grafts. When she returned home "my mom and stepdad were abusive to me. I think that kinda messed with me psychologically … before the house fire she wasn't abusive." B characterized her mother's treatment of her as "polar opposite" to interactions she had with B's siblings. When she returned to school "a lot of people saw me as special so they had me in LD classes and things like that until I was in sixth grade. It made (me) feel like I wasn't good enough for regular classes." She was the object of bullying and ridicule "for my scars" from other students and some teachers throughout elementary school. Once in middle school "the comments and making fun just got more intense. I was in a lot of fights."

By her freshmen year in high school, she "ran away from home", struggled with stability and fought with a close friend, which affected her reputation. She failed her freshman year. She credited her grandmother with providing the stability she needed, challenging her to "make something out of myself … she made me write down goals", and get back on a more positive, productive path.

Her first goal was to graduate, on time, with her class. "For half of my sophomore year and all of my junior and senior year I was in regular school, after school program, night school, summer school to make up all the credits." She "ended up graduating with my class … with honors". She also found art. "Learning art and being able to express myself that way has impacted me more than anything else. It helped me express more of what I felt inside." She participated in National Art Honors Society and won art scholarships for college, later majoring in graphic design.

When her grandmother became ill during her freshman year of college, B quit school and moved back to take care of her for the last year of her life. She continues to grieve this loss, sharing "A lot of things have been hard for me since she passed away." She said she has been unable to cook certain recipes or to do any of the artwork she once loved since her grandmother's death.

B further experienced a series of traumas and major losses in the years after her grandmother's death, including another near-death event related to her burns. She decided to address her depression in a woman's treatment facility, which further helped her find employment.

She was starting her second year back in college, "but I haven't been going full time each semester because working and doing everything," including caring for a family member's child. She changed her major in order to work with burn patients and perceived her education as a way to achieving her vocational goal. She seemed concerned she might "sound like a suck up" when she told me that psychology was a favorite subject "because it helps me to understand people and the way they think and why they think this way. And makes me not so crazy half the time (laughs)." She suggested her usual level of anxiety around "a bunch of people" was lessened in our class because "You're talking almost the whole time which is OK for me. I'm like engaged with what you're saying so I don't really notice everybody." Overall she said "I felt like I do a lot better in your class anxiety-wise other than today was horrible for me (laughs)."

Unlike other participants, B's interview occurred immediately after enacting the Mirroring/Gibberish activities. She cried throughout the interview as she talked about her life history. Her discussion centered primarily on the two activities from that day's

124

class, contrasting with the earlier Traumatic Brain activity in which she had been a primary actor. B focused mostly on social and emotional concerns about the activities, especially as related to the Mirroring and Gibberish activities.

Some of her corporeal metaphors seemed related to mental processing. She talked about her general difficulty taking notes in class. "It's hard for me to listen and write at the same time because if I'm writing what you're talking about I'm not catching it. It doesn't connect in my head." Similarly, in taking exams, "It's like everything in my head goes blank."

One of the few who volunteered to enact the Traumatic Brain activity, she recalled volunteering ("I put myself out there. I raised my hand and then I was like 'Oh God, B …. What did you just do?'"), then stated that activity "especially sticks in my head more". B said, "I remember laughing because it was funny. " She elaborated further, before contrasting that set of experiences with those of the day's activities.

I can't remember her name but the girl that played cortisol … it was just funny how she didn't really know what to do and all the things that we were coming up with that could have been going on to why we were doing that. Today I was just anxious. It made me really nervous. I felt like everybody was staring at me even though I knew they weren't because everybody was having to do it. I couldn't focus on anything. I felt stupid. I don't even remember why we were doing it.

Almost immediately, she seemed to begin orally processing to recall the activities' purpose.

Oh yeah … the association with how children experience communication and how they're trying to figure it out. Today I got it towards the end when you

explained we were doing it like I got that but just during the activity I didn't really

know why we were doing it.

She further stated of the activities in general, "Acting it out like we did in class sticks in

my head more. You're actually doing something and it creates more of a memory than

just sitting and studying."

During the course B suffered another loss, family issues resurfaced, and she

approached me for recommendations for affordable treatment providers in the

community. A few days following our interview I provided her a list of options. She

thanked me; no more was said. Within two classes after that she disappeared along with

TK. I tried emailing her through the community college system several times, to try to

check in with her about her status in the class, to express concern for her, and lastly to let

her know the interview transcript was completed. If she responded I did not receive it.

**Case 10: TK.**

TK was raised by her mother and an apparently violent and abusive man she

referred to as her "birth certificate signer". T spoke mostly about events involving this

man during the interview when talking about past family history. She discussed wanting

to please him as a very young child but "nothing I could do pleased him. I could be two

years old and write out my ABCs and it wasn't good enough because it wasn't straight

enough." She described what sounded like ritualized abuse sessions at age five.

He would tie my hands behind my back and throw me against the wall and I'd

land on the bed and he'd flip the mattress on top of me and then he would jump

on the bed. I realize now that's not a game but when I was five that was my

favorite game.

126

T said, "When I was younger my dad tried to kill me and my mom.  I was like seven so it was really bad."  She stated these events "caught up to me and I had a lot of mental issues that came out in high school."  She did not refer either him or her mother again, although T did say she was "homeschooled" in high school.  She further attributed her high level of school anxiety and fear of failure in school to his abuse.  "I know that man fucked me up a lot."

Apparently gifted, she "was too advanced for what they were teaching so my teacher gave me a week's worth of work in the first grade and I'd be done that first day."  She said "they started to accommodate" by giving her more advanced work.  When she got to middle school "I was doing things that I had already learned so I started skipping school."  She also began using drugs as "my way of coping … I was big into drugs whenever I was in sixth grade.  I did drugs pretty much from the time I was 10 years old until I was like 23, 24."  Additionally she experienced bullying, name calling and multiple physical fights, school suspensions, and expulsions.  She explained,

> I went to a predominantly black school.  Then I came out as a lesbian.  So it was
> always "you peckerwood dyke".  I'm the type of person I don't take anything off
> of anybody so I got into fights.  I was always getting kicked out of school.

She was "age placed" throughout middle school so that by the time she got to high school "I had no idea what they were talking about."

Her story about her final expulsion made me wonder, given her history of physical abuse and my clinical experience, if Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) played a part in her final physical fight with a school administrator.  "I turned around.  I didn't see anybody.  He grabbed my arm and said 'You need to come this way' and I

wigged out.  I reached back and elbowed him in the nuts and I took off."

T finally dropped/was pushed out of school completely and opted for a GED instead at the age of 21, through a community transitional employment program.  Even there she "basically taught myself my work.  If I had a question I went to the teacher. They didn't know so I taught myself."  She seemed to summarize her experience with teachers/instructors by saying, "I'm so scared to come to college and have to rely on somebody to teach me something.  I'm used to doing that myself but I can't do that here … and that scares the shit out of me."  T owned that it is very difficult for her to focus her attention during classes, especially during lectures.  She described her experiences

> I really think I have ADD because I'm just like "Oh! Somebody's movin' out there.  I see 'em!"  I'm not a listener.  I can't listen and retain information.  I'm not a note taker.  I can't listen and take notes at the same time.  I'm the type of person, you tell me something once, pretty damn good chance I'm not gonna get it.  It just goes in one ear and out the other.  It doesn't catch in there.  That's why sometimes I look at you in class like (makes funny face and utters unintelligible verbiage).  Except the time I'm like "Wait! Could you repeat that?", because something clicked but I don't know what clicked I just knew something did.  I'm glad B records because that really helps.  I can go back and listen to it.

Throughout the interview she connected the current class content to her abusive upbringing.  Towards the end of the interview, she talked with me about her plans for handling herself in class should she "start getting emotional" or "ever can't handle something we're talking about in class".  She let me know "I don't know why but I feel very comfortable around you.  I'm thankful for that; but if I ever feel like I'm going to

start crying or something just know that I will leave the room." She further let me know that she had also "turned everything off", deciding to "listen to it later" during the class discussion of Freud's ideas about addiction, when she found herself thinking, "This is what's wrong with me … that's why I'm fucked up."

She openly discussed various "triggers" for her during class discussions and the Mimicking and Gibberish activities:

I did not like the ones we did today. That was like the anxiety attack from hell. It was crazy. I was like "Why am I about to cry?" I was so pissed off because I live with her so I'm supposed to be able to mimic her but I couldn't. I just wanted to scream. I don't know why though … maybe some underlying trigger or something.

However, of the activities overall, and her decision to participate in the Traumatic Brain enactment she said,

I like doing stuff like that. That's how I learn. I'm gonna swallow the anxiety and do it because it will help me learn. I don't know how it works, just know that it does. If I'm interacting like that somehow it sticks with me. I'm like "Yeah! Finally I learn something!"

She seemed perplexed by her own reactions to the Mirroring and Gibberish activities. "Honestly, I don't know because it sounded really fun. I really wanted to do it. I was looking forward to doing it." She further stated, "I don't know of any way you could have said or done anything to not have let that happen." Before the end of the interview she asked if we would do more activities. When I indicated we would, she responded, "Good!"

A few class sessions after the Mimicking/Gibberish activities and the interview TK stopped attending class. I sent multiple emails and received no response. I have no way of knowing whether these class activities were related to her choices, may have triggered her, or if dropping out was her way of following through on her warning to me that she'd leave class if topics got too much for her to handle. I was fairly horrified to discover during analysis that while TK described herself as "a guinea pig for the psychiatrists" and openly discussed various diagnoses and medications she had been given over the years, she never mentioned a diagnosis of PTSD or its treatment.

**Case 11: SS.**

SS entered our class as a 19 year old sophomore, practically a poster child for motivated, traditional students of white privilege, a chronologically on-target, full-time student, who preferred "just teachers lecturing and me taking notes, honestly". He was scheduled to complete his associate degree in science at the end of the next semester, the first step towards his end goal of becoming a nurse anesthetist. He graduated from a small, rural high school in the top five of his class with a 4.0 GPA, and maintained that level of achievement in college. "I hope I keep it cause I need it to get into (State University)'s nursing program. I'll still have to keep my grades up through nursing school also to go to anesthetist school."

A star competitive tennis player, S "didn't really enjoy my teachers in high school. I had some nightmare teachers." He talked about a math teacher who "wouldn't teach and then wondered everyone failed our EOI end of instruction exam". He found others "oddly involved" with students "outside of the school like having over for breakfast with their family" or "a lot of the male teachers and coaches … I don't feel they

were giving the right looks to the young girls. It was kinda uncomfortable sometimes."
He described a learning environment that, from his perspective, heavily favored AP students with "the rest of the class just kinda sittin' there kinda let out to dry". He opted out of AP courses in order to continue competitive tennis.

He believed he learned best from lecture and more traditional-learning methods, but went on to admit that if "it's just straight lecture I will get distracted. My mind will start wandering off." He said that "hands on" activities, "taking things that interact more than just sitting in class, getting up and moving around, just kinda switch it up … keeps my brain working." He contrasted his high-school experiences with several in college that he enjoyed more, all involving class field trips, like a trip to a cadaver lab. "We put on gloves, got to touch, see the different striations in the muscles, the fingernails and toenails … every vein." He made his final decision about his career when "I shadowed anesthesiologists and CRNAs."

S viewed learning as "a choice and a privilege". He believes that "an education is important", crediting his parents, both of whom hold a graduate degree, with instilling these values in him. "There was not an option not to go to school. I'll be grateful to them for that forever … that's what I'm gonna instill in my kids." He seemed to value learning and education that helped further him in his career goals. He appeared to consider the relationship he had with a teacher when evaluating the overall value of the class. Of our class and the activities in particular he volunteered:

> I'm not much of a talker in front of people but if you asked me a question in class
> or I could relate to somethin' that you're talking about I would raise my hand. I
> wouldn't be too nervous to speak. Some professors, I don't know if they do it

intentionally but whenever you speak it's just like I don't know if they're

understanding.  They kinda give you a look, like "What??"  If I'm in a big setting

like that and I say something and I start feeling I said something stupid I just am

like "Forget it … never mind". You're just (a) different environment.  I can tell

you have a purpose behind what you're doing so I just kinda sit back and it all

comes together.

He said he felt "kinda nervous" doing the activities, explaining:

'cause I'm not really that comfortable with getting up and talking whenever I'm

class.  I mean I like to socialize but I'm just kinda about business.  It's hard for

me to talk to people that I don't know sometimes.  I just get kinda nervous.  I

enjoyed it but it's situations like that you kinda have to put yourself out there to

remember things.  I guess it's a memorable thing.

Of the Mimicking activity, S shared:

Entering that activity alone I felt like I paid more attention to what was going on

around me to kinda base what I was gonna do off (what) people were doing

around me.  That is what babies do, too.  They mimic.  I was listening to everyone

else, what they were doing 'cause I didn't even know where to begin.

S seemed to make direct, empathic, as-if connections between what he was doing and

how he felt during the Mimicking and Gibberish activities, how he imagined babies feel,

and what they do in making sense of their surroundings.  He appeared to make additional

connections between observing his classmates and temperament and personality trait

concepts we had previously discussed, identifying "who was an extrovert and who's an

introvert".  He further considered others' thoughts and feelings during these activities,

saying,

> I felt like some people probably felt dumb 'cause they were kinda like "Come on … what??!!" like "What do I do?". Then other people were just trying to figure out, wrap their brain around it but at the same time they were concentrating on mimicking each other, getting someone to mimic them … minds just running trying to figure it out.

When I asked about the timing of discussion with those particular activities and for his opinion about whether to create space to discuss before the activities he stated,

> I don't really think so because it's more memorable whenever you go into it not really knowing. Then it's kind of like an "Oh! Duh!" moment, like "Wow! OK … that makes sense". I feel like I learn better off of those kinds of situations, us just figuring it out for ourselves. We probably wouldn't have been able to get as into the activity. Later on it all fell into place. We were being babies. Babies don't know what's goin' on, they just make up their own stuff.

He contrasted these activities with the Traumatic Brain enactment which he found "was more comfortable than the other activity for me because I could see other people doing it. It was funny." Overall S believed the activities added to the class as "People can talk … can put their own input. It's more like a discussion."

**Case 12: CMH.**

A combination of traumatic, early-life events appears to have shaped CMH's educational experiences and later life. Chaotic family dynamics increased when she disclosed "my dad tried to molest me", precipitating a series of moves. "I went to 21 schools from kindergarten to senior year. I was always the newcomer on the block."

Targeted for extreme bullying in school "to the point that one of the girls even pushed me in front of a car, I got hit by a car." By 16 she opted for marriage as a way out of her family. By 18, in the middle of her senior year of high school, she bailed out of school and the marriage. She "got a GED shortly thereafter", and worked a minimum wage part-time job. She described valuing active learning and making mistakes in those earlier years, learning on the job by watching others, "talking to people and trial and error more than anything". She made a business with her second husband "very, very successful just from the marketing aspect. I just started implementing what I was seeing" from commercials.

She married her present husband over 15 years ago. Since then she "lost a child … that thrust us into the counseling system big time", and has two other children with special needs. A health scare got her out of her former career. "Basically my doctor said 'You're gonna die within a year if you do not cut back on your stress level'." Cutting back has meant managing five businesses, including a working farm/ranch with her husband, in addition to carrying a full-time academic load while maintaining a 4.0 GPA. At 40-something, she entered college for the first time, along with her daughter. Her Reubenesque frame, long, flowing peasant blouses, long naturally curly hair and creamy complexion hinted at the earth mother on the inside. She declared psychology as her major and already envisioned opening a specialized treatment home and program for women and children. She was astounded by her current academic success, based on her previous educational history.

C views learning as "a continual process of personal growth and expansion" that's like "Christianity and forever, the infinite side … there's always a higher level to achieve,

always something out there more to learn.  If you stop learning you just die."  Her

excitement about learning stems from "self-fulfillment … achievement" and "the

potential that comes with it. (You) can do anything you wanna do and be anything you

wanna be."  She further explained,

> I used to be limited.  There's only so much I can do.  Do I wanna go learn
>
> everything that I've already learned to get that CPA license?  No!  I really wanna
>
> do something that I was passionate about, something I was interested in helping
>
> people.  My pie in the sky dream is to have my own 501C3 home set up for
>
> children and mothers, a couple hundred acre farm where women could come to go
>
> back to roots.  There's something healing about that, about being able to plant a
>
> seed, water it and watch it grow, to watch our animals go through pregnancy,
>
> have babies and then nurture them.  Maybe by the time I'm done with my degree I
>
> can explain why that is.  My dream is achievable.  Each day of learning, each
>
> semester, each class that I finish I get a checkmark.  That drives me … big time.

> C was another Traumatic Brain actor.  She overcame her anxiety and agreed to

volunteer because she believed it would help her learning.  She spoke about that

experience,

> I think being involved in it probably made me pay attention more.  You had to
>
> watch where your place was so being engaged for me was more helpful.  You put
>
> a picture to the process.  You get it and you go "OHHHHH! OK! That's how that
>
> works".  Instead of just "Here's the brain and we're gonna go from here (flipping
>
> through her notebook) and we're gonna go to here, color code and dadada", to
>
> "OK! You know what? This brain has a file and this file is gonna be shifted over

here". I'm like "Awwwwwwwww!!! I get it! I get it!" Put it in practical terms. I won't forget it because we did it.

She discussed her experience with the Mirroring and Gibberish activities in even greater detail. She seemed to transform initial anxiety with the Mirroring activity into a positive, corporeally-aware outcome, which suggested an intricate set of connections and applications to social and emotional concerns. She relayed having initial "feelings of inferiority" and concerns about being "judged" that turned to "fun when we got halfway through" and realized "no one's laughing at you". She noticed further that "you could start anticipating what the person was going to do just by a look or a body position what they were gonna do next. Engaging makes you learn something or think about things that you wouldn't have." She had a series of "epiphany moments" of connecting the activity action to course concepts and the value of the activities for psychology classes, addressing interpersonal and relational parenting behaviors in societal terms. She further stated the whole experience changed how she interacted with others in the hallways at the college, made her make better eye contact, smile, and greet others more often.

**Case 13: SH.**

The little SH shared about her family and personal history suggested her parents valued education. She believed the relationship between her parents and a math teacher helped identify her mathematics potential and to participate in AP math classes. She characterized this as a pivotal point in her educational life to "push myself, knowing that my potential is greater than what I think it is."

Pushing herself became her educational norm, as evidenced in her two prior associate degrees in arts and applied science, previous completion of a two year nursing

136

program and her current enrollment "working on pre-req's for RN".  As a 30-something

non-traditional student, S worked full-time as a supervising nurse in a treatment facility

"with people who are struggling with opiate addiction".  She offered,

> I love learning more every day.  I've even caught myself researching a lot when I
>
> really don't have to.  I just want to know better who I'm serving so if they have
>
> questions I'm a little bit more informed and won't have to go ask the doctor.  I
>
> can just let them know because I KNOW.

S finds value in learning to improve her professional knowledge and to better assist

others.  She believes learning is "important for your future endeavors.  I really and truly

feel like it's helped me develop me and who I am."

S discussed struggling with the time demands of a full-time job and school.  By

the time of our early afternoon class, "sometimes some days I'm just like 'Ohhhh! My

goodness.'"  She reported "a big difference" between days she worked before class and

those she didn't.  She believed this affected her experiences with the activities, especially

the Mirroring and Gibberish activities.  She contrasted these activities with the others,

especially the Traumatic Brain which she described as a favorite because she found it

helpful in understanding the conceptual material, and "because everyone was so

interactive with it, playful … holler(ing) out what they thought was going on or what we

thought the scenario might be."  She said "It didn't seem like anyone was embarrassed or

ashamed", implying that there was something embarrassing or shaming about

Mirroring/Gibberish.  She appeared to confirm this as she summarized the activity set as

"doing all this silly stuff".  Simultaneously, she seemed to consider the activity as

rehearsal or practice in dealing with differences, turning the initial negative into a

positive way of learning to better herself. "But I'm OK with that too because I know that in class and also in the work place I have to deal with different scenarios, different personalities, so that part I'm OK with."

S seemed to value and find benefit from other activities in more straightforward ways. The Sociogram appeared to help her normalize some of her thoughts about herself. "It helped me just because I didn't realize so many peoples' brains worked, ticked like mine. I thought I was a weirdo." Overall she said she thought the activities "helped people because it helps you to really visualize a concept. Writing on the board is all fine and dandy but actually seeing a process really helps it to click." She further illumined, "I think that any time an instructor throws a little bit of extra something in the mix to spark your learning or interest in something is always gonna be a plus for me."

## Summary

In this chapter I introduced the individual cases considered in this study. Within the structure and demographics of the college context, the physical instructional spaces, and my overall impressions of each of the three classes, I relayed narratives for each case to provide the reader with depth and detail about each student's familial and educational histories, and descriptions of their experiences with the activities, in their own words.

Through analysis of each case I elicited a series of interrelated themes including corporeal related, social and emotional related, family related and past education related experiences that seem to have shaped these students' experiences with the activities. I offer further discussion of analysis and cross case findings in the next chapter.

CHAPTER V


FINDINGS


*Entering that activity alone I felt like I paid more attention to what was going on around*

*me … to kinda base what I was gonna do off (what) people were doing around me.  I*

*could really tell who was an extrovert and who's an introvert.  There were these two guys*

*next to me that I could tell, how they were being loud and having fun with it.  And then*

*there was other people doin' what I was doin', waitin' and seein' what everyone else has*

*goin' on.  I was listening to (what) everyone else (was) doing cause I didn't even know*

*where to begin … That is what babies do, too.  They mimic. (SS)*


*My partner said "I don't even know what to do." I'm like "But that's the whole thing is*

*you can do what you wanna do" and she's like "But I don't know what that is".  You*

*have to be able to think on your feet really quick.  I have to be aware of what you're*

*doing.  I have to try to do what you do.  You feel like you could be judged.  It was weird.*

*However it was fun when we got into it.  Once you start engaging and you see that*

*nothing's going to hurt you, you're fine, no one's laughing at you, then it's a positive …*

*When I was following her it was so cool.  After just seconds you could start anticipating*

*what the person was going to do just by a look or a body position you could tell what they*

139

*were gonna do next. I felt her embarrassment and felt like she didn't want to do it but then she got comfortable because I got comfortable. I was able to follow her which gave her reassurance so then she got relaxed and comfortable. You just go "Wow!" If babies can get in two or three seconds what this person is getting ready to do, babies can pick up. If mom relaxes and is comfortable the baby's gonna relax and vice versa. (CMH)*

With these stories from two Class Three students I provide a glimpse into the deeply nuanced nature of students' experiences with the pedagogical strategy of creative drama activities. The narratives, representing differing views of the Mirroring activity, reveal interconnected social, emotional, corporeal, and cognitive themes. The accounts hint to changes students reported experiencing while participating in the activities: from initial feelings of anxiety to enjoyment and comfort; conceptual understanding, and; acceptance of interpersonal differences with classmates. The stories further indicate how participants' interactions with classmates during activities served as touchstones for making meaning of their experiences. Cross case researchers sift through and analyze such data, searching to find such patterns, understanding what individual cases like these have in common, and how they differ from one another, while maintaining the depth, integrity and dignity of the original cases.

In the previous chapter I introduced the individual cases in brief narrative accounts developed from initial inductive analysis of the interview transcripts and researcher journal entries. I constructed the case descriptions using student narratives, highlighting inductive themes related to their family and educational experiences, their values about education and learning, and how they labeled themselves as learners. In the

current chapter I balance the case-quintain dichotomy (Stake, 2006) by presenting findings that surfaced across cases while I explore how individual student's experiences with the creative drama activities overlapped and differed.

To investigate students' experiences with the activities, I chose to utilize the theoretical framework of symbolic interactionism (SI) which emphasizes the importance of meaning people construct from interactions and how people share those meanings (Patton, 2002).  In this view, objects and experiences don't possess intrinsic meaning; they acquire meanings for people through interaction in context.  From the SI perspective, understanding students' experiences with the activities requires focusing on how students make meaning from the activities.  Specifically, this chapter answers the following research questions:

- How do undergraduate psychology students experience creative drama activities?

- How do undergraduate psychology students' describe their experiences of learning with creative drama activities?
    - What do students seem to use as touchstones for making meaning during the activities?
    - Which aspects of the activities do students identify as important to their learning?

- What nuances in students' experiences emerge from the different activities?
    - In what ways do students characterize their activity preferences?

o In what, if any, ways do students' meaning making touchstones

seem to shift or change from activity to activity?

In the popular movie, *National Treasure,* the lead character uses a set of spectacles with multicolored lenses to reveal important details of the treasure map. Like those lenses, each layer in qualitative analysis adds dimensions to understanding students' experiences with creative drama activities. Considering the layers together, however, provides a fuller, holistic picture. In this study I first reviewed student generated documents, brief responses students wrote after participating in initial activities. I jotted notes during activities, later using those to construct journal entries. I transcribed interviews, which produced emergent analytic insights. I then analyzed transcript representations of interviews (Kvale, 1996) and student-generated writings, along with my own journal. I considered each source of data multiple times and then compared them across cases. These inductive analytic iterations revealed thematic layers of meaning.

Early thematic layers, common among all cases, which emerged from this level of data analysis included the significance of family, past and present educational experiences, students' relationships with instructors, and descriptions of their past and present classroom experiences. The next analytic iteration concentrated on students' descriptions of the activities. Themes relating corporeality, social and emotional issues and cognition appeared. In one analytic layer, age inductively surfaced as a key element of students' educational values regarding the creative drama activities. Another layer revealed ways students attributed the activities as contributing to a positive class climate. Further analysis considered corporeal matters, such as body metaphors or how students

142

described using their bodies in the activities.  Additional analysis explored participants'

reported thoughts about themselves, their classmates, and actions during the activities.

Thoughts were multifaceted in terms of focus on self or others, content, and emotional

connections.

Each of these analytic lenses added another layer, bringing the overall picture into

sharper, more detailed view, increasing understanding of the intricacies at work in

students' experiences with creative drama activities.  Key to this data corpus is the

complex interconnections among the layers of students' holistic descriptions.  At times

during interviews it seemed as if simply too much was happening at once for students to

find words to adequately describe specific aspects of their experience.  Nonverbal,

corporeal gestures supplemented what words alone could not communicate.

In this chapter I present seven major findings offered in an order important for a

richer understanding of the quintain.  The first finding retains the individual case

emphasis needed to further understand the quintain.  The later findings reflect specific

elements of the first.

- Students describe multi-dimensional engagement with creative drama activities
  that reflect interconnections among their bodies, thoughts, emotions, interactions
  with classmates, and family and learning experiences.

- Students relate to and make meaning from the activities through their sense of
  self.

- Students relate to and make meaning from the activities through their experiences
  with family and education.

- Students relate to and make meaning from the activities through their interactions with classmates.

- Students relate to, make meaning from and show preference for activities through their emotions.

- Students view the activities as agents that changed their class experiences and learning.

- Students' struggles with the activities may reflect more about their larger struggles within higher education than disengagement.

In the sections that follow, I present and discuss each finding and provide supporting data and interpretive commentary to emphasize the experiential and relational components of students' experiences. I discuss discrepant cases and data that raise implications for implementing activities in psychology instruction and community colleges, discussed further in Chapter Six. I conclude with a summary in which I discuss and tie the findings with evidentiary warrants (Erickson, 1986) to answering the research questions.

**Findings: Salient Contributors to Understanding Students' Experiences with Creative Drama Activities**

To deeply understand the quintain, students' experiences with the creative drama activities, I reconsidered across all cases thematic elements (relating to family, educational history, corporeal awareness, views of self, values about learning and education, working with others, and emotions and thoughts about self and the activities) which emerged from individual case analyses. In the following sections I discuss findings that reflect the interconnections evidenced in the data from cross case analysis.

The first finding honors part of the qualitative tradition of making "the obvious

obvious" (Patton, 2002) in describing key elements of the data for outsiders. Humans experience in complex, holistic interconnections among body, mind, emotions, and interactions with others and the environment.

**Students' Describe Multi-dimensional Engagement with Creative Drama Activities that Reflect Interconnections among their Bodies, Thoughts, Emotions, Interactions with Classmates, and Family and Learning Experiences**

Students' activity descriptions offer stories packed with sensory elements of their interactions with partners, their group, or others in the class, and their emotions when participating. Students uniquely and holistically entwined thoughts, feelings, and sensations, as they recounted interacting with others during the activities. During the interviews some students showed strong emotion or used their bodies to communicate as they recalled these experiences and linked them to their past family or educational histories. The length and depth of student experiences vary by student and activity, and parallel how they describe other aspects of their lives and educational experiences. Nuanced meanings relate to their ideas about themselves and their past experiences (which I discuss in findings 2 and 3). I offer the nuanced meaning of anxiety from three cases to illustrate this pattern of interconnections.

All but one student described experiencing anxiety initially when participating in the activities juxtaposed with enjoyment, interest, or excitement. Students' initial experiences with anxiety became an important symbolic reference point for understanding their overall experiences with the activities. The cases of SM, SI and TK illustrate how the meaning of anxiety differs for each, and how this changed to or coexisted with a more positive emotion. Meaning nuances emerged from how each

145

described thoughts about herself, experiences of the emotion, and feelings about working with others, combined with her previous learning experiences.

SM expressed anxious agitation and excitement both verbally and corporeally as she described participating in the activities, interweaving the emotions with ways she presently describes herself ("My brain just never stops …. I have to be the best … I like to be in control"), her perceptions of working with others ("I hate relying on others … I'm gonna get it wrong because they screwed up"), and past life and educational experiences ("It's exciting … kind of like working a puzzle").  A self-competitive learner, always demanding excellence from herself, SM describes becoming anxious about working with others because of past experiences when she "got it wrong" and lost control when one of her collaborators "screwed up".  Her "brain (that) never stops" thinks of ways these past experiences might repeat; however, she becomes excited when she sees the activity as "kind of like working a puzzle", something with which she'd had success in past.  For SM, relinquishing control to others might mean "getting it wrong", challenging her view of self as "the best".  She feels engaged and excited when she conceives of the activities as "a puzzle", a cognitive challenge over which she feels some control.

SI described her initial reaction to the activities as "a little uncomfortable because it's not something you normally do in class and I get uncomfortable in class sometimes".  She explained that "anything new I am always apprehensive but I keep pushing myself because I know that I can do it" and that "Group activities are always difficult for me."  Overall she stated that the activities "helped everyone to be more comfortable around their classmates.  I think that really helps me to be able to learn more in class because it

made me feel more comfortable with my surroundings". She further characterized the creative drama activities as "fun, definitely". Like SM, SI feels anxious when considering activities that require her to work with others, but not because she is competitive and concerned about getting an answer wrong. Cumulative school and foster care experiences led her to identify herself as "apprehensive" and group activities as "difficult". For SI, resolving anxiety to feeling "more comfortable around classmates" relates to the interactive "fun" nature of the activities over time. This differs from SM's resolving her anxiety by excitedly, successfully meeting a cognitive challenge.

TK also expressed a combination of anxiety and excitement about the activities. TK's level of discomfort seemed to limit her ability to speak at times during the interview. She expressed herself through such means as drumming on the table, when words failed her. She said, "I have anxiety period … even just at home watching TV I'm at least at a seven on anxiety", but said of the activities, "I really wanted to do it. I was looking forward to doing it … it's how I learn". While she experienced performance-anxiety with one activity, like SM ("Why can't I do this?"), unlike SM these concerns appear to push T into questioning her sense of self ("Am I defective?"). Like SI, TK expresses experiencing anxiety to a greater extent than SM. TK has an extensive history of trauma from family and school experiences. Her excitement about the activities stems from her belief that "it's how I learn" and thus could increase her academic success. The anxiety and excitement she experiences seem to symbolize doubt she carries about her abilities, and hope for greater success.

These examples illustrate how students organized the various interconnected elements of their experiences to produce personalized meaning of anxiety that shifted to

147

feeling "more comfortable" during activities. Similarly, these elements demonstrate engagement with the activities. Further, students suggest that engaging in the activities over time decreased their overall level of anxiety of interacting with others in class, and increased their level of comfort. Students' contextual descriptions of bodily awareness, emotions and thoughts about self and working with others, and family and learning experiences, offer important nuances in understanding their engagement with the activities, and how, in turn, engagement increases comfort. Engagement is then an undercurrent in all subsequent findings, nuances I consider next.

**Students Relate to and Make Meaning from the Activities through their Sense of Self**

Students describe relating to the activities through their stated or implied sense of Self, memories of previous experiences, and plans for the future. They refer directly to a "self" as a touchstone in describing their experiences. They discuss who they thought or believe themselves to be, describe internal conversations during the activities in which they question their identity and behavior or consider their emotional reactions and behavior, and consider connections between their physical being and their learning. These elements are not discrete in their descriptions, but interconnect in a similar way to the interrelated elements in the previous finding. Virtually all participants who described the corporeal elements of their experience in detail connect those descriptions to their life experiences, experiences with learning, or defining themselves as a learner. The activities seem to symbolize a vehicle for confirming, challenging, or enhancing their Sense of Self. I highlight ways students related their Sense of Self to their experiences with the activities in the following subsections.

**Identifying myself.**

Students use what they think or believe about themselves as a touchstone for relating to the activities and use the activities to clarify, add to or confirm ways they identify and think about themselves. Some describe self-concepts they held before engaging in the activities. Some stated high expectations they hold for themselves, fueling their anxiety about the activities. In the midst of discussing their unease, TK stated, "I'm supposed to be able to …"; SM stated, "I have to be the best." Others characterized themselves as "not (being) super outgoing" or "just kinda about business," making the classroom process of working with others "take a while" or "just hard".

SI stated outright that she uses the activities as a way of "identifying myself with something". Others contrast their reactions to those of others, suggesting they use such comparisons as touchstones to more securely identify themselves. For instance, in the opening narratives to this chapter CMH noted how her responses to the activity differed from those of her partner, supporting her view of herself as a "doer". SH stated she "didn't know so many people's brains worked like mine. I thought I was a weirdo." CC first compared others ("a lot of people had wild swings but most were in the middle") before recognizing his own pattern of "swinging" and concluded "It provided a good learning opportunity to understand what you are."

**Questioning self.**

Other participants recalled questions they asked themselves during different points in the activity process that imply connections they made between their sense of self and the activities. For instance, BW recalled thinking, "Oh God, B! What did you just do?" immediately after volunteering to participate as one of the Traumatic Brain

enactors.  As TK struggled with the mirroring activity she asked herself, "Why can't I get this? Why am I about to cry?"  As she began thinking about other conceptual connections towards the end of the activity she further asked herself, "Am I defective?", processing her reactions and thoughts in terms of what was "wrong" with her.  In contrast to TK's questioning of her worth and abilities, CMH asked herself, "Why was this embarrassing? Why was this intimidating?" towards the end of the same activity.  Apparently challenging her initial thoughts and feelings about the activities, these questions signal a positive shift in how she saw herself related to the activities.  Her comments imply she may have had other critical thoughts at the beginning of the activity that she did not report (although she did talk at some length about the activities being intimidating).  She further discussed  several "what if?" questions she pondered during the Mirroring and Gibberish activities, relating concepts to the therapeutic living program for women and their children she envisions developing.

**Regulating self.**

Students further report engaging in self-talk that either contributes to or helps them deal with anxiety during the activities.  Statements focus on ideas about making mistakes and social interaction, representing opposing poles across cases and classes.  For example, SM reported thinking "I'm gonna mess up.  I'm gonna get it wrong" which heightened her anxiety about the activities.  In contrast, RO stated "If I make a mistake that's another opportunity", and expressed little anxiety.  DJ said she considered "I could be shy … but that wouldn't be fun… I'm gonna have a good time, too" while CMH remembered telling herself "Nothing's going to hurt you.  You're fine."  Others echo CMH's characterization of the activities as taking people "out of their comfort zone"

150

while some, like DJ, report experiencing relatively little discomfort from the activities.

**Defining self through learning physically.**

Students relate aspects of their own bodies to learning. Many allude to being "visual" or "hands on" learners or preferring to have more hands-on instruction than is typical in their courses. Virtually all recall and categorize the activities by how they moved or positioned their bodies in the room or near others. Perhaps not coincidentally, those students with the most corporeal references or who seemed the most corporeally expressive during the interviews relayed life histories of physical trauma and ongoing high stress.

There were exceptions to this rule. Two students described prior life experiences with physically-demanding activities. SS, the former competitive tennis athlete, described his best learning experiences as those that took him on field trips, such as the one to the human cadaver lab where he could "touch, we put on gloves, we could find … the different striations in the muscles". Activities meet his corporeal learning needs. "If I get up that kind of shakes it up and keeps my brain working instead of just sitting there drifting off into thought".

Similarly, DJ stated "I'm more of a physical learner … I'm more hands on". Several times she referred to learning as "pushing" self, and discussed in some depth how she came to stop pushing herself once she was no longer in gifted and talented programming. She said that "when we did the activities in class where we had to use partners and stuff that helped me better than just sitting down", and later talked about wishing more learning activities could involve "something with dancing", one of her creative outlets.

**Students Relate to and Make Meaning from the Activities through their Experiences**

**with Family and Education**

Students connect their experiences with their families and prior learning as important touchstones in their meaning making with the activities. Often these connections further relate to their sense of self as learners and their experiences working with classmates. The interconnected aspects manifest differently for individuals, making these experiences key to students' meaning making and understanding their activity experiences.

All but three students share a familial history of valuing education or having either participated in gifted-education programs or qualifying for them. These students pointed out creative aspects of the activities, and specifically discussed valuing creativity in their learning. A few of these students represented past family and educational or learning experiences as related but separate and distinct phenomena.

For the majority, past familial and educational experiences markedly intertwine in their narrations, especially the seven students that discussed previous or ongoing trauma and high life stress. Six of those seven reported experiencing traumatic events at home and school simultaneously. Five of the seven described being bullied by classmates or teachers while simultaneously dealing with highly stressful home lives in their early years. Three of the seven dropped out of high school, opting for a GED instead. All three of these women could be considered gifted and talented. Two of them question their academic abilities as did three others with a history of trauma and high stress, along with one that did not report such history. All attribute their doubts to lack of support, if not abuse, in past educational experiences. All of these students focused on ways the

activities help them deepen their understanding of conceptual content.

Those who gave the more rich and robust descriptions of their family or educational history further gave the more rich and robust accounts of their experiences with the activities. This pattern additionally helped to identify two sets of outlier cases, discussed in a later section. Briefly, these cases fall on polar ends of a continuum, with two providing relatively little information regarding their previous family or learning experiences or experiences with the activities and another two providing the richest descriptions of their family and previous learning experiences, and with the activities.

Finally, age emerged as an important analytic point while I considered students' family and learning experiences. As might be expected, older, non-traditional students have a broader repertoire of experiences with family and learning than do more traditional, younger students. Further, differences in the focus and meanings from those experiences seem to shift with age from a focus more on self with the youngest, more traditional students, to an interpersonal focus for those non-traditional students in their mid-to-late-20s, to considering a more outward, global, social focus with older, non-traditional students.

For example, the four youngest students, those in their late-teens and early-20s, discussed learning in which they experience skill growth or improvement, critical, self-improvement, or directly connect the value of learning to advancing their educational or career goals. They appear to believe that learning is "important" as "you broaden your horizons" and "open up to different options than what your parents taught you" (DJ) or "how to cope and how to move on" (KM). These students' views about psychology relate mainly to their personal level of interest in the subject. This group seemed more

153

likely than others to discuss the activities in somewhat utilitarian terms. Viewing them as a tool to "break the ice", younger students seem to experience the activities as entertaining or fresh vehicles for their personal interest or enjoyment, increasing understanding of the concepts, or connecting them with classmates and their resources to further individual learning. They more frequently reported watching others to help determine their own behavior and actions.

The six younger non-traditional adult students, those in their mid-20s to early-30s, discussed learning as a relational activity which benefits self and relationships, and increases understanding of self and others, typically their life partner or family. Several young-adult students with extensive high stress and trauma histories discussed wanting to work with and help younger children and teens with similar histories. Unlike the youngest group, all in this group spoke about relational experiences with teachers and among students. They seem to appreciate "actually interacting" and believe that doing so either "one on one" or in larger groups help their learning. All of these students seem to value studying psychology as a way of better understanding themselves, their life experiences and others of importance to them, and by doing so improving their interpersonal relationships. In this view, the activities fuel relationships and deepen understanding of others through applying psychological concepts. Some further credit the activities with widening their social circle within the class, and improving their overall level of comfort within the class.

The three middle-aged non-traditional students discussed their learning and educational experiences as avenues for social change or improvement. One characterized her life experiences before college as living "in a desert environment" (CMH). Another

viewed learning as "helping break out of chains … people discovering things about themselves that empower them and gives them freedom" (RO).  The third student described learning simply as "life" (CC).  He further seemed to represent the overall view of this group when he said, "There is a moral imperative for us to learn, study, and do jobs that makes society as a whole better."  All seem to view the field of psychology as necessary for bettering society and the world.  Of the three age groups of cases, these participants said the most about the activities as they applied to others.  Their comments range from perceptions about what they observed in their own group, the class, and the potential conceptual societal applications they imagine.  The activities seem to symbolize a productive springboard for developing group processes and relationships.

**Students Relate to and Make Meaning from the Activities through their Interactions with Other Classmates**

Students appear to relate to and make meaning from the activities through their interactions with others, based on what others did, said or felt and how they personally feel about that.  Working with others, and how students felt about working with others, seems to be an important touchstone for students as they make meaning out of the activities.  It seems to symbolize varied relational entities—a collective, safety or threat— depending on the extent to which the student experiences inclusion.  In the following subsections I consider interrelated emergent themes which support this finding.

**We/you/us.: relating to the group.**

Many students began discussing their experiences by identifying general roles students played in implementing the activities, stating either what students in the class did or what I as instructor had initiated to begin the activity.  "We" always preceded

155

a corporeal action (e.g., "stood back to back").  "You" usually preceded a corporeal

action (e.g., "told") which then referred back to the group ("us").  This seemed to suggest

that participants view themselves as part of a group, that a sense of "we-ness" exists

surrounding the activities, and that this exists separately from but relates to my role as

instructor.  It further suggests that at some level participants experience or describe

boundaries between individuals and the group as murky or blurred.

### Thoughts about working with others.

Participants' reported thoughts about others which seem to suggest a range of

ideas from great personal distress about working with others in general ("I hate relying on

others"; "I don't want to talk to others") to more comfortable feelings of trust or joy

focused more on another ("She's trying to help us"; "I'm gonna tell my husband about

this").  Some experienced personal distress during specific activities, such as what BW

relayed she was thinking during the mirroring activity ("I felt like everyone was staring at

me even though I knew they weren't").  For others the frustration seems related to

process, such as CC expressed about the Neuron Script activity ("How do we come up

with an answer when nobody's showing interest?").  Still others seem to be in a

transitional middle ground, using pivotal negatives and references to both self and others

("No one's laughing at you"; "I didn't know so many others were like me"; "No one

seemed embarrassed. Everyone seemed playful").

## Students Relate to, Make Meaning from and Show Preference for Activities through their Emotions

Students tend to categorize as memorable and rank their preference for the

activities based on their emotional responses to them.  How students label their emotional

responses to the activities seems to represent their experiences of Self in working with others. Earlier analysis reflected this by labeling the activities on a continuum from "the one I really liked" through "the anxiety attack from hell". Some preferences were class specific. For instance, all participants in Class Three mentioned one activity, the Traumatic Brain activity, as a memorable favorite, while no one in the other classes mentioned it. Additionally, an equal number of students from Classes One and Two talked about the Neuron Script activity but were divided, by class, in their feelings about it. In the following sections, I organize and consider the activities through affective labels constructed from the data. Data excerpts illustrate nuances.

**The funny, playful one.**

Class Three students all compared the Traumatic Brain and the Mirroring/Gibberish activities, preferring the Traumatic Brain activity. These students all focused on their experiences of finding humor and enjoyment in the activity, for slightly different reasons. SS found humor as he associated the activity with "those commercials whenever you see someone controlling their brain like they're little aliens. It's funny to see them actually being more humanized". BW remembered "laughing because it was funny, the things that we were coming up with that could have been going on". SH stated this was her favorite "because everyone was so interactive with it, playful. It didn't seem like anyone was embarrassed or ashamed to holler out what they thought was going on". Others, including those from other classes that did not necessarily count this activity as a favorite, echoed these themes.

All who volunteered to play a part in front of the class reported feeling anxious or "nervous going up there" (BW). All described shifts in their feelings as the enactment

157

progressed.  CMH and TK seemed to share experiencing the shift as understanding of the lesson increased while they performed.  "At first you kinda feel stupid but then you get it and you go 'Oh!!!! OK!!!! That's how that works'" (CMH).

**The cool moving one.**

At least one student from each class named the Sociogram activity as a favorite, or as memorable for them.  All explanations included enjoyment in moving or doing.  Some students further appreciated patterns that emerged from the group action.  "It was cool to see how different people were" (KM).  Others seemed to find personal meaning by using the activity to identify self.  "This is me so I'm gonna go over here" (SI).  Still others seemed to combine both.  "That showed that a lot of people had wild swings from one end to another but most were in the middle.  Although for some reason I did have a lot of wild swings" (CC).

**The exciting one.**

While various students remarked on the Detective activity, only one spoke about it in any depth.  Just prior to discussing this activity she talked about her need "to be in control" as a reason she felt "nervous" about the activities in general, but found this one to be "exciting".  Her experience of this particular activity as more mentally challenging, "like a puzzle" took her so beyond her usual initial anxiety that "not knowing" felt more exciting than uncomfortable.

**The ambivalent ones.**

Students found three different activities, the Neuron Impulse, Neuron Script, and Emotional Greetings, memorable based on opposing emotional responses to each.  Some remembered them because of the negative feelings they had about working with others.

Negative feelings related to touching or being in close physical contact with a new person. "It was awkward at first" (RO). "The one where we had to stand back to back with someone made me really uncomfortable because I didn't know the person that I was standing with" (SI). Apparently close physical proximity with a relative stranger not only increased anxiety, it did so to the extent that this aspect of the activity stood out from all the others. In contrast, another student enjoyed and identified the spontaneous nature of the activity, the chance to be "dramatic", and hearing her partner praise her efforts. She considered "being shy" but made a conscious decision to put more into her enactment, while acknowledging such activities prevented one from being "really shy". She further stated this activity helped her get to know her partner.

Students' ideas about making mistakes when working with others added another dimension to their experiences. During the Neuron Impulse one student "was thinking about how I hate relying on other people. If I take their word for it I'm gonna mess up telling the next person. I'm gonna get it wrong because the person behind me screwed up" (SM). While SM felt anxious about potential mistakes and performance, others found inevitable errors enjoyable. "I thought it was cool how people felt things. It started in one spot and somehow worked to a whole different spot. I thought that was REALLY interesting" (KM). Similarly, DJ said, "I just thought it was crazy how we would start out but then it ended up somewhere else. I thought it was just kind of Comical."

For some the activity mattered less than group dynamics. "It seemed like the group … was just not interested in what we were doing. I came up with some answers and nobody else seemed very interested in talking about it" (CC). Another student's

159

experience seemed to fall on the other end of the participation spectrum but with similar results. "I think our group had a bunch of leaders in it. It was a little difficult trying to understand what they were meaning" (SI).

Opposing views about group dynamics were offered. "My group were just so excited ... because it's a team, right? " Enthusiasm was not diminished when "nobody really understood what we were saying ... when we came back they both (said) 'I don't care! That was the best!' (laughing). I just felt so like on a high when I left I was like 'Yeah!'" (RO). Groups sometimes resolved tension and conflicts, as LH expressed: "We had agreements and disagreements over what part did what and how did it relate to reality."

**The only one I really didn't care for.**

Perhaps ironically, the only student to comment on the Introduce Your New BFF activity as "the only one I really didn't care for" was the same student that stated, "I like working with people than just by myself" and repeatedly referred to the activities using partners in positive terms. . As with other students, her anxiety appeared to stem from interacting with new people. "It's the first day of class and you don't know anybody and you're like 'AHHHHH!!! I don't know what to say'" (DJ). Ultimately, however, she thinks "that stuff is important so everybody can kind of get to know each other and see who's who". She further stated that since I introduced myself first to the class, "we should be able to do it too. If you're not shy then why should we be shy?".

**The awkward, uncomfortably intimate and vulnerable, silly ones.**

In my experiences using the creative drama activities, students have consistently reported feeling uncomfortable, anxious or uncertain during the Mirroring and Gibberish

160

enactments. Students' comments about discomfort were not unexpected. The specifics of those comments, however, provide insight into experiential complexities. One student attributed the discomfort to intimacy. "It was an intimate moment … looking at someone and having them in your space ... having to mimic someone is like (being) a baby because … it made us vulnerable" (CMH).

Students' experiences with this activity set, more than any others, seem to underscore the various ways interacting with others, emotion, thoughts, previous learning experiences and sense of self interconnected and shape students' anxiety and engagement. Within this group of students the interplay resulted in one student mentally disengaging from the activities, two students focusing negatively inward and another two focusing positively outward as they continued to engage.

Something about how SH experienced these activities, "doin' all this silly stuff" with "this woman I didn't know", prompted her to make a disgusted face and pretend to scream during the interview while discussing them. Her reactions challenged her sense of being "OK with new people". She attributed balancing work and school time demands as costing her time needed to form interpersonal connections with classmates. She said little else about the activity.

This activity set negatively affected BW and TK. Both described how the activities prompted them to focus on their inner feelings and escalated their anxiety. Most of BW's attention focused on thinking that "everybody was staring at me even though I knew they weren't". She said "during the activity I didn't know really why we were doing it. I couldn't focus on anything but the fact that people were staring at me and I felt stupid". While the post-enactment discussion helped her understand how

161

activities and course concepts connected, she felt anxious when she could not forge those links herself. TK, on the other hand, became overwhelmed with anxiety precisely because of the parallels she found between her experiences and the course concepts during enactment. "That's how mommy and baby communicate … It pissed me off. So does that mean that me and mommy didn't communicate like this? Am I defective? Why would she do something like this?" She suggested the possibility that aspects of the activities produced "some underlying trigger" of her extensive history of abuse, which led to the self-questioning and her to characterize this set of activities as "the anxiety attack from hell".

The remaining two students began the activities feeling anxious but as they engaged and focused on their partners and others around them shifted to feeling more comfortable and able to make conceptual connections between the activities and course content. Theirs are the stories that opened this chapter. SS, initially "uncomfortable or awkward", described shifting rapidly into paying "more attention to what was going on around me". As he observed others, picking up cues about what to do in the activity, he realized "babies don't know what's going on, they just make up their own stuff so it made more sense to do it that way to me … us figuring it out ourselves". Like SS, CMH seemed to quickly move beyond her initial discomfort to describe what she called "epiphany moments", signaled through a succession of "Wow!"'s throughout the transcript. Beginning with her realization, "If I can get in two or three seconds what this person is getting ready to do, same thing … babies can pick up", she connected enaction with the concept of emotional synchronicity, considered cultural and technological influences on parenting, human development, and therapeutic interventions.

162

**Students View the Activities as Agents that Changed their Class Experiences and**

**Learning**

Students attribute participating in the activities with changing how they felt about the activities, thought about course concepts, and the overall class environment. The activities seem to symbolize a sense of positive movement from an initially negative space to a more positive one in various ways. Some students reported emotionally-negative associations with the word "drama" or thoughts of acting and yet went on to talk about enjoying the activities. Students described ways the activities changed their understanding of concepts, changes they experienced in the class, in their comfort level or those of others in the class, as related to the activities. They pointed out an increasing acceptance of ambiguity or interpersonal difference from participating in the activities. I discuss each of these aspects in more detail in the following subsections.

**"Drama is bad".**

I was prepared to hear negative first reactions from students either about the activities or the idea of creative drama. I had assumed some, like PD, would simply say, "I don't like acting. I don't like any of that." I was frankly surprised when she said, "…but it was helpful. I wouldn't have wanted to sit out."

I was most surprised by the students who associated the word "drama" with struggle, conflict, and loss. Of these, only BW acknowledged awareness of her response as different from others when asked "What do you think of when you hear the words 'creative drama'?" She replied, "Arguing … I know that's not what you're meaning." Of the three students that shared this pattern, perhaps SM summed up a common initial reaction to creative drama when she said, "Drama is bad to me. It reminds me of bad

things.  I like to be in control and drama seems very unpredictable."

While some students, like PD, initially made negative associations with drama, all ended up experiencing the activities as "helpful", "cool … really interesting" or even "exciting".  None of the students participating in the study identified any negative aspects the activities had upon their learning.  The possibility seemed to even baffle SM.  "That's weird to me that that wouldn't work for somebody … just doesn't even compute in my head.  I'm just not wired that way."

**Wrapping, clicking,** "**getting", burning and building.**

Students offered a wide variety of key corporeally-themed statements describing their experiences of learning with the activities.  When taken together, such student statements suggest a progression of learning opportunity stages the activities present.

- "People just trying to figure out … like wrap their brain around it."

- "Seeing a process it really helps it to click."

- "I'm like awwwwwwww!!! (waves arms in the air) I get it! I get it!"

- "I don't think I would have got it if we were to just like watch the video or did the lecture thing."

- "Activities giving metaphors and stuff it just burns it in better."

- "Give me a core to build off of.  Even if we go here, here and here I can always come back to that core and then work through the steps to reach the big picture."

As I describe in Chapter Three, I provide little preliminary explanation or lead in to most of the activities when I present them.  Students spontaneously enact most of the activities with minimal instruction.  This can indeed leave students to mentally scramble for a bit, trying to "wrap their brain around" what they are doing and how it connects to

the lecture or discussion which preceded it.  As connections begin to "click", students further begin to "get" the concept, more deeply understanding in insightful ways.  If students experience "getting" concepts as meaningful, the activities may help "burn it in" enough to spark further thought and reflection about the concept.  The "burned in" place seems to become the "core to build off of", anchoring further thought connections in relation to "the core".

**Exchanging ideas.**

The opportunities for processing activities through dialogue seem a key part of students' experiences with the pedagogy.  Students describe the activities as changing how they thought about course concepts.  Many attribute such changes to the social, interactive nature of the activities and follow up discussions that are central to the pedagogy.  For instance, many students described realizing errors in their thinking or compared their understanding of concepts before and after the activities.  Some described other students as key learning resources in prompting this change.  For instance, LH offered:

> It allows us to participate and learn about each other.  Group work helps socialize and understanding what other people think of the work.  It helps give more idea about what the subject is about … When it's a group you have more resources from your other students, see what other people's relation is or what other people think of that subject or how they felt or what they thought.

LH appreciated how group discussions surfaced both agreements and disagreements crediting them as "makes my brain function … helps my brain work".  The process of constructing knowledge with class mates seems an important and enjoyable piece of the

learning process in psychology for her and others.

DJ stated her preference for group work at the very beginning of the interview. She seems to equate social interaction as learning and showed greatest preference for the Neuron Impulse activity because "everybody was involved, not just like two people but the whole class."   Another partnered activity "kinda helped me to get to know the girl and later she sat by me in class, too, and we switched notes and stuff".  She seems to differ from LH in that she appears to perceive the social connection to another classmate and subsequent sharing of resources (class notes) as a byproduct; for LH, the interaction and exchange of ideas seems to be the resource and main focus, with social connection to others as byproduct.

**"Add(ing) to the overall environment".**

Students attribute the activities with changing the social and emotional environment of the class.  Some comments focused on personal experiences; others focused on perceptions of others and the class as a whole.  Participants noted changes in the classroom environment whether students initially feel apprehensive or anticipate the activities as "fun" or "exciting".

PD declared that the activities "break the ice", marking the opening to changing the learning environment.  Students noted the change from individual, passive, traditional instruction to the active, cooperative activities.  "Everybody gets up slow out of their chairs" (CMH); "everybody's kinda up and they're standing by each other" (DJ).  Those approaching an activity from a more emotionally-negative space discussed feeling "so apprehensive, like, 'I don't wanna do this'.  But you get halfway through it and you're like, 'This is not as bad as I thought'" (CMH).  Students approaching from more

emotionally-positive spaces offered, "This person's doing it. They're having a good time. I'm not gonna be shy. I'm gonna have a good time too" (DJ).

Whether their point of reference was their own experience, like CMH ("Once you start engaging and you see that's nothing's going to hurt you, you're fine.") or their perceptions of others ("If you see everybody doing it then people will want to participate more."), like DJ, students attribute the activities as changing their own comfort level and that of others within the class, sometimes further attributing increased learning to the change. For instance, SI offered:

> They helped everyone to be more comfortable with their classmates because we were actually interacting with them on some level. I think that really helped me be able to learn more in the class because I felt … more comfortable with my surroundings.

SS seemed to echo SI's thoughts about personal comfort while extending them to include the influence on others. He stated his belief that the activities

> … definitely adds to the class, like the overall environment. It's a happier environment. I'm not much of a talker but if you asked me a question or I could relate to something … I would raise my hand. I wouldn't be too nervous to speak. Going into your class, people can talk. I feel like those activities add to that. People can have their own input. It's more of a discussion.

Students further noted the interconnection between active engagement in the activities, affective changes in the learning environment and the increases in each.

> I think when you're in a classroom and it's just strictly lecture there's no communication, there's no give and take. I think it's good for people to get

involved.  When they do the exercises they feel important, like if they're learning

something or they have a question that it's important to ask, it's OK to ask.

They're just as important as anybody else in the room and I think that's good for

morale … I think it promotes good will, humanity, you know?  Fellowship.  (RO)

This student summarized the interaction process stating that the activities "forces them to

come out of their shell and to *embrace the unfamiliar*" (italic emphasis for the next

section).

### Embracing the unfamiliar.

The activities move students to "embrace the unfamiliar" for themselves and in

relating to other students, noting ways I model this during the activities and discussions.

I consider each aspect in its own subsection.

#### *Embracing the unfamiliar for oneself.*

Students discussed doing things they wouldn't normally do, such as participating

in the activities, because they believe doing so helps them learn.  For example, all who

enacted the Traumatic Brain activity left the comfort of their seats to take the unfamiliar

lead in an unknown enactment in front of the class, facing an unknown reception by

classmates, "swallowing my anxiety" (TK) because they believed doing so would help

them better understand course concepts.  Similarly, the feelings almost every student

repeated  about the activities in general, initial anxiety changing to more positive

emotions, indicates a form of personally embracing the unfamiliar.

#### *Embracing unfamiliar others.*

Students discussed ways the activities help them become more open to those

different from them, and increase tolerance of differences in classmates.  Overall the data

168

reflected this pattern as students discussed getting to know previously unknown classmates because they participated in the activities. RO and LH specifically mentioned a particular "character in our class", and how the activities helped them and others see him as "harmless and kind of loveable in some ways … Sometimes things are a little scary from what we're comfortable with but that's OK " (RO). CMH reported taking her "epiphany moments" outside the classroom, embracing more people unknown to her. "One of the things I try to do now's when people are walking through the hallway, look at them and say 'Hi' and see what they do."

### *Embracing the unfamiliar: the role of teacher.*

A few students commented on how they view my role as teacher related to embracing the unfamiliar or different, and how they used this as a touchstone in their own process. DJ noted that my actions, introducing myself to the class before the first Introduce Your New BFF activity, helped her decide to get beyond her anxiety and embrace the opportunity to talk with a new person on that first day of class. As I mentioned previously, DJ commented, "If you can do it we should be able to do it too. If you're not shy then why should we be shy?" LH characterized my role during the activities, "you're like our guidance", suggesting my actions helped her interact with others, share her ideas and consider those that differed from hers. SM discussed what she noticed about my role in post enactment discussions:

> Instead of shoving the answers in to our face you made us question and then you were also very open to opposing views. You didn't bash anybody. There were a lot of times students would have completely different views on it and you tried to at least tie it all together.

169

SM noted specific relational skills she perceived I modeled related to empowerment, openness, tolerance, and inclusion.

**Students' Struggles with the Activities may Reflect more about their Larger Struggles within Higher Education than Disengagement**

Qualitative validity in part depends on the researcher's attending to discrepant cases and data to interrogate findings and to consider other key factors at work in data. Considering those cases that at first seem to be "outlier" cases, in the sense that they show unusual or special elements, can further understanding, provide new learning of other cases or add insight to related concerns (Patton, 2002). This section attends to data and case examples that varied from other students' descriptions of their experiences. Specifically, what these cases shared in common might, at least initially, be described as disengagement.

I present this information in a more tenuous vein than preceding findings, for a couple of reasons. The first has to do with the term *student disengagement*, and how I use that term as a self-labeled relational teacher. While I am aware that researchers sometimes use the term student disengagement in the literature as a professional euphemism for drop-outs (Washor & Mojkowski, 2014), along with "disaffected" (Slee, 2014) students who exhibit negative behaviors and affect (Blondahl & Adalbjarnardottir, 2012), I use the term here as I have heard teachers use it regularly; to refer to students that don't (or won't) participate in deeper, more meaningful or sustained ways with pedagogical strategies the teacher has selected to use. Student engagement is a prominent current concern in higher education, but amorphous and difficult to define. I chose to italicize the term disengagement to indicate my desire to reframe that practice definition,

to reconsider the students from Class One who didn't seem to have much to say about the activities or their family or learning histories, and those from Class Three that shared a great deal of their past experiences but left the course, and the role of teacher in relationship with them.

Tentativeness further relates to lack of member checking in the study. Both cases from the first set came from Class One, and required different use of inductive and deductive reasoning before the same issue emerged, with neither student available for a member check. The other two cases came from Class Three. Both students disappeared from the course shortly after the Mirroring and Gibberish enactments and their interviews around week 10. Neither student responded to my repeated email attempts to contact them.

Further data analysis of these emergent, stratified, extreme cases produced two ways I alternatively considered student disengagement, as struggles to find voice and with anxiety in higher education, which I offer in the following subsections.

**Struggling to find voice in higher education.**

The two cases from Class One stand out as markedly different from all others as they both lack rich, robust descriptions of family, educational history and experiences with the activities. During the analytic process it gradually became clear that these students were the only two that described or demonstrated struggles in expressing themselves, especially as that pertained to academic work in higher education. Both demonstrated problems with either speech fluency or communicating meaning during the interview. I define problems with speech fluency as stops and starts in speech, frequent use of sounds (e.g., ummmm, uhhhh) or repetitive words (e.g., like), or sudden, abrupt

changes in word choices that makes tracking overall meaning laborious. I define

problems with meaning as either incorrect word use or confabulating words. I consider

these mechanical problems with self-expression as part of what I mean by "finding

voice". The other part of "finding voice" as I consider it involves comfort and ease in

communicating about one's experiences and abilities.

Each of these two students described difficulties with their academic abilities.

Both attended a technical program rather than follow a college prep course of study in

high school. Both initially struggled to pass exams in our class. Both discussed

communication issues with professors in college classes in more depth and detail than

they did anything else. I present facets of each case to further understanding of ways

these points of comparison manifested in these students.

PD literally said nothing about her family, and reported her educational history

like she was reading a travel agenda, with contrasting sound bites about each destination:

> … one was M (private school) and like (local) public school and then I switched
>
> to (another public district, a third local district, second local district) … I knew
>
> more people and the kids were more like willing to be nicer … but teachers didn't
>
> really care as much (in second district) but (third district) was … a lot harder …
>
> their standards for their teachers were kind of like higher. (ellipses indicate
>
> pauses)

Her description of the Sociogram was equally brief and rather disjointed:

> … the one where we got if we were a certain type of personality we were just like
>
> go like stuff where it seemed like I could have been either one where the spatial or
>
> the visual learner … I guess watching everyone else and going like just the

172

experience of doing it like made me remember … and not knowing why we were

doing it then hearing those things made me like "Oh!"

She seems to switch thought directions three times within ten words in one sentence

("we were just like go like stuff where it seemed like …").  She further tacked on "I don't

takes me a while to actually get to talking to people".

What she did discuss in more fluid, specific depth were her experiences in her

college composition classes.  Becoming "a better writer" seemed valuable and important

to her.  She stated these were her favorite courses "because you get to express your

thoughts".  Apparently writing gives her the time and opportunity to choose her words

and organize them in a way she finds difficult when talking to others.  Her descriptions of

the activities and the overall interview support this idea.

Her responses to interview questions about the activities gave the initial

impression that she doesn't really know what she thinks.  Unlike others (notably RO) she

mentions a variety of possible opposing ideas but never really commits to any.  For

example, when asked about her experiences participating given that she stated "I don't

like acting", she responded,

Well, I just like it would've been better if it had been at the end of class maybe or

like a little bit towards the end just because it seems like the class is more

comfortable with everyone by then and so it would have been easier … but I think

it helps also to like break the ice, so … either way. (Ellipses indicate pauses)

When asked if she thought the activities were more anxiety-producing or helpful she said,

"I guess I mean it's bound to produce anxiety but it was helpful like if it was my own

choice I wouldn't have done it but I'm glad like we did do it so …"

173

PD further discussed various study strategies she used.

I go over all my vocab like my notes and stuff from class and I have to make flash cards and then I just review the flash cards. Then I just make up hints and clues for the word, like words out of each like to resemble, like vernacular. I remember that because that's the language like types of languages like I still like I don't know how like somehow I'll like associate that word with language and so I just get it in my head.

Taken together with her stated preference for "answers that are definite" and "things like pretty straight out", it seems possible that PD needs more concrete scaffolding, such as overt instruction on reflection, during the activities (and perhaps the interview) for her to be able to more articulately express her meaning from the activities.

KM demonstrated similar difficulties in expressing herself. She further questioned her academic abilities, perhaps making discussions about her learning more difficult. She gave some brief but important related details about her family and view of herself as a learner. She readily talked about being the first in her family to go to college. She attended "a country school" and originally went to "trade school" like her parents because she believed "college was too hard" since she is "not a photographic learner. I have to read it, read it, read it". She defined learning as "a challenge", but one she enjoys. She changed her mind about going to college when her step-father "pursued me into want to go". Other misuse of words was most pronounced in her rich description about her biology professor and his teaching style compared to mine and another humanities instructor.

She labeled the biology professor as "very, very, very, very intelligent so he

174

speaks at – he don't dumb stuff down … You do. You help me do that. My humanities teacher helps me do that".  She later went on to describe a variety of instructional strategies used in both classes that the biology professor did not use.  Her use of "dumb down" really refers to use of diverse, purposeful, pedagogical techniques, and reflects more about her opinion of her own abilities than the quality of instruction, its rigor or the level of intelligence of any of the instructors.

Her struggle for words and meanings carried over to her descriptions of the activities. Unlike any other student, KM not only did not discuss feelings of anxiety, she could not recall feeling any kind of emotion with the activities.  She instead "thought it was cool how people …" behaved in them.  She referred to the Neuron Impulse activity as "the pulse one", describing it in the most literal, corporeal terms ("we went through and squeezed each other's hands or tapped"), then struggled for the next two transcript pages to talk about ways the activity affected her learning.  She finally responded to my prompt, "You said you enjoyed the activity.  You enjoyed it because …".  She said, "I thought it was cool how people how much it changed you know? How people felt things you know it started in one spot and somehow worked to a whole different spot. I thought that was REALLY interesting".  When I asked "Did anything about that activity …", she completed the question for me ("help me with the test?") and quickly stated "no", adding "I didn't do well on the first test so to me probably not."  She later said this "nervous one like just understanding … helped me a lot", apparently considering this as separate from her performance on that exam.  She further stated she found the Sociogram to be helpful, with neither activity being "distractful at all".

Cumulative consideration of all these aspects points to KM's struggle to express

herself when discussing her college learning and potentially not yet understanding how she learned best. Unlike PD, the tone of her responses was more definite, with no mention or overtones of anxiety; however, she seemed to emphasize that even in favorite classes like psychology "It doesn't come easier, but ummmm in a way it does make more sense." Like PD she may need more concrete scaffolding, such as overt instruction on reflection, during the activities for her to be able to benefit fully from the creative drama activities, understand her learning processes more fully, to more articulately express her meaning from the activities.

**Struggling with anxiety in higher education.**

Unlike PD and KM, BW and TK had no trouble communicating their thoughts and feelings about their past histories or experiences with the activities. Theirs are some of the richest data among all the cases. While there is no way to know with certainty that the final activities and interviews contributed to them disappearing from the course, they both were quite emotional during their interviews following the Mirroring and Gibberish activities and repeatedly noted the level of anxiety they experienced during them. I did not notice any unusual reactions during class, and did not know of the existence or intensity of their feelings until the interviews. Considering the role of anxiety in these outlier cases seems important in informing the use of the activities as a pedagogical strategy and from a relational educator's perspective.

Unlike all other students, BW and TK dropped out of the class within a few sessions of the last enactments and their interviews. While all but one student mentioned dealing with anxiety during the activities, and some talked about feeling anxious in any setting where they interacted with new people, five students reporting previous traumatic

experiences or ongoing high life stress indicated they felt troubled by anxiety in a variety of settings in an ongoing way. Even among these students, BW and TK stood out during the interviews.

Parallels between their backgrounds include prior experiences in treatment for the anxiety, depression, and other conditions related to the extent of their trauma experiences not found in any other students' life stories. Both experienced abuse and life threatening circumstances at an early age which continue to adversely affect their lives and relationships with their families. Both encountered difficulties in fitting in to their school environments prior to the critical, life threatening incidents. These problems escalated after their critical incident as they encountered bullying from students and teachers, producing further trauma and stress. Both reported that struggles with anxiety and previous schooling shaped their present experiences in classes at the college.

BW spoke fairly extensively about ways she experienced anxiety in class and how she believed it affected her school performance.

> I get really nervous when there's a bunch of people … Tests … I get nervous about time going too fast and everybody's done and I'm still there so I just start circling stuff … I study all the time then when it gets time to test, it's like everything in my head just goes blank.

She talked about ways this played out in her developmental writing class "It's hard for me to concentrate … everybody constantly talks." The instructor further "has timed things … by the time I think of something that makes sense to write we have to turn it in already". By contrast she stated that she "felt like I do a lot better in your class anxiety wise … I'm engaged with you and what you're saying"; however, that was not the case

for her during the Mirroring and Gibberish activities.

BW finds being in large groups of people anxiety provoking.  Her anxiety escalates in classroom situations which invite comparing self with others.  While many students might claim the same pattern, BW has a history and position no other student had in this study.  The severe burns she suffered at age 6 continue to affect her physical being and make her position in social comparison a vulnerable one.  She additionally experienced repeated bullying and abuse in classroom environs and in other work environments that further relate directly back to that original critical incident.

TK summed up her anxiety about being in college when she said,

I hate school.  I hate learning new things because I'm so scared I'm gonna fail.
I've been told "You're a failure" my whole life.  I failed middle school.  I failed
high school.  If I had relied on teachers to help me get my GED I would have
failed that too.  I'm so scared to come to college and have to rely on somebody to
teach me something … that scares the shit out of me.

She had similar comments about the developmental writing class she attended with BW, but focused more on the teacher's role ("She doesn't do anything about it") in contributing to the distractions in the class.  Like BW, she further contrasted her experience in that class with being in ours, and how she viewed me and my pedagogy to that of the writing teacher, and others.

I'm not being an ass kisser or anything but your class has been the only positive
experience.  The students are here to learn, which is great.  You try to make sure
we understand everything.  You tell us what we need to know, break it down into
your own words.  You explain stuff to us.  I've never had a teacher do that.  All of

178

my teachers have either been note takers or "I'm gonna tell you this once and if

you don't get it you're outta luck" types.

This student seems to have assumed her struggles in schooling were her responsibility

and maintained a distrust of those within an education system that failed her, making

college a high anxiety environment for her.

Further, unlike any other student, TK presented herself as someone with an

inadequate support system. During the interview, she shared,

That's why I'm always coming up to you after class because I don't really have

anybody that I can talk to about my issues other than B. There's really nobody to

help me with anything. So that's why I was like "You know, she teaches about

psychology, so maybe she'll know." You know?

I remain uncertain whether discomfort with other students, past experiences in

school, other unknown matters, the creative drama activities, or the activities contributed

to I these two leaving the class; students in the context in which I teach negotiate family,

work, and personal responsibilities that shape their experiences in school. However, the

timing of leaving the class may indicate that the spontaneity and risk required with some

of the creative drama activities may have affected them differently than other students in

my classes. This aspect has troubled me the most as their instructor and the researcher in

this study. It is not at all unusual for students to approach me with such issues, precisely

for similar reasons TK suggested when she thought "You know, she teaches about

psychology, so maybe she'll know". In my experience, students expect their psychology

instructors to know about psychological conditions and issues, and suggest relevant

resources. I have considered additional ways I might serve students within the college. I

have strengthened my relationship with key staff members on campus as a result of my experiences with these students. All of this raises important implications about how instructors should consider implementing the activities, and for psychology educators, perhaps in particular, which I discuss in Chapter Six. I further discuss and consider implications for such collaborative efforts in Chapter Six.

### . Summarizing Discussion

In previous sections of this chapter I presented this study's findings. In this section I summarily discuss connections between the findings and the research questions about students' experiences with the activities, delineating the touchstones students used for making meaning, the aspects students identified as important to their learning, ways they characterized their activity preferences, and which, if any, ways these shifted between activities.

Students used the socially interactive nature of the activities, ways they viewed themselves and their histories, and experiences of others as touchstones for making meaning from the activities. More specifically, students used what they experienced bodily, emotionally and cognitively in the moment of the activity, along with their memories of previous experiences and ideas about themselves as touchstones for creating meaning from the activities. They further simultaneously identified and used aspects of others' bodies and movement, expressed thoughts and emotions, and behavior as meaning making touchstones. The first four finding statements speak directly to these touchstones in students' meaning making processes.

Students further identified the physical, social interaction of the activities as important for their learning. Some named the opportunity to move and watch others

move as helpful to keeping them alert and engaged. Others recognized hearing and sharing ideas with others as essential for increasing their understanding and knowledge of concepts. Still others pinpointed the increased comfort they experienced in the class overall as a result of participating in the activities as pivotal for their learning, and that of others. Collectively, students described a progression of corporeal metaphors for the activity process and their experience of learning through the activities. All of these aspects are supported in the data for findings two, four and five.

Students clearly characterized their activity preferences as related to the emotions they associated with the activities, referring to the activities using emotions or feeling states. This pattern was evident in their use of indigenous labels (Emerson, et. al., 1995), such as "the funny one", as well as the strong emotions BK and TM invoked in describing their experiences.

Finally, students' experienced activities in nuanced ways. These nuances related directly to finding one, and understanding the inseparable interconnections among individual student's body, thoughts, emotions, personal and educational histories, and experiences with others. These holistic interconnections were evident in all levels of the data analysis, emphasizing the range of students' experiences with the activities. How individual differences combined within classes further contributed to nuances, as shown by the characterizations of activities and preferences. For example, the Traumatic Brain activity was enacted in all three classes, but stood out as a favorite only for those students in Class Three.

The answers to all of these questions raise important connections to the existing SoTL literature related to relational teaching, reflective practice and instruction, and the

181

neuroscience of learning. The role of emotionality in learning appears to be a particularly

salient connection emerging from this study. These connections further suggest weighty

implications for teaching and learning in undergraduate psychology and higher education

reform, which I have already begun to incorporate into my teaching. I discuss these

implications in the next chapter.

CHAPTER VI


CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS


*An unexpected event, Class One's refusal to enact an activity, contributed to setting this*

*class apart from the others.  During class, after reviewing the parts of the limbic system,*

*with my usual Socratic approach falling flat with this notably silent group, I asked "So …*

*who's ready to have some fun today?"  When no one responded, I asked again, "Anyone*

*ready to have fun today?"  A lone female voice from the back of the room said, "No*

*thanks … I think I'll pass."  Initially irritated, I considered options and responded, "Oh*

*… just not up for it today?"  She shook her head and said "Not really".  I asked if others*

*felt the same way.  There was no real response, little eye contact, and some seemingly*

*nervous shifts in some chairs.  I then asked "Well … wazzup??" and for a show of hands*

*to indicate if this was a low energy time of day for them.  A few hesitant hands went up no*

*higher than chest height.  I acknowledged that this was also a low energy time for me.*

*I asked one last time, jokingly adding, "If there's no one out there, y'all are*

*gonna be stuck with just me …" When no one volunteered, I acted out the parts of the*

*Traumatic Brain enactment, asking students to refer to their notes to tell me what each*

*part did.  I walked them through the parts, moving my body to the designated stage spots*

*(very difficult to do given the limited space), as students provided the information about*

183

*their function.  I experienced this enactment as nearly excruciatingly painful; almost all students had their heads in their notes, few spoke up.  I then asked for them to come up with a regular life scenario that would be a low stress situation.  Only one person spoke up and offered a scenario.  I walked through the parts and how each would function under that condition.  A few students raised questions at this point, including one which jumped us into the more traumatic version of the story.  This time, the role of cortisol was introduced and a student asked about the effects on abused children.*

The preceding story, reconstructed from my journal and field notes, highlights an experience I never encountered in the classroom previously: Class One's refusal to participate in a creative drama activity.  The specific activity, the Traumatic Brain activity, was in fact popular in the other two classes.  This story, a critical incident (Patton, 2002) within the study, illustrates potential problems teachers may encounter when using creative drama activities in the undergraduate psychology classroom and suggests broader implications for teaching.  The study findings I presented in Chapter Five have implications for implementing the activities, teaching and learning in undergraduate psychology and the SoTL.  I focus on these topics in this chapter.

This study presents a detailed look at individual student's experiences with teacher-developed creative drama activities used as a pedagogical strategy in undergraduate community college psychology courses to better understand students' experiences with those activities.  The literature clearly demonstrates connections between positive affect and emotion with cognition across developmental stages when instructors use drama methods; however previous studies do not explore participants'

meaning- making process of engaging in such activities as I do here. I conducted the

study to: 1) to contribute to SoTL in undergraduate psychology by exploring students'

experiences with the creative drama activities to understand  students' meaning making

associated with the activities; 2) to contribute an in-depth and detailed account of the

activities and their implementation for psychology instructors considering use of such

innovative activities in their teaching, and; 3) to contribute to my own reflective practice

while contributing to the SoTL in undergraduate psychology.  I chose symbolic

interactionism to inform this multi-case study to uncover touchstones and symbolic ways

students make meaning from their experiences with the activities.

With this final product I offer an in-depth and detailed understanding of students'

experiences, their meaning making processes, and a concrete set of creative drama tools

undergraduate teachers might use within their own teaching practice.  I confirm previous

connections between positive affect and emotion with cognition from creative drama use

with qualitative depth and detail that exposes nuanced understanding of how students

experience and describe those connections as part of their learning with the activities.  In

the two previous chapters I introduced the thirteen cases (Chapter Four) distributed across

three courses, and discussed emergent analytic findings (Chapter Five) from the data,

detailing individual cases while adding more specific understanding of the quintain.  I

addressed the ways findings answered the research questions concerned with ways

students represent their experiences with activities.  Findings suggest that students

holistically engage with the activities while making meaning using what I refer to as

touchstones, various aspects of their experiences: their Sense of Self; their past

experiences with family and education; experiencing changes in themselves, their understanding of concepts, their feelings, and; working with their classmates.

I present the seven related findings below (Chapter 5) and then turn to conclusions and implications. The first finding makes the obvious patterns of the data corpus obvious (Patton, 2002). The data reveals that students describe experiences with the activities as complex, holistic phenomena consisting of interconnections among one's body, mind, emotions, and interactions with others and the environment. Students found the activities engaging on multiple levels. With the additional findings I tease out specific touchstones from these interconnections that students used to make meaning in greater detail. Nuances I delineated within findings point to symbolic ways students use the touchstones. To review, findings are:

- Students describe multi-dimensional engagement with creative drama activities that reflect interconnections among their bodies, thoughts, emotions, interactions with classmates, and family and learning experiences.

- Students relate to and make meaning from the activities through their sense of self.

- Students relate to and make meaning from the activities through their experiences with family and learning.

- Students relate to and make meaning from the activities through their interactions with classmates.

- Students relate to, make meaning from and show preference for activities through their emotions.

- Students view the activities as agents that changed their class experiences and learning.

- Students' struggles with the activities may reflect more about their larger struggles within higher education than disengagement.

In this chapter I consider conclusions and implications of the findings. I draw the following conclusions from the findings and supporting warrants:

- Students' reports of multi-dimensional engagement indicate the activities support embodied learning with varied meaning making from diverse touchstones in undergraduate psychology instruction.

- Classroom climate is a key component of implementing creative drama activities, affecting students' experience of the activities and being affected by them.

- Instructor's pedagogical and interpersonal strategies seem important in developing the safe, welcoming learning environment needed for students' engagement in the activities.

- Students' life experiences, including trauma and high life stress, in and out of the classroom may shape reactions to and reflections on the activities.

- Instructor reflection, awareness of students' potential range of reactions to activities, and pedagogical care and adjustments are important to the strategic use of creative drama activities.

I first use these conclusions to structure discussion of connections between relevant embodiment and SoTL literature and data. Next I use the findings, conclusions and connections to the literature to address the implication questions:

- How might students' experiences of creative drama activities better inform undergraduate psychology pedagogy?
  - How do creative drama activities in undergraduate psychology seem to promote desired teaching and learning outcomes for reflective practice? How can this be better assessed?
  - What are the implications for undergraduate psychology teaching in a community college environment?
  - How might findings better inform SoTL research?

## Connections between Relevant Embodiment and SoTL Literature and Students' Experiences of the Activities

Students reported their experiences in a multitude of ways which connect directly with the embodiment, reflective practice, and relational teaching literature and Huitt's (2003) model. These connections carry a number of implications for implementing the activities, teaching and learning in undergraduate psychology and the SoTL. I set the stage for those implications as I first interweave the conclusions with the literature and data that further support the conclusions. With this organizational decision I additionally emphasize more interrelated connections needed for understanding students' experiences of such holistic activities as creative drama.

## Students' Reports of Multi-dimensional Engagement Indicate the Activities Support Embodied Learning with Varied Meaning Making in Undergraduate Psychology Instruction

Support for this study's initial finding exists within the embodiment literature. To review, that finding states that students described multi-dimensional engagement with

creative drama activities, reflecting interconnections among their bodies, thoughts, emotions, family and learning experiences, and working with classmates. With this finding I essentially restate embodiment's claim about the interconnections and interchangeability among our bodies, minds, emotions and the social world "as a form of lived experience, actively engaged in and with the world of sociocultural and physical objects" (Overton, 2007, p.3). Embodied engagement uses the entire self in interpersonal or relational experiences with others or the environment in understanding and making meaning during those experiences (Ray, 2006).

Students reported their experiences in holistic ways which made nuanced meanings that related to ideas they held about themselves and their past experiences. They discussed using their Sense of Self to make meaning from the activities and the activities to inform their Sense of Self. At the same time, all participants expressed a sense of group cohesion, or "we-ness," which suggested that students experienced boundaries between individuals and the group as sometimes murky or blurred. Students made meaning from their emotional reactions to the activities and working with others. How they labeled their emotional responses to the activities seemed to symbolize their experiences of Self in working with others. These "embodied appraisals" (Prinz, 2004 as used by Columbetti & Thompson, 2008, p. 59) suggest self-organizational activity, originating internally and from personal experience, and not linearly caused by any outward stimulus (Ellis, 2009). These findings echo the enactive approach's view that "living beings are autonomous agents that actively generate and maintain their identities, and thereby enact or bring forth their own cognitive domains" (Colombetti & Thompson, 2008, p.55).

Students implied their engagement through their robust descriptions narrating what they thought, felt, noticed, did and perceived others doing during the activities. Their descriptions indicated varying levels of engagement by student and activity. Overall, students reported feeling actively engaged in learning with the activities, which matched my perceptions recorded in field notes and journal entries. Some students stated that by providing the activities I "got us to think and engage" (SM). Others seemed to use interest to signify engagement, as it fluctuated between activities and group members. "Nobody else seemed very interested in talking about it … whereas some other people that I joined with had a great interest in what we were doing" (CC). Still others described participating in the activities as a chance to "get involved" (RO) "because we were actually interacting" (SI).

The data abounds with students' descriptions of ways they experienced embodied engagement during the activities. The student-generated descriptions relate to the Classroom Processes portion of Huitt's (2003) Transactional Model of the Teaching Learning Process. Classroom Processes include student and teacher behaviors related to classroom activities, with student engagement as a key aspect of student behaviors contributing to desired Output, teacher defined learning outcomes (Huitt, 2003). The data seems to support a possible theoretical interplay between embodied engagement and Huitt's model. Students' embodied engagement with the activities can produce unique, personalized nuances in meaning making; psychology teachers need to anticipate this when planning to use these activities as a pedagogical strategy as part of their Classroom Process and in considering desired Output.

Concurrently I suggest a different interpretation of the importance of Input as

related to embodied engagement in Class Processes and Output than Huitt's (2003). I find students' Sense of Self and their family and learning experiences of great relevance to Output. The data shows that each student brings these touchstones with them into the classroom setting as part of their previous or tacit knowledge. The data supports that students used these touchstones in their meaning making with the activities. Nuances developed from what these touchstones symbolized for each student during the activities and after. Students often identified themselves in relation to their family or learning experiences, such as SM being "hard on myself … I have to be the best", or SI feeling "uncomfortable in class … but I keep pushing myself because I know I can do it".

Over half of the students entered our classroom with a history of trauma or high life stress. Many of these students described ongoing school bullying, involving students and teachers. These students described feelings of anxiety in class, especially when interacting with other students. Their level of anxiety affected their meaning making in distinct ways, some of which, like TK and BW, were intense and unsettling compared to others. I found these touchstones of utmost importance in understanding students' meaning-making processes and learning. Huitt considered Input as the least important component of his model to determining Output outcomes, which he defined as academic achievement scores on standardized tests (2003). The embodied nature of the activities has implications for the teaching-learning process in undergraduate psychology, including assessment, which I consider in a later section.

Students discussed a variety of ways that they thought, felt and changed while interacting with classmates during the activities. I address connections between this data and the literature in the next conclusion.

**Classroom Climate is a Key Component of Implementing Activities, Affecting Students' Experiences of the Activities and Being Affected by Them**

The sixth study finding summarizes changes students described; from more negative, anxious thoughts and feelings, to more positive ones; toward noting others' acceptance of differences , and; ways these changes interacted with and influenced their thinking about class concepts. While students never used the words "class climate", they devoted much time in discussing a "perceived quality of the classroom setting" (Gillen, Wright, & Spink, 2011, p. 65), the ways in which teachers and learners "experience the psychological and physical characteristics of the classroom" (p. 66). One stated the activities "… definitely adds to the class, like the overall environment. It's a happier environment. Going into your class, people can talk. I feel like those activities add to that." (SS) Other students attributed this "happier environment" to an increased sense of safety, comfort, acceptance and enjoyment related to the activities.

The patterns students reported of increasing comfort as they participated in the activities and related to others in the class seems to parallel Zarilli's (2007) observation that repeated embodied experience with a particular form or structure expands the field of possibilities for movement/action (p.645). As students engaged ("I was looking to others to see what they were doing"), they changed their original appraisal of the activity ("Why was this so intimidating?"), allowing them to further engage in the activity. Over time and with more experience with more activities, many shifted to "feeling more comfortable" overall.

While others offered similar comments about most of the activities, this was not

the case for BW during the Mirroring and Gibberish activities. These activities were extremely anxiety producing for her as she "felt like everybody was staring at me … and I felt stupid." The differences in these students' experiences seem to connect to Curazon-Hobson's (2002) findings that trust, related to students' perceptions of community within and outside the classroom, is critical for dialogical learning, a re-imagining of "how things might be different for both themselves and the other" (p.267).

Most students talked about the activities as "taking me out of my comfort zone" but further credited the activities with helping to lower their overall anxiety in the class, increasing their sense of comfort, and deepening their learning. "They helped everyone to be more comfortable with their classmates because we were actually interacting with them on some level. I think that really helped me be able to learn more in the class." (SI) Students further found value in interacting with classmates during activities, building new relationships, and the opportunity to directly deal with individual differences and diversity in classmates. One student summarized various views others had offered:

> There's a couple of characters in there that are a little rough around the edges, you know? A little scary. When they do the exercises they feel important, like if they're learning something or they have a question that it's important to ask, it's OK to ask. They're just as much important as anybody else in the room and I think that's good for morale. (RO)

This data reminded me of other research findings in which undergraduate students in cooperative classrooms perceived a greater sense of connection to others and adopted mastery goal orientations when engaged in interactive-learning activities (Summers & Svinicki, 2007).

Students suggested activities contributed to building relationships and accepting others.  For one student, an activity simply "helped me get to know the girl" (DJ).  Another "thought it was cool to see how different people were" (KM).  A common descriptor for the activities among all students was "fun".  Students talked about "enjoying" an assortment of activity features, noticing people laughing or smiling, or finding humor in aspects of various activities.  Some, like LH, enjoyed sharing ideas with classmates. "It's nice to agree and disagree. (It) helps my brain work."

These comments contrast sharply with interactions in lower-level undergraduate psychology classrooms as reported by Atwood, et. al., (2010).  These researchers found distinct differences in classroom talk between teachers and students, and students with one another, in first- and fourth-year undergraduate psychology courses.  The researchers characterized first-year classes as cumulatively or disputationally driven, an environment unsuitable for deeper knowledge development.  Students in this case study indicated a much more positive emotional climate than found by Atwood, et. al., (2010), and delineated how my teaching contributed to that.

**Instructor's Pedagogical and Interpersonal Strategies Seem Important in Developing the Safe, Welcoming Learning Environment Needed for Students' Engagement in the Activities**

Students reported experiencing positive social and emotional changes in the class related to some of the needed teacher characteristics and skills suggested by the relational teaching literature (Bosniak, 1998; Wang, 2012).  This point underscores my conclusion that relational teaching and strategies matter in implementing the activities, helping decrease students' anxiety levels in order to better engage.  For example one student

referred to my role as "guidance", suggesting role modeling.  Another student implied elements of risk taking when she stated "If you can do it we should be able to do it too.  If you're not shy then why should we be shy?" (DJ) regarding my appropriate self-disclosure on the first day of class, prior to the Introduce Your New BFF activity.  Still another student suggested I had created a sense of safety for her when she said, "I feel comfortable with you and in your class.  I don't know why." (TK)

Several students compared and contrasted how they experienced me as a teacher as opposed to other teachers.  Inevitably interpersonal and relational differences made up the core of these stories.  Students reported they experienced my teaching style as different, and for them preferable, from other instructors in that "you're not trying to use your PhD to talk above us" (SM); "you will be becoming more the psychologist" (CC); "you help us, you write everything out and talk about everything"(KM); "you've stayed true to your word" (RO), and; "you tell us how but not how … so there's room to put (my)self in it." (CMH)  One further suggested I modeled characteristics and skills of a relational teacher during activity discussions when she said:

> Instead of shoving the answers in to our face you made us question and then you were also very open to opposing views.  You didn't bash anybody.  There were a lot of times students would have completely different views on it and you tried to at least tie it all together. (SM)

As considered through a relational lens (Bosniak, 1998), this student seems to suggest that by not "shoving the answers in to our faces you made us …" empowered to question and voice "completely different views", which I was "open to" and attentively validated through effective communication and active listening as I "didn't bash anybody … and

tried to tie it all together".

The story opening this chapter further illustrates ways relational concerns affect my pedagogical choices. These examples have broader significance for other instructors choosing to use creative drama activities and developing their pedagogy. I selected actions and responses to the individual student and the class as a whole that I believed would move with their resistance instead of against it, while still accomplishing the content goal I had for that particular class session. Beyond concerns for course content, I wanted to handle events to add to, not detract from, a sense of acceptance and safety within the class. These choices relate to a connection between relational teaching and class climate made by others (e.g., Konrad, 2010; Wang, 2012). I curbed my initial reaction to the outspoken, resistant student, choosing to respond purposefully instead. Rosin (2015) refers to curbing countertransference, an automatic reactional response based on one's un/conscious, past experiences to another's automatic behavior based on their un/conscious, past experiences, as key in supporting relationship and effective teaching. Going with the class resistance, rather than fighting it, seemed to decrease it and helped students engage in the activity. This outcome aligns with scholarly findings that relational teaching decreases anxiety and resistance, and increases engagement (Mirick & Davis, 2015), which in turn increases students' reflection and in-depth learning (Konrad, 2010; Wang, 2012).

Use of multiple instructional strategies focusing on ways students learn over content transmission (Go, 2012) marks mastery instruction, found more in relationally-oriented than mastery-oriented educators (Butler, 2012). Students noted additional pedagogical choices related to the activities, contrasting those other instructors used. KM

compared me with her biology professor, "He doesn't dumb stuff down … All it is is lecture.  You write everything out and talk about everything."  DJ offered, "out of all my classes you're the one that did the most physical".  LH stated, "Some of my other classes don't do that kind of participation … all we do is listen".  TK elaborated,

> It's not you putting something up on the overhead projector and saying "OK. Time to copy notes".  All of my teachers have either been note takers or "I'm gonna tell you this once and if you don't get it you're outta luck" types.  You tell us what we need to know, break it down, you explain stuff to us.

SH echoed, "Instead of 'wawawawa …wawawawa (flat, nasally sound)' at the board, 'OK! Get up! Everybody's getting up.  Let's do something.' to spark your learning or interest".

Huitt (2003) reminds of the importance of teacher preparation and strategic use of instructional methods as part of Classroom Processes on Output.  This is particularly important for creating the safe environment needed for effectively  implementing the activities.  Students recognized some of my strategies in implementing the activities as they observed and reflected on the process. "We did them and then we all sat down and then you asked us 'So what do you think that was all about?'" (SM)  "I can tell you have a purpose behind what you're doing so I just kinda sit back and it all comes together." (SS)  "Sometimes you just have to put the deer in the headlights.  If you tell the deer you're coming and what you're gonna do the deer's gonna run.  I think you have to do that to get a true response." (CMH)

Finally, the data suggests that at least some students expect their psychology instructors to know about psychological conditions and be open to offering help or advice

197

in dealing with them. CC noted "that sitting in a psychology class it seems like every other person had a psychological problem or their kid had a psychological problem". TK reported thinking "You know, she teaches about psychology so maybe she'll know" before approaching me with an issue after class. Willingness to entertain such issues and students' comfort in addressing them is the essence and byproduct of relational learning (Konrad, 2010).

With this conclusion I raise many implications for implementing the activities, teaching and learning in undergraduate psychology and the SoTL. I discuss these implications in a later section. This conclusion further connects back to the concern voiced in the first conclusion: when instructors use the activities they need to anticipate in advance that students use diverse touchstones to make meaning when engaged in the activities. As with any pedagogy, but particularly with such embodied dramatic activities in a psychology context, instructors need to anticipate the diverse backgrounds and life experiences students bring with them into the activities, possible ways this touchstone can affect their experiences of the activities, and their ability to reflect on them. I explore the role of students' life experiences on reflection further in the next section.

**Students' Life Experiences, including Trauma and High Life Stress, in and out of the Classroom may Shape Reactions to and Reflections on the Activities**

Better understanding the role of students' prior experiences in present learning might assist educational reformers develop more effective policies and strategies. I presented empirical evidence in the previous two chapters which clearly demonstrates that students bring prior knowledge and experiences with them into the classroom which they use holistically in the activity enactments. This relates to Schon's (1983) knowing-

in-action, what Kinsella paraphrases as "the knowing is in the acting" (2007a, p. 406), and to Zarilli's (2007) views of entering "*a certain relationship* with the form/structure through one's cultivated perceptual/sensory awareness" (p. 645). Students perhaps expressed this most clearly when they discussed ways they identified themselves and related previous experiences to the activities. For example, SM stated "I have to be the best … I like being in control", making the "unpredictable" aspects of the activities such as "relying on others" anxiety producing; those activities that "were like a puzzle", something with which she had past success, she experienced as "exciting". Others talked about "not (being) super outgoing" or "just kinda about business" making talking and working with others "take a while" or "just hard".

Deductive reasoning further uncovered previous informal learning experiences students brought with them into the activities. Considering the cognitive connections students made during the activities revealed the knowledge memories students seem to have accessed in the process. For example, SS referenced "those commercials where … someone (is) controlling their brain like little aliens"; PD characterized the Neuron Impulse activity as "the telephone game"; CMH referenced observations she'd made of current parenting practices of mothers "propping up bottles".

Data further showed that while students are enacting they are problem setting or considering specific aspects of the situation (Kinsella, 2007) and adjusting or attempting to adjust their actions to better perform, what Schon (1983) calls reflection-in-action. Some stated such things as "I paid more attention to what was going on around me … to kinda base what I was gonna do off (what) people were doing around me." (SS), indicating the student used others as points of social reference during this stage and

adjusted what he did accordingly.  Others focused on the corporeal aspects of the

activities, such as RO thinking about saying to a fellow classmate "You're killing my

hand!" during the Neuron Impulse, or SI's self-instruction during the Sociogram, "This is

me so I'm gonna go over there."  LH describes in detail managing conflict with another

group member during the Neuron Script activity.

> J was very mad cause he was very confused.  He wasn't understanding what I was
>
> trying to tell him so he got a little upset.  I was like 'If you're gonna get mad I'm
>
> not gonna talk to you'.  Then he was like 'Why aren't you gonna talk to me?' And
>
> I'm like, ' Because you're gonna get mad at me and I don't like that'.  My sister
>
> and I just kept on explaining to J what it was.

In each of the examples, the student focused on a particular aspect of an in-the-moment

interaction with one or more classmates, considered at least one course of action based on

that on-the-spot reflection, and acted accordingly.  The story at the beginning of the

chapter further illustrates my reflection-in-action, as it indicates I considered different

possible responses to the class and the individual student who refused to participate in the

Traumatic Brain activity.

Finally, the after-enactment discussions and interviews for this study gave

students a chance to reflect further on the activities and make connections to the concepts

they illustrated.  This is what Schon (1983) calls reflection-on-action.  For instance, BW

made the connection "the association with … how children experience communication

and how they're trying to figure it out" following the Mirroring and Gibberish activities

in the after-enactment discussion even though she reported reflection-in-action ("I felt

like everybody was staring at me even though I knew they weren't because everybody

was having to do it. I couldn't focus on anything … I felt stupid.") indicating her struggle at that time.

CMH provided a prime example of all stages of Schon's cycle in her description of the Mirroring and Gibberish activities.

I have to be aware of what you're doing.  I have to try to do what you do.  Can I do what you do? I know for me there was a sense of "Can I do this?"  I'm watching her and starting to anticipate and then I'm not even thinking about anticipating … Then I start thinking "Why was this so embarrassing? Why do I feel what I feel? Why is it so intimidating?"  After just seconds you could start anticipating what the person was going to do just by a look or a body position you could tell what they were gonna do next.  I kind of felt her embarrassment and felt like she didn't want to do it but then she got comfortable because I got comfortable.  I was able to follow her which gave her reassurance so then she got relaxed and comfortable.  Then I started relating it to the whole baby and the learning and the development … We prop up bottles.  I look at all these babies and I wonder are these gonna be the babies that don't want to be touched?  Are these gonna be the ones that lack compassion for others?  That one little thing sparked all of it.  It gets you to think.  One of the things I try to do now's when people are walking through the hallway, look at them and say "Hi" and see what they do.

This example illustrates how this student's ideas about herself and interacting with others ("Can I do this?") began to shift as she monitored herself and her partner during the activities, and questioned her previous ideas and beliefs while simultaneously tracking

and adjusting her own actions. Her connections to the psychological concepts for which the activities were designed began in the enactment and continued as she further formed connections to her original, tacit knowledge. Ultimately she changed her behavior as she applied the new ideas generated from this reflective process to life experiences.

This student reported relating to others unknown to her in a more inclusive way following and as a result of her reflection on these activities. This student's small behavioral change points to an incremental transformation from participating in and reflecting on these activities, one sign of instructional effectiveness (Kreber, 2015). Three other students (CC, SI, and RO), representing all classes, discussed other ways the activities contributed to transforming their thinking, behavior, or ways they noted transformation in the relationships of others in the class. CC discussed how his view of psychology had changed from a culturally-prescribed idea about "weakness" to playing "a HUGE part to play in our lives and society" and wanting to take more classes to "learn more about myself and people around me … to be a better person". SI informed "since I've taken this class I've actually reached out to my biological father and finally felt ready to do that." RO described observing how the activities helped others in the class "get more involved",  helped her to be more accepting of the "characters in there that are a little rough around the edges" and "the bubble gum girls in their own little world", and "bring everybody together so there's a camaraderie".

Perhaps not coincidentally, all four students reported trauma or ongoing high life stress as part of their experience histories. Three were over 40-years of age. Unlike the other three students reporting similar trauma and stress backgrounds, these four focused and reported more confidence in their abilities than the sources of trauma and stress.

The kinds of transformational, life-application-from-reflection these students reported are among the instructional goals I have for students in my classes and raise implications for instructor expectations of the content and depth of students' reflections, or Output (Huitt, 2003), implementation of the activities and SoTL I discuss in a later section. I found that the family and educational experiences students bring with them into the class, along with age, affect their meaning making with the activities. This only became clear to me through reflection and analysis of the data in this study. As I realized the importance of age and experience on students' reflections, in tandem with the need to anticipate other diverse student meaning making elements, I further appreciated the instructor's need to reflectively consider creative drama processes and outcomes to strategically use this instructional method effectively.

**Instructor Reflection, Awareness of Students' Potential Range of Reactions to Activities, and Pedagogical Care and Adjustments are Important to the Strategic use of Creative Drama Activities.**

Creative drama activities require careful planning as part of a pedagogical strategy because they often evoke anxiety in undergraduate students but enhance their experiences. Instructors must take time to reflect on each class enaction and take students' feedback about their experiences of the activities into account in that reflection-on-action to improve the teaching-learning process. Schon reminds,

> As practice becomes more repetitive and routine, and as knowing-in-practice
> becomes increasingly tacit and spontaneous, the practitioner may miss important
> opportunities to think about what he is doing. Through reflection, he can surface
> and criticize the tacit understandings that have grown up around the repetitive

203

experiences … and make new sense of the situations of uncertainty (1989, p.6).

To paraphrase Kreber (2015), such reflection allows instructors to consider what they

think they know about the strategy, teaching and learning, and the discipline, and whether

alternatives are possible and desirable (p. 575).

The personal and professional knowledge an instructor brings into the classroom,

Huitt's (2003) Input, the instructor's planning and preparation prior to class, Huitt's

Classroom Processes, and awareness of and focus on aspects of classroom dynamics at

the time of instruction all comprise what Schon (1983) refers to as reflective practice as a

type of action research, intended to improve pedagogy (Pereira, 1999).  I now offer step-

by-step connections among this view, elements in my opening story, and the literature for

the reader.

In the story I illuminate my reflection-in-action, as I report considering different

possible responses to the class and the individual student who refused to participate in the

activity.  In that moment I made decisions about who I was and wanted to be in that

context, the role frame (Pereira, 1999) which informed my definition of the problem and

my responses to it.  Rather than choosing to assume the role of Classroom Authority, and

frame the students' responses as rude and offensive behavior, I chose the role of

Relational Educator.  This allowed me to reframe the problem (Pereira, 1999) as

resistance to participating to the activity and utilize knowledge-in-action, my previous

social work training in dealing with resistant clients for the remainder of the encounter.  I

continued to "take the pulse of the class" (Mirick & Davis, 2015), adjusting my responses

based on this feedback form, throughout the incident.  The entire process is Schon's

(1983) reflection-in-action.  Further reflection on the entire incident, after class and in

this study, reflection-on-action (Schon, 1983) has led to me to consider various other ways I could have responded (practicing comfort in silence, opted to enact the activity at a later time in the class, etc.), further informing my practice since the incident.

Discussions with students (Mirick & Davis, 2015) and feedback from colleagues become integral pieces of reflective educational practice (Mirick & Davis, 2015; Parra, Gutierrez & Aldana, 2015; Pereira, 1999) which can transform teaching from the superficial transmission of information to a pedagogy focused on students' learning needs (Go, 2012). Reflective practice then becomes an important element in relational pedagogy (Konrad, 2010; Wang, 2012), perhaps contributing to the connection between relational teaching and mastery instruction found in the literature (Butler, 2012). Current peer observation approaches, however, focus more on assessing technical skill than the kind of critical reflection necessary for relational practice (Yiend, Weller, & Kinchin, 2014). I raise implications for implementing the activities, undergraduate psychology pedagogies and the SOTL related to these theoretical connections in the next section.

## Implications

As I reflected on the data within the light of the relevant SoTL literature I found several implications regarding the use of creative drama in undergraduate psychology instruction. The major findings about the role of emotionality in learning, which I have discussed in terms of classroom climate and expanded within the finding of students' struggle with anxiety, open possibilities and a wide array of potential pedagogical and policy practice choices. These include implications for the implementing the activities, undergraduate psychology instruction and the SoTL in undergraduate psychology. I consider each area in its own subsection.

**Activity Implementation**

I strategically developed and implemented the activities used in this study as a reflective, relational educational practitioner. While the reader may be tempted to pick and choose some of these creative drama activities in a cookbook approach to psychology instruction, the data, findings and conclusions suggest that instructors need to put in place an array of key conditions to use them effectively and sensitively. The data and literature suggests reflective practice and relational teaching are interrelated, affect learning outcomes, and have specific implications when using creative drama activities. These include concerns about establishing and maintaining relationships within the learning space, and the need to consider certain aspects of developing reflective practice skills as an instructional outcome. I consider all in the following subsections.

**Relational teaching.**

While it may be said that using such instructional strategies as creative drama might be part of mastery instruction, having mastery as a primary goal as a teacher with no concern for relationship with or among students might well be disastrous for students' learning with creative drama. Creating and maintaining a classroom environment which students perceive to be safe, perhaps more than any other teacher attribute or skill, seems critical. The story at the beginning of this chapter illustrates choices I made in an unexpected moment of student resistance with the goal of pressing through the resistance while maintaining safety.

**Establishing and maintaining a safe climate.**

As I noted in Chapters Four and Five, two students from Class Three with

histories of extreme trauma dropped out of the college shortly after completing their interviews immediately following the Mirroring and Gibberish activities. While I remain uncertain whether these activity experiences influenced students' decision to drop out of my class given that students in my community college context must often leave classes for a variety of personal and professional reasons, the possibility that the activities might have played any part in their departure has fueled serious reflection about the need to implement the activities carefully and strategically (discussed in this section) and for supportive programs and services for students, college wide (discussed in proceeding sections).

As a result of conducting this study, I have started including an "official observer" role option in the enactments. I designate an area of the classroom/enactment space for students who wish to opt out of enactment. Students who choose this option agree to talk about their observations and what they believed to be occurring as part of the post-enactment discussion and reflection-on-action.

Students described positive changes in the classroom environment, including perceived increased tolerance for the unfamiliar and different. Students attributed the activities as the agent of these changes. RO and LH gave particularly moving accounts of evolving inclusion of one particularly diverse classmate, ways they came to personally consider this man more positively and saw him treated more positively by the group as the activities progressed over the semester. This implies potential to address social justice matters within the undergraduate psychology classroom as students' perceive increased comfort and safety within the learning environment through the activities.

The issue of a safe climate further applies to the reflection process itself. While

some students attributed the activities with helping them "feel more comfortable around their classmates" (SI) so they might "raise my hand … I wouldn't be too nervous to speak" (SS), the two cases from Class One discussed in Chapter 5 suggest that instructors may need to provide more active instruction in reflection for some students to participate in and benefit from the reflective discussions following activity enactment.  I offer specific implications for this aspect of the activities next.

**Reflection.**

The creative drama activities afford an opportunity for students to practice reflection as defined by Schon (1983).  The practical, in-the-moment kinds of knowledge and decision making Schon designed it to foster are not necessarily also critically reflective.  Challenging tacit knowledge or beliefs about prior knowledge may require further structure to post-enactment discussions designed specifically for that purpose. The kind of reflective knowledge and skill development the activities afford may be more difficult for students to articulate (Kinsella, 2007a), particularly in a spontaneous, group setting.  This raises both instructional and assessment possibilities.

I wonder if students might benefit from direct instruction in reflection and Schon's (1983) model prior to using the creative drama activities.  Such instruction might include additional avenues for students in identifying and expressing their thoughts and feelings, such as written reflection papers or poems, or including more domain specific training in recognizing body responses.   More overt use of the model might yield informal (e.g., focused class discussions) and more formal assessment tools (e.g., rubric developed to rank formal student generated reflection papers) with which to bridge the scientific/practical knowledge divide and track students' development of both types of

knowledge and skills with the activities. I discuss assessment as a curricular issue further in the next section.

The literature further suggests the need for peer support and feedback during an instructor's post-enactment reflective process. All of these implementation ideas, and the data findings from which they sprang, further suggest implications for undergraduate psychology pedagogy and the educator/practitioners in the domain. I consider these implications next.

**Undergraduate Psychology Education**

Implementing the creative drama activities further resonates possible repercussions for educators in psychology, particularly those teaching lower-level courses, and for the place of the domain within the academy based on the reflective-practice, relational-teaching literature and the data findings. I address concerns about the educator's orientation to the subject and students, the place of reflection and its assessment in psychology curricula, and the psychology department's/educator's role in supporting student learning and one another within the academy in the following sections which further relate to the reflective, relational, safe climate issues I previously discussed. While each of these concerns may apply to teacher education in general, I contain my discussion to the domain of psychology specifically as I made that the focus of this study.

**Psychology educators' orientation to teaching, learning and learners in the domain.**

A psychology instructor's primary goal orientation, relational versus mastery (Butler, 2012), relates to his or her orientation to teaching in the domain. Orientation,

from an applied clinical/counseling to a psychology-as-science perspective, informs

instructional goals, important in determining if the instructor attempts or successfully

uses creative drama activities as a pedagogical strategy. Kreber (2015) characterizes this

continuum as one between phronesis, the development of practical knowledge, and

techne, productive or theoretical knowledge (p. 568), and advocates for balance. Schon

(1983) developed his model of reflective practice to address the overreliance on theory at

the expense of practical knowledge.

I have stressed the role my reflective, relationally-oriented, clinical-social-work

training had in shaping who I am and what I do as a teacher. Unlike training in social

work, current instruction and training in psychology and psychology teaching does not

necessarily rely primarily on reflection or relationship as the basis for work and learning

(Rosin, 2015). I recognize that some, perhaps many, of my colleagues do not share my

orientation; however experience and the data from this study suggest that students look

for their psychology instructors to be relationally oriented. TK is far from being the first

or only student in my classes to approach me with questions or dilemmas of a personal

nature related to course content, thinking "She's a psychology teacher. Maybe she

knows." The literature (e.g., Konrad, 2010) and the data further suggests that once

students feel more comfortable with classmates and the teacher, they become more likely

to ask such questions. As students participate in more activities and feel more

comfortable, they become more open about sharing personal and emotionally-charged

information.

This can be rewarding, and daunting. For example, towards the end of the

interview, SI let me know that as a result of things she had learned and reflected on from

our class, she had made the decision to find and contact her birth father, who abandoned her before she was placed in foster care. While this went far beyond any expectations I might have had for ways students might apply course knowledge to their lives, and moved me to tears, it simultaneously made me aware of the responsibility, and anxiety, I felt as part of a chain of events that became that decision, and its possible repercussions. I consider additional concerns and implications related to the relational nature of creative drama activities, and the teaching of psychology in general, in a subsequent section. Before discussing these, I further address the issue of the instructor's relationship to the subject (Hobson & Morrison-Saunders, 2013) as curricular concerns.

**Curricular concerns.**

Using creative drama activities could benefit psychology instructors that value reflection and wish to provide opportunities for students to develop skills in this area as they increase conceptual knowledge. Current undergraduate psychology curricula, for the most part, do not do this (Rosin, 2015). A corresponding shift in curriculum development as suggested for health care by Kinsella (2007a) or social work by Froggett, Ramvi and Davies (2015) needs to address the learning space between theoretical knowledge and knowledge in practice, particularly for those students taking lower-level psychology courses as prerequisites for degrees in clinical-practice fields. Including reflective practice within the curriculum, with Schon's (1983) model or others, might further increase students' ability to process and reflect and should be considered.

The domain should support experiential-learning opportunities within psychology curricula; however the data suggests that evaluating the quality and depth of reflections should consider students' age and level of experiences outside of the classroom. Older

students clearly made broader, more global, cultural, and societal connections between the activities and their corresponding concepts than younger, traditional students, implying a developmental and growth orientation to teaching and learning supported by others (e.g., Zadina, 2015). This carries further implications for assessment.

Students' learning with the activities does not necessarily translate easily to assessment of concepts through the objective, teaching as knowledge transmission (Go, 2012) type of exams utilized in many psychology departments. Students' reports and my experience further suggest that the activities develop two different types of knowledge, technical and scientific or practical, requiring different forms of assessment, supporting Schon's position and that in the literature (e.g., Kinsella, 2007, 2007a; Kreber, 2015). The type of reflective assessment tools I suggested in previous sections might better serve as formative, diagnostic tools for teachers focused on students' learning, rather than knowledge transmission (Go, 2012). In addition, the embodied approach to learning suggests the need for more subjective assessment options. This carries further implications for the SoTL in psychology which I consider in later sections. I next discuss additional and unexpected ways that psychology educators might support students' learning.

**Supporting student learning in the academy.**

Relational psychology educators choosing to utilize creative drama activities as a pedagogical strategy should prepare themselves to hear more about student's personal lives and concerns, including stories of trauma and high life stress. Such interpersonal dynamics as I found in this study raise implications for psychology instructors and for the role of the domain within the academy. Without a support network in place to help both

educators and students deal with such student disclosures, both may feel inadequate to effectively cope with the emotional overflow onto learning (Horsman, 2004).

While conducting this study I became more aware of the high number of students at the community college who deal with trauma and high life stress. As a result I changed my practice outside the classroom. I began informal discussions with colleagues, including those in student disabilities support, about the issue. My inquiries brought together a group of concerned colleagues. We have begun developing a proposal to address the need to coordinate existing services and provide additional services within the college for students and faculty. While institutions need to conduct more systematic accounting it appears that more students in community colleges may struggle with trauma and life stress than the adult education literature currently reports. Implications of this relate directly to student success, retention, and completion rates, which are currently of concern to the college, and may be applicable to other community colleges and four-year colleges or universities, which may benefit from a similar task force.

Identified action areas in which trained psychology faculty could serve in key roles include: identifying and supporting students with learning and mental health concerns such as trauma and high life stress; linking such students with available support services within the college; professional development for faculty in identifying signs of trauma and high stress reactions and more effectively dealing with them in the classroom; increasing support services within the college for students and/or identifying and partnering with existing community resources to assist students in obtaining services, and; working with students to identify existing college student support policies and procedures that contribute to heightening trauma and stress, amending those policies and

procedure where possible.  I have applied to join an innovative assessment training

program with the college, with this task force and set of student support needs in mind as

the focus of my proposed assessment project.

**Supporting reflective practice among psychology educators.**

The literature (e.g., Mirick & Davis, 2015; Parra, Gutierrez & Aldana, 2015;

Pereira, 1999) supports peer feedback to further inform one's reflective pedagogical

process.  The current peer feedback system in the academy, peer observation, tends to

focus more on assessing technical skill than the critical reflection necessary for relational

practice (Yiend, Weller, & Kinchin, 2014).  Peer observations are used in many

institutions as evaluations for tenure, rank and promotion recommendations, making them

competitive rather than collaborative, as are models focused on professional development

(e.g., Donnelly & Fitzmaurice, 2011).  Reflective, relational psychology educators need

collaborative support from within the academy to feel free to safely, critically consider

their practice, develop models for such practice, and receive domain support for such

efforts.

All of the preceding sections carry additional implications for SoTL in

undergraduate psychology, which I consider in the next section.

**SoTL in Undergraduate Psychology**

In this study I found several touchstones and ways students symbolize their

experiences with the creative drama activities.  I further raise other questions and possible

areas for additional study which could add to the SoTL in undergraduate psychology.

Further studies might explore similarities and differences among students' experiences

with different psychology classes with different instructors, not this teacher/researcher,

consider the experiences of other instructors using the activities, and in other settings, such as a four year college or university.   Studies including formal instruction in reflection along with the activities might provide additional insights.  Additional studies might further explore students' experiences retrospectively.  Considering interviews as reflexivity about what students believe, experience, and talk about related to their learning experience in class might add to the reflective practice literature both as student product and for critical examination of instructors' thoughts, beliefs and problem framing.   Others may wish to use my design approach in other contexts, adjusting for the limitations noted in Chapter Three.

More research, resources, and practical tools need to be available in the SoTL in psychology about relational teaching, reflective practice and the role of both in embodied learning such as creative drama provides.  This would require a domain shift in epistemological preference away from positivist/post positivist experimental, quasi-experimental and correlational research methods to inclusion of other research methodologies, and acceptance of more than pre-test/post-test scores as indicators of instructional effectiveness.  Alternative assessment tools as related to reflective practice and embodied learning need to be developed.  I suggest exploration of the role of age and experience in reflective skill development.  Further implications for SOTL in psychology research areas include the role of reflective, relational psychology instructors, and those using creative drama, in identifying and supporting students with learning and mental health concerns, student retention, faculty development, and student support program development.

There further appears to be potentially meaningful connections for the field of

psychology among the SOTL, embodiment and neuroscience areas.  Additional research

utilizing creative drama in undergraduate psychology teaching which explores the

neuroscience of the learning process might open an additional avenue for considering

instructional effectiveness, and support a more embodied view of learning.

## Summary

In this chapter I reviewed the study findings before presenting a list of

conclusions drawn from those findings and supportive warrants.  I further supported

conclusions with connections from the data and to the literature.  I presented and

discussed implications of the conclusions for implementation of the activities,

undergraduate psychology educators and the SOTL in undergraduate psychology.

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APPENDICES

**Oklahoma State University Institutional Review Board**

Date:             Wednesday, April 03, 2013

IRB Application No    ED1352

Proposal Title:        Undergraduate Psychology Students' Experiences with Creative Drama: A
Case Study

Reviewed and        Exempt
Processed as:

**Status Recommended by Reviewer(s):  Approved     Protocol Expires:    4/2/2014**

Principal
Investigator(s):

Ruth Wilcox                     Lucy Bailey
8223 E. 56th Place             215 Willard Hall
Tulsa, OK 74145               Stillwater, OK 74078

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The IRB application referenced above has been approved.  It is the judgment of the reviewers that the
rights and welfare of individuals who may be asked to participate in this study will be respected, and that
the research will be conducted in a manner consistent with the IRB requirements as outlined in section 45
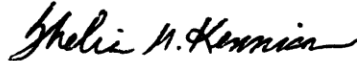CFR 46.

☒ The final versions of any printed recruitment, consent and assent documents bearing the IRB approval
    stamp are attached to this letter.  These are the versions that must be used during the study.

As Principal Investigator, it is your responsibility to do the following:

1. Conduct this study exactly as it has been approved.  Any modifications to the research protocol
   must be submitted with the appropriate signatures for IRB approval. Protocol modifications requiring
   approval may include changes to the title, PI, advisor, funding status or sponsor, subject population
   composition or size, recruitment, inclusion/exclusion criteria, research site, research procedures and
   consent/assent process or forms.
2. Submit a request for continuation if the study extends beyond the approval period of one calendar
   year.  This continuation must receive IRB review and approval before the research can continue.
3. Report any adverse events to the IRB Chair promptly.  Adverse events are those which are
   unanticipated and impact the subjects during the course of this research; and
4. Notify the IRB office in writing when your research project is complete.

Please note that approved protocols are subject to monitoring by the IRB and that the IRB office has the
authority to inspect research records associated with this protocol at any time.  If you have questions about the
IRB procedures or need any assistance from the Board, please contact Dawnett Watkins 219 Cordell North
(phone: 405-744-5700, dawnett.watkins@okstate.edu).

Sincerely,

*Shelia M. Kennison*

Shelia Kennison, Chair
Institutional Review Board

Appendix B
Recruitment Flyer

**You Are Invited!**

"Undergraduate Psychology Students' Experiences with Creative Drama: A Case Study"

You are invited to participate in a research project that I am doing as part of my dissertation at Oklahoma State University. I'm interested in your experiences with learning and the creative dramatic activities that we will use in class to learn concepts in psychology. Part of what I need to understand will come from what I normally do in teaching; watching what happens during the activities in class, from short follow up paragraphs you'll write about the activities, and from some recording we may do of some of the activities that will help our class discussions.

What would be more helpful to my understanding would be to talk with some of you in more detail. You will be asked do an interview with me. The interview session should require no more than an hour of your time. I'm working on finding a quiet, private place for that here on campus (such as the meeting room next to the Academic Services area) and will arrange a specific time and place with you. I'll also need to check in with you briefly (no more than 10-15 minutes) after we do an activity in class, and after exams.

As an incentive for participating in interviews, you can earn 10 extra credit points. There will also be additional extra credit opportunities worth as many points (or more!) during the semester, so you can still earn extra credit if you would rather not participate.

Your decision about participation in any or all of this is purely voluntary and in no way will affect your grade for the course.

If you are interested in participating, please let me know. You can email me with questions or concerns at either ruth.wilcox@tulsacc.edu or rwilco@okstate.edu  or you can contact my dissertation director, Lucy Bailey, Ph.D., with questions or concerns at lucy.bailey@okstate.edu .

Thank you for your help.   Ruth Wilcox

Appendix C
Recruitment Script for "Undergraduate Psychology Students' Experiences with Creative Drama: A Case Study"

As we have discussed, research in psychology typically falls into either the quantitative or qualitative methods camp. The use of qualitative methods is a relatively newer way of doing research, which allows the researcher to better understand a situation or phenomenon and its meaning for participants from their particular point of view.

As your instructor and as part of my doctoral work, I am interested in better understanding students' experiences of some of the activities we will use in our work together during the semester. Part of what I need to understand will come from what I normally do in teaching; watching what happens during the activities in class, from short follow up paragraphs you'll write about what you did, and from some recording we may do of some of the activities that will help our class discussions.

What would be more helpful to my understanding would be to talk with some of you in more detail. This is where qualitative research methods come in. I hope to be able to interview several of you to better understand how you experience these activities.

I have a flyer that tells more about the project that I'll hand out at the end of class.

If you are interested in participating, please let me know. I'll get back with you so we can work out scheduling. I'll also be glad to answer any questions you may have, either now or then. Your decision about participation in any or allof this project is purely voluntary and in no way will affect your grade for the course.

Appendix D

Informed Consent

Undergraduate Psychology Students' Experiences with Creative Drama: A Case Study

Investigator:  Ruth Wilcox, MSW – Doctoral candidate at Oklahoma State University

Dissertation Director: Lucy Bailey, PhD

Purpose:

The use of qualitative methods allows the researcher to better understand a situation and its meaning for participants from their particular point of view. As your instructor and as part of my doctoral work, I am interested in better understanding students' experiences of some of the activities we will use in our work together during the semester. Part of what I need for this ongoing evaluation I will get from things I do routinely, as part of regular class instruction. These will include: 1) classroom observations during implementation of seven creative drama activities. Each observation will last between 15 and 30 minutes; 2) anonymous written feedback about a particular activity or pre/post activity comments about the extent of students' understanding of concepts., and;  3) audio or videotaping of four out of seven activities, lasting between 15 and 30 minutes, used to generate further in-class discussion.  What will be most helpful to better understanding will come from talking with you in more depth about your experiences of the activities we will do in class.

Procedures:

As a participant in this research, you can expect to be asked to do some things beyond what we will do as part of normal class instruction. You will be asked to:

- Participate in individual interviews with me, scheduled separately and away from class time. These will last no longer than 1 hour. Interviews will be audio-taped for accuracy in analysis, and occur in the meeting room adjacent to the Academic Services office. Topics will include general experiences in learning, learning style, and experiences with the activities used in class.
- Participate in after activity and after test check-ins. These will be very brief (less than 10-15 minutes) discussions of your experiences with the specific activities we use in class.

You can further expect that the routine aspects of regular classroom instruction mentioned above (my observations, the anonymous written feedback, and recordings of selected activities) might generate additional data which will be used to help further deepen understanding.

Risks of Participation:

There are no known risks associated with this project which are greater than those ordinarily encountered in daily life.

Benefits:

Students may gain better and more meaningful understanding of qualitative research and themselves as learners as a result of participating in this project. The final product should provide a deep and detailed account of students' experiences with specific creative drama activities. Findings could provide new and further insight into such innovative approaches to instruction in undergraduate psychology, perhaps adding to the scholarship of teaching and learning for undergraduate psychology instructors.

Confidentiality:

I will keep interview transcriptions in a locked file cabinet at my home. No one will have access to them except me. Any identifying information from interviews, focus groups or written

assessments you turn in will be removed for reporting purposes. In qualitative research, the researcher looks for patterns that may emerge from the data. That is what I will be looking for and reporting in either a piece of publishable research that stands on its own, or becomes part of my dissertation. Once the research project is completed, I will destroy the audio tapes.

It is possible that the consent process and data collection will be observed by research oversight staff responsible for safeguarding the rights and wellbeing of people who participate in research. In keeping with professional ethics and mandated reporter ethics and requirements, I would have to report any participant's threat or disclosure of harm to self or others of which I might become aware during the research process.

Compensation:

You can earn 10 extra credit points (<1% of total points possible for the course) as an incentive for participation.  I also offer additional extra credit opportunities for students that enhance learning about things we've already covered in class, for those that do not wish to participate. These can be found on our course web page on Blackboard and include written papers about personality type, learning style and genograms. Point values for these assignments total 50 points (<10% of total points possible for the course)..

Contacts:

If you have further questions about this research project, you can contact me (Ruth Wilcox) either by email (ruth.wilcox@tulsacc.edu) or through Academic Services (918-595-7154). You may also contact my  OSU dissertation director, Dr. Lucy Bailey, either by email (lucy.bailey@okstate.edu) or by phone (405-744-9194).

If you have questions about your rights as a research volunteer, you may contact Dr. Shelia Kennison, IRB Chair, 219 Cordell North, Stillwater, OK 74078, 405-744-3377 or irb@okstate.edu.

Participant Rights:

Participation in this research project is purely voluntary and has no impact on the grade you receive for the course. You may opt out of participation at any time, without any penalty or reprisal.

 I have read and fully understand the consent form.  I sign it freely and voluntarily.  A copy of this form has been given to me. I understand I may be contacted for follow up interviews, surveys, or questionnaires by the researcher.


_____                                          _____

Signature of Participant                                                                Date


I certify that I have personally explained this document before requesting that the participant sign it.


_____                                      _____

Signature of Researcher                                                              Date

Appendix E

Undergraduate Psychology Students' Experiences with Creative Drama: A Case Study

Initial Interview Protocol

- Please tell me about some of your experiences with school or learning

- What have been some of your favorite classes in school?

- What have been some of your least favorite classes in school?

- How do you think you learn best?

- Please complete this sentence … "Learning is …". Please tell me more about that.

- Please tell me about one of your best learning experiences.

- Please tell me about a learning experience that was not so good.

- If learning could occur your way, what would it be like?

- We will be doing/have done some learning activities in class that are based in

  creative drama.

  - What do you think of when you hear the words "creative drama"?

  - How do you feel when you hear those words?

  - What effect(s) do you anticipate these activities might have for you in this

    class?

- What questions do you have for me about the activities or this research?

- What else do you think might be important for me to know to better understand you

  and your experience with our class activities?

Appendix F

Activity Manual

Just Play with It:  Interactive Exercises to Enhance Concepts in Psychology

Ruth Wilcox, MSW, PhD

**Things to Consider Before Using This Manual**

If you have read this far, then my strategy of calling this a set of "interactive exercises" has worked. I chose this terminology to try to lower possible performance anxiety associated with "drama" and "acting". While the exercises that follow truly do have their roots in the field of the dramatic arts, keep the following in mind:

1. It's not about performance – No special talent or ability is required to successfully implement or participate. The exercises use partner and small group activities, much like other instructor manuals. These exercises are about having a spontaneous, problem solving experience, not necessarily class performance. In this sense, they are more closely related to what O'Neill (1995) referred to as "process drama", in which the important learning occurs from participating in the process itself.

2. Voluntary performance is always welcome – You can always give the invitation to partnerships or groups to show the results of their efforts to others in the class, but this should always be voluntary. Making participation in "performance" mandatory is a sure way to squash the spontaneity, energy and enthusiasm of your group. Allow a "safe space" from which students may observe and then report their observations to the class if they choose to "opt out" of enaction.

3. The exercises are grounded by work of those well-known in the fields of drama therapy and drama in education (Blatner, 2007; Emunah, 1994; McCaslin, 2006; Spolin, 1970; Sternberg & Garcia, 2000; Weltsek-Medina, 2007, to name but a few). All are adapted specifically for enhancing the specific concepts indicated here.

**Introduce Your New BFF\***

Exercise Objectives: This exercise illustrates numerous concepts related to encoding memory, short term memory and strategies, and faulty or false memories. It can also be used at the beginning of the semester to help students get to know each other and develop a better sense of class community.

Procedure:

1. This exercise can be used to start the semester or before, during or after lecture on memory.
2. Have students partner with someone they do not already know.
3. Tell them that they will take a few minutes to introduce themselves to each other. They can share whatever information they care to for 1-2 minutes; the catch is that at least part of what they say must be untrue. The only thing that must be true is their name; everything else is up for grabs.
4. After they have introduced themselves and told their "stories", partners are to give each other feedback on what they heard. They can speculate on what they think is truth or lie, and speculate on what the actual truth of the person's life might be.
5. Partners may then respond to each other's feedback, and tell the actual truth about those areas originally discussed.
6. Come back as a large group. Discuss the experience. Ask how students believe this activity will effect their ability to remember their partner.
7. Volunteer pairs may then introduce each other to the class, telling both about their background and what s/he learned about the partner from the exercise. After each introduction, ask the person being introduced if their partner presented their information correctly, and if s/he left anything out.
8. Discuss. If using as a true introductory activity, look for trends, patterns, point of connection among the group.  If using as a memory activity, relate findings to: rehearsal strategies; chunking; encoding; retrieval; working memory; false memory

\*adapted from Emunah (1994), p. 162-3.

**Nerve Impulse**

Exercise Objectives: This exercise is intended to help students identify the parts of a nerve cell, their functions, and understand the firing of nerve cells. This is best done after lecture or at the beginning of the next class as review.

Procedure:

1. Present material on the structure and function of the nerve cell, neurotransmitters, and nerve cell firing.
2. Have class form a single file line. Each student should extend their right hand forward, across their body (as if shaking hands), and their left hand behind them. Each student's right hand should then grasp the left hand of the person in front of them.
3. Explain that the right hand represents the cell's axon and the left represents a dendrite, with their body representing the soma. They will be "receiving" the nerve impulse with their left hand and "sending" with their right.
4. Have the person at the back of the line begin an impulse by squeezing the left hand of the person in front of them, who will in turn squeeze the left hand of the person in front of them, etc., until the impulse reaches the front of the line.
5. This can be repeated as many times as desired, switching "senders" by either turning the line around, or having the last person move to the head of the line. Sound can be added or verbal commands that the person at the head of the line has to carry out. Time the group's impulse.
6. A variation: Begin the impulse with a touch to the back and have that passed around the group. Note any variations in where the touching deviates en route.
7. Discuss. Point out how each student's nervous system had to process the information and react. Consider "response time", especially how it relates to action potential and individual cell firing time. If using the variation, discuss ways the messages changed (if it did) and what might cause such changes in nerve function, how this might impact behavior, mental processes, etc..

**Neuron Script**

Exercise Objectives: This exercise is intended to help students identify the parts of a nerve cell and their functions.  It's best done after lecture on nerve cell anatomy and physiology, or as a review at the beginning of the next class.
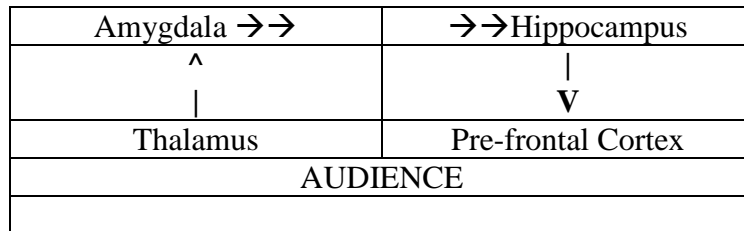
Procedure:

1.  Present material on the structure and function of the nerve cell and neurotransmitters.
2.  Divide the class into groups (at least 3, no more than 5).
3.  Explain to the groups that they will have a chance to interact with the material to get better understanding of the role of each part of the cell.
4.  Have the class review the information, concentrating on what each part of the cell does. Make a list on the board for reference. Be sure to include receptor cites, dendrites, nucleus, axon, terminal sacs and neurotransmitters in the list.
5.  Have the groups develop a simple skit involving separate players to represent each part of the cell. To do this, they may want to write a script that gives each player a line that would reflect the job of the structure represented (eg – Neurotransmitter says: "Here I go to deliver this very important message"), then play it out within the group OR simply develop a storyline that describes each player's part in the plot.
6.  You may have to give an example for students to understand the process.  A good one uses the post office/mail delivery metaphor.  The post master (nucleus) tells the postal worker (axon) to take a letter (neurotransmitter) out in the mail truck (terminal sac) to your street (dendrite) and put it in your mailbox (receptor cite). Tell students that they cannot use your example!
7.  You might offer the option for two groups to come together to discuss/perform their separate work and possibly collaborate on combining their efforts. This would allow them to see a "synapse" in action.
8.  Offer the chance for smaller groups to share their ideas with the class. They can enact their script, tell it and draw a diagram on the board, or dictate for you or a classmate to write on the board.
9.  Discuss results as a class.  See if others agree or disagree with part assignments and why. Offer guidance or suggestions to clarify or correct any errors if students can't.

**Traumatic Brain\*\***

Exercise Objectives: This exercise illustrates numerous concepts related to brain anatomy and physiology, memory, cognition especially the role of the amygdala, hippocampus, and the impact of trauma.

Procedure:

1. This exercise can be used during or after lecture on memory and the brain, and/or the effects of trauma on cognitive functioning and brain development.
2. List the following on the board: thalamus; amygdala; hippocampus; prefrontal cortex; cortisol (and related stress hormones); dopamine & serotonin (optional). Review the basic function(s) of the first 4 on the list.
3. Explain that this activity should help students to better understand the role that each of these parts plays in cognition and memory development, by developing each as if it was a character with a part in a play. Using what they know about each part, they are to consider what kind of characteristics each would have if it was enacted as a character on stage. They are to think about what kinds of lines they might have, how they would behave and what sort of personality they might have. Make notes on the board.
4. Ask for volunteers to play each part in front of the class. Review parts. "Block" the enactors using the following diagram to show the "actors" the flow of interaction on stage:

| Amygdala →→ | →→Hippocampus |
|---|---|
| ^ | &#124; |
| &#124; | V |
| Thalamus | Pre-frontal Cortex |
| AUDIENCE ||
| ||

5. Have the class develop an activity involving minimal stress for enactment, such as "What goes on behind the scenes when an animal lover encounters a dog in the park", and the sensory information the thalamus will hand off to the amygdala.
6. Allow the actors to play out the scene. Offer assistance as needed.
7. Discuss briefly. Introduce the effects of stress/trauma to the process. Add cortisol to block the communication between the amygdala and hippocampus (see diagram below)
8. Have the class add stress/trauma into their original story, such as "What goes on behind the scenes when someone with a dog phobia encounters a pit bull in the park".
9. Enact this new scene.

10. Discuss as a group. Help students make the connections between this and difficulty thinking when stressed, brain development, the impact of trauma on children's development, etc.

| Amygdala →→ | C | →→Hippocampus |
|---|---|---|
| ^ | O | \| |
| \| | R | V |
| Thalamus | T | Pre-frontal Cortex |
| | I | |
| | S | |
| | O | |
| | L | |
| AUDIENCE | | |

**adapted from an exercise led by Sally Bailey, MSW, MFA, RDT/BCT during training June, 2006

**Playing Detective \***

Exercise Objectives: This exercise focuses on the role of perception in attention,awareness and sensory memory. It could also conceivably be used to illustrate points on faulty or false memory.

Procedure:

1. This exercise can be used either before or after lecture on the role of perception on conscious awareness/sensory memory. It can be a good segue from the material on sensation and perception into this area, or used to "connect the dots" between the two areas after the material has been covered in lecture.
2. Divide the class into dyads.
3. Tell students they get the chance to practice their detective skills and try to be Sherlock Holmes (or other popular detective character). Tell them they are to carefully observe their partner. Give them about a minute to do so.
4. Have students face away from their partners and make 3 changes to their appearance, without their partner's knowledge (they can turn away from one another; one member of the dyad may leave the room and return, etc.)
5. Have students turn around and face their partner again. Students are to see how many of the three changes their partner made they can identify.
6. If desired, this activity can then be expanded to combine 2 (or more) dyads into a small group, with steps repeated, or have a small group make changes that the rest of the class has to try to identify.
7. Come back together as a larger group. Find out how many dyads/groups were successful in identifying one, two or all three changes. Discuss. Relate findings to either lead into or reinforce lecture. This can also tie into Loftus' work on faulty/false memories.

\*adapted from Emunah (1994), p.181.

**Mirroring\***

Exercise Objectives:  This exercise focuses on increasing student understanding of the level and type of interaction, synchronicity, validation and connectedness necessary for secure attachment, social cognitive development in infancy. It can be used before "Gibberish" to further tie in synchroncity and connectedness.

Procedure:

1. This exercise may be used before, during or after lecture on attachment theory, and in conjunction with "Gibberish".
2. Have students select a partner, preferably one with whom they feel comfortable.
3. Partners should decide between them who the initial leader for their dyad will be.
4. Explain that the purpose of this exercise is for students to experience what it is like to have another mirror their actions, not to trick the other. Each will have a chance to be in the leader and in the mirror role.
5. Have students face each other. The leader is to begin with slow, deliberate movements. The mirror is to follow these as precisely as possible. It may be helpful for students for you to suggest a specific activity for them to mirror, such as shaving, putting on make-up, brushing their hair or teeth, etc.
6. Remind pairs that their goal is to be in synch as much as possible, to the extent that an onlooker might not be able to tell which person is the leader and who is the mirror.
7. Switch roles after a minute or two.  NOTE: This kind of deliberate intensity if prolonged can be uncomfortable for students, causing the activity dissolve into silliness.
8. Discuss the experience as a group. Ask for objective and subjective feedback about the experience. Slowly guide the discussion around to similarities this exercise has to research on early parent-child interactions and the impact that synchronization has on the attachment process. This discussion can also be tied into the impact of temperament mis-match between parents and children.

\*adapted from Emunah (1994), p. 150-4.

**Gibberish\***

Exercise Objectives:  This exercise focuses on increasing student understanding of the role of very early language development on future phonological, semantic and pragmatic language development, and Bruner's LASS. It can be used after "Mirroring" to tie together language development, social and cognitive development in infancy.

Procedure:

1. This exercise can be used either before or after lecture on early language development. It can be helpful in helping students to better understand the concept of babbling, and the role of social support in furthering the developmental process.
2. Have students select a partner. This exercise will work best if they can select someone with whom they feel relatively comfortable.
3. Tell students that you are going to help them get back in touch what it was like to try to interact with people before they had their present level of ability with language. To warm up the group, have all pairs, at the same time, begin to talk to each other LOUDLY at the same time. This is not meant to be a conversation. Each person is to talk about whatever comes to mind without regard for what the other person is saying. Encourage them to raise the volume as loud as they are comfortable, and speak, nonstop, for a short period of time (30 seconds should do it).
4. Repeat the previous step, but have students speak something other than any language known to them. Encourage them to use some made up language, or sounds, slowly coming around to speaking this to one another, as if in an argument.
5. Now that they are used to using their made up language, tell them to try to carry on a "conversation" with one another. They can use props (pens, pencils, whatever is handy) to help focus the action. Or the instructor can call out different emotions that pairs can then express to one another in their made up language.
6. Come back together as a group. Discuss the experience, paying attention to student experiences of feeling in and out of sync with their partners, when they had a sense of having a conversation, what elements contributed to that, etc. See if anyone took on the language of their partner, and if so, what did that do to the level of interaction. Ask about Bruner's ideas on the LASS and the impact that social interaction and support has on language development, how it impacts further growth beyond babbling, etc.

\*adapted from Emunah (1994), p. 109-2.

**Emotional Greetings\***

Exercise Objectives:  This exercise focuses on increasing student understanding of the connections between affect (facial expression) and emotion.  It can also be used to open discussion about emotional development and differences between primary and social emotions.

Procedure:

1.  This exercise may be used either as an attention grabber before lecture, to illustrate points during or as a culminating activity after lecture on affect and emotional development, and Ekman's research on the subject.
2.  Have students choose a partner and stand back to back (or if desired and there is room, with backs toward each other but separated by several feet, so they can walk towards each other).
3.  Tell them you will call out a feeling. They will then turn around, face their partner and greet them as if they were feeling the way indicated, then return to their back to back positions to await the next instruction. Tell them to try to pay attention to their partner's facial expressions and body language for each turn.
4.  Go through the primary affect states first (happy, sad, mad, surprise, fear, disgust). If you like, write each word on the board as you use it for further discussion later. Try to match your voice to reflect the emotion called out.
5.  After completing this initial round, you may wish to stop for discussion and identification of facial expressions and their neurological basis.
6.  You may wish to do another round using social emotions (proud, shame, guilt, envy, embarrassed).
7.  Discuss students' experiences with these, identifying the combinations of facial expressions needed to convey the emotion, tie ins to culture and language, etc. Ask things such as "Did you have the same basic expressions as your partner on those? Why? Why not?" to help make the points about differences between primary and secondary emotions.

\*adapted from Emunah (1994), p. 150

**The Silent Greek Chorus (Sociogram)\*\***

Exercise Objectives:  Sociograms are a flexible sociodramatic tool which can allow students to bodily "vote with your feet", compare ideas with others, and interact with classmates all on a nonverbal level, while considering any number of conceptual questions before addressing concepts in discussion or lecture.

Procedure:

1. Preselect areas of the room ("stage") to correspond with answers to a set of predetermined questions or statements (e.g., Silverman's Visual-Spatial Learner quiz and characteristics list from http://www.negifted.org/NAG/Spring_Conference_files/UpsideDownBrilliance.pdf  if exploring learning differences, with one side of room designated for visual-spatial, the other for auditory-sequential and middle of room for either)
2. Ask students if they are familiar with the Greek Chorus in ancient Greek theater and what role chorus members played in drama. (If not, explain briefly.)
3. Tell them they get the chance to be part of a Greek Chorus, but a silent one. Explain you will ask them a series of questions/make a series of statements and they will comment on the questions/statements by moving to an area of the room you designate.
4. After making sure they understand directions, begin asking questions/reading statements and indicating designated "stage" areas for comments (e.g., "If you are better at geometry, go to my right, algebra, go to my left or if you're equally good or bad at both, go to the middle of the room).
5. Have the "Chorus" note where they are "on stage" before moving to the next question/statement.
6. Once all questions have been asked/statements have been read, have the Chorus give themselves a hand and take their seats.
7. Begin discussion by asking students what they thought the activity was about/might be the topic coming up. Allow time for open brain storming. Ease into topic (e.g., discussion of learning differences and Silverman's research, the role of early childhood ear infections on brain development she uncovered, etc.)

\*adapted from an exercise led by Sally Bailey, MSW, MFA, RDT/BCT during training June, 2006

**Table 2.  Appendix G – Sample Correspondence Table**

Table 2

*Inductively Emergent Thematic Categories Found Across Cases*

| Category | Thematic Category | Example |
|---|---|---|
| Corporeal/ Physical References | | |
| C1 | Body parts | Back; brain |
| C2 | Action/movement/direction | We squeezed … or tapped |
| C3 | Bodily responses/use of body | (singing) |
| C4a | Corporeal metaphor: neurological | I'm just not wired that way |
| C4b | Corporeal metaphor: behavior | You didn't bash anybody |
| C4c | Corporeal metaphor: connection | Give me a core to build off of |
| C5 | Trauma | They made me take my clothes off to check for bruises |
| Social Emotional References | | |
| SE 1 | Positive emotion | Fun; comfortable |
| SE 2 | Negative emotion | Anxious |
| SE 3 | Social emotion | Intimate; embarrassed |
| SE 4 | Teacher-student | You were open |
| SE 5 | Social Action | We were interacting |
| SE 6 | Personal meaning | I didn't realize so many people's brains worked like mine |

VITA

Ruth A. Wilcox

Candidate for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Thesis: UNDERGRADUATE PSYCHOLOGY STUDENTS' EXPERIENCES WITH CREATIVE DRAMA: A CASE STUDY

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Biographical:

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Completed the requirements for the Doctor of Philosophy in Educational Psychology at Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, Oklahoma in December, 2015.

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Completed the requirements for the Bachelor of Science in Education at the University of Tulsa, Tulsa, Oklahoma/USA in 1980.

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Professional Memberships:
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American Psychological Association: Community College Affiliate