

**POETIC AND THERAPEUTIC ENCOUNTERS  
WITH  
ADOLESCENTS**

by  
**ELMIEN BUTLER**

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Supervisor: DR. G. A. VILJOEN

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## Declaration

“I declare that **Poetic and Therapeutic encounters with adolescents** is my own work and that all the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.”

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Elmien Butler

## Acknowledgements

Thank you to

My Heavenly Father for bestowing creativity on me.

In particular,

- The multitude of voices and creative beings that make my work and life interesting and worthwhile;
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I dedicate this thesis to

Machiel Dabner, who will always expect me to work with him from a  
not-knowing stance

and

Sude van Niekerk, who is waiting for us with courage and magic in  
her lap.

## Summary

This study explores whether it is useful to implement drama and movement as therapeutic constructs to create poetic moments and transformation when working with the narratives of adolescents. Literature clearly indicates that creative techniques are used therapeutically in different contexts. The researcher is interested in narrative therapy and social constructionism and combines these concepts with those of drama and movement to create poetic moments. From a creative position the researcher hopes that the construction process reflected on in this research project may lead to new discoveries in therapy.

A group of adolescents took part in a 10 week program in which they explored different processes, stories and relationships and eventually co-created a movement drama with a social theme.

The participants used for the purpose of this dissertation responded positively and spontaneously to constructing a movement drama through a process of creative interaction and conversation. A review of the realities and knowledge constructed, revealed that drama, movement and narrative therapy can be used effectively in therapy and thus has viability when used with the adolescents in a group context.

The body and mind become one through explorative, drama and movement exercises. Participants can interact, reflect and create on different levels of interaction. The therapist works from a 'not knowing' stance which makes the process experiential, because it is constantly influenced and changed by what the participant brings to the process. In the creative space, fresh experiences and alternative stories are stimulated and discovered by means of explorative exercises and transformative and meaningful dialogues. Furthermore the researcher shows how a social constructionist approach, linked to languaging and movement, can create poetic moments that may benefit the creative therapeutic process.

By reflecting openly on the social construction process, which includes the program, insightful conversations, self-reflections and a DVD of the created movement drama, I hope to make a contribution in the repertoire of the creative psychotherapist when dealing with adolescents and their stories.

### **Key Terms**

Postmodernism, social constructionism, drama therapy, movement, adolescents, language, narratives, poetic moments, group therapy.

## Notes on literary styling

The way I am presenting this dissertation is a sample image of how I communicate naturally. I believe language is not just embedded in the written word, but in how people/voices speak, words they choose and the sounds and non-verbal expression given to it. The dissertation is filled with voices that contribute to the co-construction conversation and performance piece (movement drama). These voices and thought processes are shared with the reader in a somewhat unconventional style.

I make use of different lettering styles and ways of presenting to make the meaning making process known to the reader. I make use of drama terms as titles and also explore the dialogue genre that forms part of plays and theatre. My reflections become personae in an ongoing research dialogue. These will be explained more fully later in the dissertation.

My language and ways of communicating, sharing data and applying therapy, relates to my acting background and how I prefer to build up a language of interacting with a group or client I share therapy/research with. The way I speak and share with adolescents clearly differs from how I communicate with family, academics and colleagues. The reader will be introduced to all these voices and my hope is that you will be able to hear their different 'dialects' clearly. I wanted to share an 'informal conversational style' (Viljoen, 2004) in the representation of this research project, making it more concrete and expressive. I attempt to punctuate and situate every chapter, rather than coming to conclusions prematurely. In social constructionism premature conclusions limit ongoing knowledge creation and the research process.

I also present the reader with recorded video material on therapeutic processes as well as the created end performance. The enclosed DVD becomes a different form of communicative expression and presenting research.

On the other hand I am aware that this is an academic endeavour, and therefore I also colour the dissertation with academic expression. I attempt to make as many voices as possible part of the research journey and hope that the literary styling of this dissertation will help to create an interactive language with readers. I believe that creativity in therapy and research open up more experiences and possibilities.

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## Chapter 1

### Audience anticipation-expectation

According to those with the know-how, I am supposed to write this chapter after the completion of the dissertation, because then I will have a better grasp on what I actually wanted to find out. This chapter supposedly gives me the opportunity to stand back and look at what has been created/constructed. On the other hand I think that writing this chapter opens up more possibilities for conversations between me and the actual research process. I know it sounds out of the ordinary, but as a social constructionist I need to ask; where does research really end?

It should be said that the reader will perhaps find this research project different when compared to a typical scientific study. Do not be discouraged. It is simply a creative soul and a social constructionist's account of a process of discovery.

As an actress/therapist I am part of an art-making process when constructing the dissertation. I wanted to share my unique language with readers without alienating them academically. I believe I have succeeded in some way by combining different possibilities of sharing knowledge. At the end I believe readers will be able to construct their own understandings from being in conversation with this dissertation.

To communicate the research appropriately, I start in Chapter 2 by sharing with the reader where I come from creatively and therapeutically. I show how this influenced the undertaking of this research project and the understanding of a creative construction process. I also reflect on what I can use to make my journey useful from an academic point of view.

In Chapter 3, I focus on literature pertaining to drama and movement as therapeutic techniques within a postmodern context. I also look at group therapy and aspects connected to being an adolescent. As the crux of the research project is poetic moments, these are defined and explained. I look at

the creation of poetic moments in relation to embodied aspects and active language construction.

Chapter 4 deals with how I constructed a contextually relevant research design for this research project. I like to include methods from a variety of research approaches. I reflect on what I want to find, how I will go about and what the value of the constructs may be in the end.

In Chapter 5 I share my reflections and thoughts on therapy. I focus on an important conversation I had and I share the group's creative process and enchantment when being able to construct poetic moments through language, movement and drama. Readers are then asked to become part of the audience by watching a movement drama performance with a social theme on an enclosed DVD.

Chapter 6 deals with my transformation as actress/therapist. I look back and reflect on the research process and transformation. How therapeutic balance is created within in me by bringing two worlds together. In so doing I share with the readers an inspiring conversation with actors about the process. This chapter also deals with the transformation the adolescent group went through. The description of therapeutic process and its effects represent the results of the study. I also share what I hope the reader might learn from interacting with this dissertation.

Finally shortcomings and future ideas for further research are explored.

## Chapter 2

### Exposition I

*I ought to tell you I have an insatiable  
curiosity about people; it's impossible for me  
to see and hear enough of them.*

*Bertolt Brecht*

#### ***Why share my journey?***

Being on a life long journey continually constructing experiences assumes that as a subjective social constructionist researcher I would like to share my journey with the reader. I want the reader to understand how postmodern thinking in terms of psychology presented me with an opportunity to bring the worlds of drama and therapy together on the research stage, as it were.

In this research project I play an important role in the knowledge creation process, and I feel that background information gives the reader information that pertains to the research project's meaning making process. The same principle applies to therapy that is socially collaborative. The focus is on the therapist-client interaction. "This requires specific attention to the experience and behaviours of the therapist in relation to the client's experience" (Schwarz, 1998, p. 433).

Being part of the meaning making process presupposes that I need to share my story as it plays a significant role in the therapeutic, social and research context. "We become participant actors in the therapeutic story" (Cecchin, 1992, p. 89). I invite the reader to become part of my research story. I use words and metaphors from the drama spectrum to make it more meaningful.

## ***Self-exposure***

In the exposition phase of creating a dramatic performance, the participant-actors are faced with certain expectations, obstacles and pleasant surprises. My exposition/self-exposure phase that relates to this research project took on the following shape:

I started my training as an actress with certain expectations. I wanted to be trained and equipped to be a professional actress and drama teacher. I wanted to act and interact creatively through the medium of drama with audiences and people at large.

What was the result? Firstly the drama and acting scene in South Africa is limited in relation to character work and stage productions. Secondly, I did not fit the perfect 'look' for television and had limited requests for auditions. Thirdly, out of my drama teaching a holistic drama school developed which attracted different 'characters', all of whom were not all that interested in performance but rather in self-exploration.

This led me to exploring and questioning 'my' self-development and creative opportunities. As part of this journey I started studying psychology. This exposure inevitably brought my fields of interest together in a powerful, dynamic and workable way. Could I now call myself a dramatic psychotherapist, a psychological actress, a so-called 'psytress' or rather a creative therapist? Sadly it was and still is not that simple.

My background clearly implies that my impression of traditional psychotherapy is infused by elements such as creativity, drama, movement, mime, conversation and role-play. Ultimately these concepts become useful metaphors for therapy. This makes sense to me most of the time as I interact with clients and students, but how can I make my observations, explorations and experiences known to others, scientifically valuable and personally integrated?

During my third year and at the B Psych level of my psychology studies I felt somewhat disconnected with regard to applying therapeutic techniques within certain parameters. I felt safe, but discontent. Basically I was stuck. How do I share and incorporate my background and embedded knowledge into this therapeutic realm? With an open mind, a trial-and-error approach and a 'not knowing' stance (Anderson & Goolishian, 1992) I experienced many poetic moments (Deissler, 1996) where everything in a drama or therapy session seemed to come together. However, how to theoretically incorporate these personal 'truths' within the field of psychology proved to be a big challenge.

The journey continued as I entered my masters training and 'hallelujah', suddenly the postmodern philosophy in terms of psychology presented me with an opportunity to start incorporating my two worlds academically and practically. Suddenly there was a connection between my thoughts and those of postmodern thinkers like Shotter, Freedman, Combs, Gergen, Anderson, Goolishian, Foucault, Keeney and Wittgenstein. Some ideas of White and Epston were also useful. I was instantly (and still am) attracted to the work of narrative and constructivist therapists.

Although this was a rejuvenating starting point on the journey to self-integration as a therapist/artist/researcher, it was apparently not going to be smooth sailing. What will I call my approach? How will I refer to myself? How will I theoretically share my beliefs and practices? Once again I was stuck, but this time in a good sense. With a postmodern background and a degree of valuable knowledge, what concerned me now was not only how to make it truly effective and sustainable in terms of therapy, but also in terms of myself as a creative therapist. The dissertation started playing a part in my self-development as a therapist.

### ***A view from the wings***

#### ***Context of interest***

As a trained actress and drama teacher and while studying psychology, I have constantly been exploring and facilitating different ways of interaction in the process of creation/construction of movement, mime and drama pieces or

performances. As an artist I understood/understand the healing aspects of creative processes. In my mind the creative space produces a "community of discovery" (Bagley & Cancienne, 2002, p. 25). As a result of this creative outlook, my immediate response to research was linked to this context of interest.

As researcher, actress and creative therapist I need to work from a paradigm that does not inhibit the research process with too many rules or restrictions. I naturally work from a 'both-and' approach where contradictory ideas can exist together. It is clear that research might become the third creative activity in the constructive trinity of drama, therapy and research.

I agree with Feyerabend's (1993) anarchistic view on research: "Proliferation of theories is beneficial for science, while uniformity impairs critical power. Uniformity also endangers the free development of the individual" (p. 35).

Traditional Western research factors for plausibility include pragmatic, time-tested, value-free, and specific criteria for deciding the credibility of stories or descriptions within cultures. These criteria favour those who can present themselves in predictable, linear, 'left-brain', 'either-or' consumer-efficient ways. As a 'right-brain' thinker I do not agree with this view. "If people in power rigidly use these signposts as objective, 'true' evaluations of people's capabilities and worth, those who don't fit within the dominant culture can easily be discounted, totalized, and pathologized" (Smith & Nylund, 1997, p. 6).

As a social constructionist I believe that therapists/researchers should recognise that people "are meaning-makers who construct... their psychological realities" (Hoyt, 1998, p.1). According to Foucault (as cited in White, 1997, p. 223), a new pole has been constructed for the activity of philosophising, and this pole is characterised by the "permanent and ever changing question, 'What are we today?'" , implying a historical reflection on ourselves.

## ***A constructionist perspective***

*They all have their own body  
configuration and strength, their own  
beauty. They live and play according to  
what and who and how they are. They do  
not try to be what they are not.*

*Clarissa Pinkola Estes*

The constructive trinity of drama, therapy and research dictates that someone like me will be attracted to the metaphors of narrative and social constructionism. According to Freedman and Combs (1996), the main premise of social constructionism is that the “beliefs, values, institutions, customs... and the like that make up our social realities are constructed by members of a culture as they interact... from generation to generation and day to day” (p. 16).

I see myself as a social constructionist, which undoubtedly implies a subjective definition of therapy. I see myself as an integral part of the research process, which makes me more than a data-collecting figure. I see myself as part of different groups and processes. By this I mean that meaning is co-created. I am personally invested in this research project.

The power of language and stories play a significant role in my life, whether in a therapeutic, social or performative context. Therefore it makes sense that stories and my identity should play a part in the research process. I have experienced the vast healing possibilities of stories. I believe language creates and constructs the world we live in. “Meaning and understanding are socially and intersubjectively constructed” (Anderson & Goolishian, 1988, p.372). Thus I would want to create research from a similar perspective because then I know the research process will eventually open up to/for me

and make sense. “The search for new meanings, which often comprises searching for new language, is a search for us to be the selves with whom we feel most comfortable” (Andersen, 1992, p. 64).

In theatre training I learnt the concept of being in a ‘here and now’ space, always ready to improvise and adapt. I became a participant-observer. This has offered me the opportunity to stay ‘in the moment’ with clients and groups. It invites spontaneity and choice into the space. A space where different ways of communication and co-creation are accepted. “The constructive therapist gives up temptations of power and certainty and maintains curiosity” (Hoyt, 1998, p. 2). I believe in people’s resourcefulness and do not view myself as an expert on human functioning and relationships. This implies that I will always be a lifelong learner.

This personal approach refers to how I position myself in relation to my knowledge and that of the group or individual that I am working with. I do therapy from a ‘not-knowing’ (Anderson & Goolishian, 1992) perspective, and am therefore always open to change and challenges. Keeney (1990) depicts psychotherapy as a performing art and emphasises that the therapist should improvise his or her own style. I am capable to respond to any possible situation and to become part of a process of creative change. Andersen (as cited in Hoyt, 1998, p. 50) says the following: “This means always being willing to have our own strong opinions, biases, and values challenged, and being willing to be open to what evolves”.

According to Cecchin (1992), as therapists, we become participant actors in the therapeutic story. The separation between ‘participant actor’ and ‘conversationalist’ is arbitrary. From conversations I had with actors and adolescents in processes with me as director, facilitator and therapist, it became clear that I made use of ‘circular questioning’ (Selvini Palazzoli, Boscolo, Cecchin & Prata, 1980) and utilised roles that emerge in the interactive process. Circular questions presuppose that people or members of a group are connected in ongoing relationships. The actions and emotions of

one person are affected by, and affect everyone else in a group (Freedman & Combs, 1996).

Cecchin (1992) points out that this is a process of co-construction, where the therapist shares the responsibility for the context that emerges in therapy (or drama sessions). As I have become part of many processes as a creative therapist, and still am, I will always be part of an ongoing process where I am a co-participant/participant actor. Keeney (1990) believes therapy becomes a genre of interactional theatre. Therapy is after all a creative endeavour.

### ***Enter: Research Problem***

What naturally happened was that my personal constructed journey into drama and psychotherapy became part of my dissertation topic. In my Master's training I observed how process-based activities, like writing a journal and being part of group conversations and knowledge creation, lead me to generate questions about the collaboration between the creative arts and therapy. As a dissertation had to be submitted as part of my Master's training, it became apparent that research would be the most applicable scientific tool to explore the questions I had at the particular moment.

"Education, research and art making are the same endeavour in different modes..." (Bagley & Cancienne, 2002, p. 11).

Over the past few years I have worked with adolescents in different contexts and experienced the extent to which creative exploration and therapy may benefit the well-being of this population group. Adolescents are the role players of tomorrow and their narratives and meanings of life are important in understanding where we as South Africans are coming from, where we are at, and where we are heading.

In this research project I envisage how an adolescent group will explore 'moving' narratives as part of constructing a movement drama. From my experience, a narrative movement journey is a spontaneous and effective way to dramatise poetry and prose, to explore a topic or theme and to reinforce understanding of language. All the participants should be active at the same

time and each should be encouraged to interpret the narration in their own way. The action can be written for individual, pair or small group playing. Voice, lighting, music and sound effects can be used creatively to produce a mood or atmosphere for motivating the participants (Jennings, 1998).

Narrative movement/pantomimes can be replayed for more detailed dramatisation. A narrative pantomime might focus upon body movement and use of space, miming actions with objects, character exploration, emotions or sensory awareness (Kellet, 1998).

The nature of the topic of this research project calls for a research design that can explore and reflect the emergence of 'poetic' and therapeutic encounters in a creative context with adolescents.

According to Durrheim (2004, p. 39), "exploratory studies are used to make preliminary investigations into relatively unknown areas of research". They employ an open, flexible and inductive approach to research as they attempt to look for new insights into phenomena. Creative therapy within the narrative metaphor is one of the less explored phenomena in South African psychology according to a website search conducted by the researcher and the University of Pretoria's library staff in 2004.

Movement, drama and art therapies related to adolescents have mainly been researched by drama and educational departments. I did not come across many dissertations in South Africa that look at the above topic from a postmodern perspective, except for: *The effect of a creative drama experience on the adolescent child* (Winterbach, 1990) and *The development of the self-concept of the adolescent with the aid of drama therapy: a psycho-training programme* (Saunders, 1997).

Kellerman (1992) believes that therapists and psychodramatists have a preference for spontaneous action, emotional experience and the release of feelings at the expense of critical questioning and solid research.

"Psychodrama seems to be known more for its applications than for it

theories” (Kellerman, 1992, p.33). Therefore a commitment to research will broaden the applicability of creative therapeutic methods. Within a postmodern paradigm, drama, movement and narrative methods can enhance the therapeutic repertoire of the creative psychotherapist.

I hope that this research project may influence psychotherapists’ views of dramatisation and movement from a social constructionist’s point of view within the therapeutic context, and that it may provide a better understanding of the narratives and poetic moments adolescents construct.

The research project will ‘hopefully or ultimately’ determine how the exploration of the emergence of poetic moments in the therapeutic processes involved in dramatising and moving the narratives of adolescents, can assist therapists and adolescents alike in their journey to self-knowledge and creative growth. This will lead to psychological empowerment, which is the process by which people create or are given opportunities to take control of their own future and influence the decisions/stories that affect their lives.

In light of the fact that South African literature on this subject is limited, the project will also contribute to ‘homebrewed’ knowledge regarding the therapeutic gains relating to this type of approach.

I envisage that this research project will contribute to the growth and development of the participants, the academic field of therapy and to my development as a ‘not-knowing’ therapist (Anderson & Goolishian, 1992). Therefore from a constructionist viewpoint I wish to examine: *The effects of poetic moments in the therapeutic processes involved in dramatising the narratives of adolescents and transforming them through movement.*

### ***Situating the chapter***

In this chapter I introduced myself as researcher to the reader. I argued why it is important from a social constructionist point of view to share my background and knowledge creation process. I discussed my context of interest as related to drama and therapy and how I would like to apply these constructs in

research. I positioned myself in relation to social constructionism and argued that meaning and understanding is mutually constructed between people. Therefore, therapists share responsibility for what happens in the therapeutic and research contexts. Finally, I introduced the reader to how the research problem evolved and what I envisaged at this stage in the research project.

## Chapter 3

### *Exposition II (Literature Review)*

#### ***Setting the stage***

Within the social constructionist paradigm I view literature and the voices that create it as conversational partners. “The literature which I read and interpreted is seen as making a contribution to the research as some of the constructing voices leading to the formulation of a research problem” (Viljoen, 2004, p. 10). Therefore literary conversational partners assist me in constructing a layered, transformative reality, which in this case will be called a dissertation. After working on Chapter 2, key concepts related to this research project were presented to me by the literary conversational partners.

In the following chapter I share applicable literature. I will attempt to define postmodernism and social constructionism. I will discuss different creative approaches as to their use and value to therapy. Finally I will explore the cultural context of the adolescent and focus on aspects of group therapy.

#### ***Postmodernism***

According to Sey (2004), postmodernism is a broad term for many approaches that set themselves up in opposition to the coherence and rationality of the modern world. Postmodernism emerged in the 1970's and 1980's when Lyotard's (1984) critique of the grand meta narratives of Western reason rejected the view that science can be spoken in a singular universal voice. “The status of knowledge is altered as societies enter what is known as the postindustrial age and cultures enter what is known as the postmodern age” (Lyotard, 1984, p. 3).

For Doherty (1991) postmodernism breaks away from the modernist principles of ‘less is more’ to ‘more is more’. According to Freedman and Combs (1996), the modernist worldview emphasises facts, replicable procedures and generally applicable rules and therefore easily ignores the specific, localised meanings of individual people. Postmodern psychology tends to move toward concepts such as understanding, language, culture and myth. Concepts such

as consciousness, unconsciousness and the psyche recede into the background (Bakker, 1999).

One of the most important concepts that postmodernism has introduced to the social sciences derives from its use of interpretive methodologies based on the model of language and discourse (Sey, 2004). Postmodernism attempts to reinterpret psychological subjectivity. Foucault (1980) argues that postmodernism provides a means of asking questions about the construction of knowledge and power, the forms they take and the role played by them in social phenomena, and how those phenomena are understood. Rorty (1979) demonstrated that epistemology in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century has been marked by a shift from notions of truth to notions of significance or meaning.

It is clear that many scholars of the late 20<sup>th</sup> century believe that knowledge is 'socially constructed' since knowledge relies upon the socially crafted tool of language. According to Sey (2004, p. 467), "the constructionist approach to the human and social sciences, derived from the epistemological impact of postmodern thought". Language therefore helps to construct knowledge as social meaning is encoded in language (Terre Blance & Durrheim, 2004). "The postmodern temper seeks to reject meta narratives (*sic*) in favour of micro or local narratives where the claims to truth are much more modest and less prone to abuse" (Hoyt, 1998, p. 85).

Postmodernism implies that what can be said about the world – including the self and others – is an extension of shared conventions of discourse. Within the local narrative context there is an opportunity to hear the voices of those who were traditionally silent (women, the poor and in this case, adolescents). According to McNamee and Gergen (1992), social constructionism invites the kind of self-reflection that might open the future of alternative forms of understanding.

In this research project I will focus on the specific cultural and narrative context of adolescents as they move and dramatise their understandings of

their place in the world as well as their understanding of social powers. One of the assumptions of the research project is that drama and psychology have social responsibilities that have to be fulfilled in the therapeutic space. This links to critical psychology, which is a contextual psychology that attempts to understand people in their social and material worlds (Hook, 2004).

Whitmore (1994) refers to this postmodern attitude as “shaping signification in performance” (p. 116). Schiebe (2000) asks us to take note of the self-representation, performance, and scripts of the drama that is our everyday life. In doing so, he challenges our “dispirited senses and awakens psychology to a new realm of dramatic possibility” (p. 152).

Within a postmodern paradigm drama, movement and narrative methods can enhance the therapeutic repertoire of the creative psychotherapist.

### ***Drama and drama therapy***

*All the world's a stage,  
And all the men and women merely players.  
William Shakespeare*

Drama and movement as therapeutic tools have been used constructively for the past fifty years in educational and therapeutic contexts (Exner, 1995). It was in the early sixties in Britain that a development in the remedial application of drama and movement within the educational framework began to direct itself towards work in clinical areas (Jennings, 1987).

Emunah (1994) writes that dramatherapy can be defined as the systematic and intentional use of drama/theatre to achieve psychological change and growth.

I will now point to a few manifestations of drama in the field of therapy. I will focus on psychodrama, social theatre and playback theatre.

### ***Psychodrama***

“Psychodrama is a group therapeutic approach designed to evoke the expression of feelings involved in personal problems in a spontaneous, dramatic role-play” (Shaffer & Galinsky, 1974, p. 108). Kellerman (1992) defines psychodrama as a kind of psychotherapy: a method used for healing, promoting personal growth and creativity. The father of psychodrama was Jacob L. Moreno (1892-1974), and except for the development of psychodrama he also emphasised focusing on action, as opposed to analysis, and to focus on the ‘here and now’ (Shaffer & Galinsky, 1974). This resonates with the social constructionist approach to research.

Group psychodrama helps secure therapeutic effects through different influences; including the inter-personal, emotional, cognitive, imaginary, behavioural and non-specific agencies (Yalom, 1985).

Another form of spontaneous dramatic experience created by Moreno is called sociodrama. He wanted to put the dramatic expression of spontaneity and creativity to a useful purpose on a social level and contribute to the improvement of the human condition (Verhofstadt-Deneve, 2000). It was one of Moreno’s hopes that “human conflict could be diminished and understanding among people increased through an open exploration of socio-cultural differences using dramatic methods” (Shaffer & Galinsky, 1974, p. 124).

### ***Social theatre***

Many therapeutic drama approaches developed from an interest in the social applicability of theatre. Brecht (1898-1956), a German playwright (Brook, 1990), was a leader in the field. He vigorously objected to the Aristotelian concept of catharsis, seeking instead to stimulate the minds of his audience concerning the world around them, their status in that world and the conflicts that were playing out around them (Brook, 1990).

One of Brecht's most remarkable and innovative students to date is Augusto Boal (1931- ), a Brazilian political activist and the artistic director of the Arena Theatre of Sao Paulo from 1956 to 1971 (Lovelace, 1995). Social theatre introduced by Boal's work around forum theatre, invisible theatre and theatre of the oppressed open up expressions of socio-cultural animation. "In this usage, all human beings are actors (they act!) and spectators (they observe!)" (Boal, 2000, p. xxx).

Boal's basic concerns relate to Paul Freire's (1921-1997) work, who believes it is "more important to achieve a good debate than a good solution" (1972, p. 230). According to Freire (1972), dialogue is a co-operative activity involving respect. He did not encourage focusing on the actions of man, but rather on the 'thought language' with which man refers to reality, the levels at which that reality is perceived, and their view of the world. Engaging in performance thus brings forth questions, experiences and issues that are difficult to initially express in words. The creative expression of complexity will ultimately lead to thick descriptions (Smith & Nylund, 1997) and poetic conversations (Deissler, 1996).

According to the experiential educators Boud and Miller (Lovelace, 1966), theatre and play as a means of self-expression in groups and communities is called creative-expressive animation. Animation and Boal's "theatre as the art of looking at ourselves" (Boal, 2000, p. 74) are closely linked to each other. These concepts undoubtedly link with the concept of reflexivity as a therapeutic strategy. According to Schon (as cited in Hoyt, 1998), reflexivity requires a type of therapeutic practice where each move or exchange informs the next one. Boal (2000) similarly looked to theatre as an instrument of education, rejecting the popular notion of theatre as only spectacle and entertainment. Theatre becomes a metaphor for therapy where participants are vulnerable in exposing processes that ultimately lead to change of direction. Simpson (as cited in Boal, 2000, p. 54), describes animation as follows:

Animation is that stimulus to the mental, physical, and emotional life of people in a given area which moves them to undertake a wider range of experiences through which they find a higher degree of self-realisation, self-expression, and awareness of belonging to a community which they can influence.

Theatre as a tool for transformation and self-searching has been in use for many decades. Major techniques of the theatre of the oppressed are:

- Forum theatre: a problem solving technique in which an unresolved scene of oppression is presented, the audience are invited to stop replays as solutions are improvised.
- Image theatre: a series of physical exercises and games designed to uncover essential truths about society, culture and the self.
- Invisible theatre: issue orientated scenes performed in public settings to stimulate a dialogue involving the public ('Mandala Center', 2004).

Theatre of the oppressed challenges stereotypes and promotes empathy, just as in social constructionist and narrative therapy. We are formed by the social themes of the society we live in. Foucault (as cited in Smart, 1985, p. 69), describes this transformation as follows:

It is not that the beautiful totality of the individual is amputated, repressed, altered by our social order, it is rather that the individual is carefully fabricated within it, according to a whole technique of forces and bodies.

### ***Playback theatre***

Southern (as cited in Lovelace, 1996) defines art as a form of communication. This artistic dialogue opens an address to the people. It relates to playback

theatre, which is an original form of improvisational theatre in which audience or group members tell stories from their lives, and watch them enacted on the spot. Whether in public theatres, workshops, educational or clinical settings, playback theatre affirms the importance and dignity of personal experience, enables people to view their lives in new ways, and draws people closer as they see their common humanity.

First created in 1975, this manifestation of theatre was developed by Jonathan Fox and Jo Salas as the original playback theatre company in Hudson Valley, New York (Lovelace, 1996). Externalising basic human experiences by means of theatrics ultimately becomes a non-standardised postmodern therapeutic tool. It is clear that this creative tool can be used with different groups and people in different contexts. Theatrics implies the use of stories which from a postmodern perspective informs life. The telling and sharing of the stories that “hold us together and keep us apart” (Howard, 1991, p. 38), has therapeutic significance in the creative context because it helps participants or clients to find meaning and create value.

### ***Movement as a linguistic activity***

*There is a vitality, a life force, an energy, a quickening, that is translated through you into action, and because there is only one of you in all time, this expression is unique. And if you block it, it will never exist through any other medium and will be lost.*  
*Martha Graham*

Underlying dance or movement therapy is the principle that physical movement is intermeshed with the individual’s emotions and thoughts. Moving the body not only reflects what the individual is thinking, but physical processes can create thought processes (Chodorow, 1991). Fleshman and Fryrear (1981) note that self awareness, body language, deep muscle relaxation, biofeedback and psychosomatic medicine are areas wherein

mental health workers are beginning to recognise the interdependence of physical and mental processes. Movement therapy is also seen as a cathartic release of tension and anxiety (Chodorow, 1991). Movement speaks to us about the body and the mind's inner life. Movement becomes a language of its own. Laban (1980) means that:

The astonishing structure of the body and the amazing actions it can perform are some of the greatest miracles of existence. Each phase of a movement, every small transference of weight, every single gesture of any part of the body reveals some feature of our inner life. (p. 19)

Laban's (1980) concepts of movement are studied as part of education, therapy and industry. According to him all movement has certain fundamentals in common, they are:

- That people are unique, have worth and are therefore of value.
- That the inner life of every person is as inimitable as their fingerprints.
- That the inner life is expressed consciously or unconsciously through movement.
- That movement is the bridge between a person's inner life and the external world.
- That the bridge sometimes resembles a loop – for what happens in the outside world affects us internally and significant movement will affect how we present ourselves in the external world.
- That internal change will be made visible.

The focus in dance therapy as seen by Feder and Feder (1981, p. 158) is on the dynamics of mind and body as they interact on the emotional level. It is felt that a client, must, first of all, become well-acquainted with his or her own body. According to Exner (1995, p. 8), this also builds clients' self-confidence in that they recognise their own inner rhythms, those of others and respond freely to them, and in so doing are able to understand the body as an expressive mechanism which can release emotions. Grotowski (1994)

believes that we do not possess memory. Instead our entire body is memory and it is by means of the body memory that impulses are released.

Barrager-Dunne (1997) speaks of four kinds of knowledge: 'rational', 'technical', 'relational', and 'bodily'. Rational knowledge refers to theoretical, abstract ways of knowing, whereas technical knowledge describes practical knowing. Relational knowledge focuses on how to be with a particular person in a particular moment. According to Park (2001), relational knowledge is linked to establishing relationships with our bodies and feelings. In this process we focus on “unique features as ends to be appreciated, in contrast with representational knowledge which places the particular in generalised contexts of understanding” (p. 84).

In the therapy context, bodily knowledge refers to tuning into the client's/participant's and therapist's/researcher's sensory or nonverbal expressions. "By tuning in to the child and responding with bodily knowing, the therapist assists in creating the conditions for an exchange of ideas (even nonverbal ones)" (Barragar-Dunne, 1997, p. 73).

The dance pioneer Martha Graham (1894-1991) says that “movement never lies. It is a barometer telling the state of the soul’s weather to all who can read it” (1991, p. 4). Listening to our own body data is just the beginning of probing the possibilities of a physicality of knowing (Snowber, as cited in Bagley & Cancienne, 2002). In therapy knowledge in the relationship is created in the act of relating and it shows itself in words, expressions, actions and other forms of “doing relationship” (Park, 2001, p. 85). According to Shotter (1996a), as living, embodied beings (as open systems) we cannot help but be spontaneously responsive to events occurring around us.

The concepts of analogue (analogical) and digital (logical) which have become part of the daily general discourse about communication technologies and environments, also resonates with the ‘movement as a linguistic activity’ concept. At the eighth Macy Conference in 1951, physiologist Ralph Gerard (as cited in Wilder, 1997) explained that “an analogical system is one in which

one or two variables is continuous on the other, while in a digital system the variable is discontinuous and quantized” (p. 13).

Similarly Gerard gives the example of the analogue rheostat that dims or brightens continuously, versus the on/off digital light switch. Bateson applied these concepts to coding in human communication and suggested that “apart from the central nervous system, there is a possibility that the whole moving body may be used as analogic component” (Ruesch and Bateson, as cited in Wilder, 1997, p.171).

In *Pragmatics of Human Communication* (1967), Watzlawick, Beavin and Jackson expand on Bateson’s applications of analogue/digital to nonverbal and verbal communication. They declare (and I agree) that analogue communication means all non-verbal communication, including “posture, gesture, facial expressions, voice inflection, the sequence, rhythm, and cadence of the words themselves... as well as the communication clues unfailingly present in any context in which interaction takes place” (p. 43). They view analogical communication as our primary means to communicate messages about relationships.

According to Shuttleworth (as cited in Jennings, 1987), who explored a systems approach to dramatherapy, Watzlawick’s (1978) notions of the way we understand our world are very useful in creative therapy. Watzlawick suggests that while much of our intellectual understanding of the world is centred in the dominant hemisphere or ‘left’ brain, much of our more irrational and often unconscious behaviour is determined by the non-dominant hemisphere or ‘right’ brain. One of the major functions of therapy is to try and find a way of allowing ‘new’ information and stories to shape a person’s behaviour.

Therefore, effective therapy (and in this case creative therapy with the focus on identifying and creating poetic moments in movement and drama) often requires constructing languages that can bypass the intellectual ‘left’ brain and find a way into the more unconscious ‘right’ brain. These communications

could include verbal and non-verbal expressions by means of movement, talking, improvisation, sharing and creating stories.

Being analog is only a start, and only a part of the story, but taken seriously it may provide one more aperture to 'missing information' in an age that so clearly falls for the collective wisdom an ecological vision may hold. (Wilder, 1997, p. 6)

### ***Adolescents as a cultural group***

*Must I say something?  
Can it be wrong?  
Will you let me be wrong?  
Or can I change my mind?  
15 year-old in an improvisation.*

To be able to understand and collaborate with adolescents' constructs I believe it is useful to keep the ideas of Erik Erikson in mind, because "adolescence has been called a variety of things from a disease to a miracle" (Dreyer, 1980, p.30).

Erikson's psychosocial approach focuses on the adolescent period as the identity synthesis period (1977). Working with adolescents on this research project I believe that the construct of identity synthesis plays a meaningful role in their development in the group context.

Erikson portrays identity as the fifth stage in an eight-act sequence of life conflicts that a person encounters along the road from birth to death in old age. According to Erikson, identity develops as follows:

The process of identity formation depends on the interplay of what young persons at the end of childhood have come to mean to themselves and what they now appear to mean to those who become significant to them. (Erikson, 1977, p.106)

Identity to Erikson incorporates puberty processes and psychosocial issues. There needs to be a synthesis between commitment and crisis about the adolescent's roles in society. Furthermore, the balance achieved during the identity conflict of adolescence will affect all developmental stages encountered during adult life.

It can be argued that, according to Erikson, identity in the adolescent stage is a socially constructed phenomenon. His views relate to the social constructionist' view on culture as a story we live by. LeVine (as cited in Howard, 1991) defined culture as a "shared organisation of ideas that includes the intellectual, moral and aesthetic standards prevalent in a community and the meanings of communicative actions" (p. 67).

In order to create and collaborate with the adolescent cultural group, I believe that 'culture' should be seen as a community of individuals that sees its world in a particular manner. Therefore, adolescents will share specific interpretations as central to their lives and actions. "The young tell the dominant stories of their cultural group" (Howard, 1991, p. 190).

Peterson (1993) identified the following assumptions, which may be kept in mind when working with the adolescent cultural group:

- Adolescents have a desire to be heard, listened to, taken seriously, and respected.
- All adolescents need support, no matter how strong and successful they might seem.

- Adolescents feel stressed at times. Some feel stressed most or even all of the time.
- All adolescents are sensitive to family tension.
- All adolescents feel angry at times.
- All adolescents feel socially inept and uncomfortable at times.
- All adolescents worry about the future at times.
- All adolescents, no matter how smooth and self-confident they may appear, need practice talking honestly about feelings.
- Everyone wears a facade at times.

When working with adolescents I will be drawn into their constructions and knowledge of life. I will be introduced to specific practices and various operations of power. According to Foucault (1980), power is something that can be used and deployed by particular people in specific situations, which itself will produce other reactions and resistances. It is not tied to specific groups or identities. I embrace the idea that identities are not fixed (Gergen, 1995), that power differences change in different contexts and that our identities and futures are not determined by descriptive social 'facts'. This links to Derrida's (1997) idea of identity as constructed through differences, not sameness. Choice therefore becomes a major life factor in a (therapeutic) context where nothing is fixed.

### ***Language and narratives***

*So, psychology is  
narrative.  
T. R. Sarbin*

Working from a social constructionist paradigm, I embrace the narrative idea of assuming that people themselves have 'technologies' (Foucault, 1980) necessary for their lives to be meaningful. I want to therapeutically facilitate a richer description of who they are by means of creative techniques. I would

like to expand relational knowledge between participants in the therapeutic context by creating a relationship with a language of its own.

For modernists, language is representational; it reflects reality (Anderson & Levin, 1998). In contrast, the postmodernists and poststructuralists draw the attention to the constitutive nature of language and text. Postmodernists focus on how the language that we use constructs our realities, world and beliefs. The only worlds we know are the worlds we share and create in language. Derrida (1997) cites Heidegger as claiming that being is nothing outside language. Being is tied not to a particular word or concept or system of language but to the possibility of words and language or expression in general (Derrida, 1997). Language is therefore not a passive activity but an interactive process (Freedman & Combs, 1996).

As a researcher and therapist, I abide to Milton Erickson's rule: "Learn and speak the client's language" (Erickson & Rossi, 1981, p. 206). He was committed to make therapy fit the person. From a narrative perspective we can interpret Erickson's approach as a form of re-authoring. Re-authoring connects with the social constructionist view that language is something people do together, which makes it a shared activity. For psychotherapists that work from this perspective change of belief, relationship, feeling or self-concept, are connected to change in language (Freedman & Combs, 1996).

The conversations that therapists and clients have can be seen as stories, as narratives. Narrative therapy involves recognising that we think about life in a story form. We highlight events and experiences and link them together. In doing so we create meanings about ourselves and the world we live in. From a narrative standpoint, the initial focus of therapy is on trying to grasp the local meanings and understandings of everyone involved, through creating a mutual, comfortable, and a safe conversational environment (Smith & Nylund, 1997).

We all have problem stories as well as alternative stories, and have the choice to decide what stories we want to play a role in our present and future (White,

1997). According to Andersen (1992), participants or clients start to talk in ways that lead to possibilities and continuing conversations. This helps clients to make sense of life and leads to freedom and hope. Anderson and Levine (1998, p. 46) argue that:

Human life and relationships, knowledge and expertise, are shaped and reshaped in and through conversation, and thus the potential for transformation and change is an infinite in variety and expression as in the individuals who realize them.

In this research project the focus will be on the active languages participants create in drama and movement within a therapeutic context. These concepts become languages in their own right if we relate it to the movement literature explored earlier in this dissertation. Narratives, the creation of knowledge and the movement thereof relate to embodiment and coordination.

### ***Poetic moments and transformative dialogue***

*Human beings communicate in a way  
far more profoundly with one another  
through the nature of what they are,  
than through their words.*

*Laurens van der Post*

According to Watzlawick (as cited in Hoyt, 1998), the most frequent factor that brings about change in human lives is what Franz Alexander called a 'corrective emotional experience' in 1946. A 'corrective emotional experience' can be viewed as a 'poetic moment' that suddenly opens the eyes for a different way out of a problem or a way of thinking. A therapeutic space is therefore created to facilitate conversations that allow participants to tap into their creativity and develop future possibilities.

Drawing on postmodern and social constructionist suppositions, I suggest that language/talk is the primary medium of constructing our social or organisational realities and sense of the self. Therefore language becomes action, and vice versa. Shotter (1996b) states that we make sense of what is happening around us in the flow of our everyday dialogical activity.

In this research project, adolescents will make sense of what is happening around them by means of drama, movement and conversation in a creative space. As a social constructionist, I accept the premise that talk becomes action and helps us to make sense of our world. Therefore studying how dialogical practices (Shotter, 1996a) may shape reality, offers rich potential for understanding, articulating and living our lives in more deliberate ways, for knowing, knowing how to live, knowing how to listen (Lyotard, 1984). Interaction becomes more responsive, reflexive and critical.

The talk-action concept links to Freire's ongoing reflective process called 'praxis' (action that is informed), which is the development of critical awareness involving a process of conscientisation. This process occurs both individually and collectively in groups (Freire, 1972).

I believe language has the power to heal or destroy. Language as a therapeutic tool can lead clients and therapists alike toward a more integrative way of thinking, being and acting. Carswell and Magraw (2001) call this the language of "holism and metaphor" (p. 3). Anderson and Goolishian (1988) point out that social constructionists believe that 'languaging' about a problem actually creates and thus precedes the problem. Thus, 'languaging' about problems or alternatives precedes solutions or alternatives and create change.

In exploring the creative and therapeutic processes involved in dramatising and moving the narratives of a group of adolescents, I will focus on 'transformative dialogue', 'responsive events' or poetic moments. Poetic moments link naturally with the aforementioned discussions around language, embodiment and conversation.

What is a 'poetic moment' you may ask? According to Deissler (1996), poetic moments can be seen as relationship-engaged activities. These poetic moments consist of images that are not 'in our heads' but ones that we initially show or express to each other, involuntarily, in our bodily ways of humanly reacting or responding to such events.

We speak of them as having a metaphorical quality, as seemingly involving an image in some way, for the way of acting 'carried in' our spontaneous reactions, often appears to have been 'carried over' from another sphere of our lives. (Shotter, 1996b, p. 1)

Cunliffe (2002) describes poetic methods as non-theoretical, unpredictable, practical ways of talking that occur in the living, responsive moment. They include our use of:

- Metaphors, images, analogies, irony
- Instructive forms of talk
- Imaginative forms of talk used to reveal possibilities or new ways of connecting
- Gestures

The non-theoretical stance is useful in therapy because it allows for creativity, meaning making and change in focusing on taken-for-granted poetic moments.

Wittgenstein (1953) calls these poetic moments, reminders because they direct our attention to taken-for-granted, embodied aspects of everyday forms of talk. Such forms of dialogue may create a range of responses or open up possibilities for creating a shared sense, further dialogue or action (transformation). The creation of a space where groupwork and relationship building can happen is of utmost importance before therapy starts. This

space lends itself to the happening of poetic moments, and enhances the therapeutic relationship and creates shared possibilities.

### ***Group therapy***

In this research project I envisage how a group of adolescents will create a movement drama by making use of their own voices, bodies, stories and reflections. Group processes will inevitably play an important role in this therapeutic context. According to Yalom's Interpersonal-Facilitator Model of Group Therapy (1985), therapeutic change in groups is an enormously complex process and occurs through an intricate interplay of various guided human experiences.

The therapy analogue of the client-therapist relationship becomes broader in group therapy. It includes the client's relationship not only with the group therapist but to the other group members and to the group as a whole (Yalom, 1985). According to Moreno (as cited in Kellerman, 1992), every participant in psychodrama is a potential therapeutic agent to the others. The group becomes a social microcosm which provides a context in which new interpersonal relationships may develop (Yalom, 1985).

It is therefore important to organise a therapeutic drama group in such a way that a therapeutic atmosphere can develop and cohesiveness can be established. Group cohesiveness is a basic property of groups and can broadly be defined as "the resultant of all the forces acting on all the members to remain in a group" (Yalom, 1985, p. 49).

Planning group therapy sessions is of utmost importance. The type of group and its appropriateness will have to be communicated to possible participants beforehand. Additional considerations like the size of the group, number of sessions and where and when meetings will take place are part of the pre-planning process (Jacobs, Harvill & Masson, 1994). Yalom (1985) also views preparation as crucial to effective group therapy. When the birth and development of a group have been established, the group becomes a physical

reality and then the “therapist’s energies are occupied in shaping the group into a therapeutic social system” (Yalom, 1985, p. 115).

The demands on the group leader are complex because the focus continually shifts. The leader uses techniques to shape a group culture. These can be anything from instructions to suggestions, empathising and conversations (Yalom, 1985). The role of the group therapist relates to many of the roles the psychodramatist plays. Table I below gives an overview of the professional roles the psychodramatist plays according to Kellerman (1992, p. 46).

*Table I: Professional roles of the psychodramatist*

<b>Roles</b>	<b>Functions</b>	<b>Skills</b>	<b>Ideals</b>
Analyst	Empathiser	Understanding	Hermeneutics
Producer	Theatre director	Staging	Aesthetic
Therapist	Agent of change	Influencing	Healing
Group leader	Manager	Leadership	Social

When a group is lead by a therapist who can facilitate the creation of a therapeutic social system, the group becomes the agent of change. It provides the support, advice, interpersonal feedback, learning and hope for all its members. These are then also the factors that participants in group therapy find most helpful in the end (Yalom, 1985).

In this research project the focus will be on trying to move away from intrapsychic ways of defining problems and rather focus on alternative stories, interactional patterns and poetic moments. This does not imply that intrapsychic change or development will not take place. According to Yalom (1985), “every group, with its unique cast of characters, all interacting complexly with one another, undergoes a highly individual development” (p. 299). Christensen and James (2001) reported that female adolescents in a group recreation programme experienced an increase in self-esteem and gained a sense of empowerment. The girls discovered new coping skills,

learned to work as a team, trusted themselves and their group members, and increased their contribution to group success.

### ***Situating the literature voices***

From the literature overview it is evident that a combination of drama, movement and narratives can create a versatile construct or metaphor for therapy and research. I do not wish to follow only one particular approach to therapy. I want to be informed by various aspects from different approaches and I want the information to infuse my local construction of therapy. In summary the following was noted as contextually useful:

- A combination of drama, movement and psychotherapy can be used for healing, personal growth and creativity (Emunah, 1994; Kellerman, 1992).
- Social theatre links to the social constructionist' point of view of stimulating the mind about the cultural and social issues influencing our daily functioning and our everyday talk/language (Boal, 2000; Freire, 1974).
- Performance can be a metaphor for co-operative dialogue. It can bring forth issues that are difficult to express in words (Cunliffe, 2002; Shotter, 1996a).
- We are all actors and observers reflecting on each other, whether we are the participant, client, researcher or the audience (Boal, 2000).
- Improvisations lead to stories which ultimately lead to stimulating dialogue and new views on life (Keeney, 1990).
- Connecting the body and mind stimulates a physical/non-verbal narrative that opens conversation and knowledge creation (Barrager-Dunne, 1997; Snowber, 2002).
- Adolescents are a group of people with unique voices that want to be heard in a context in which they feel stimulated and in which they can play an active part (Yalom, 1985).
- Adolescents can share their personal and cultural meanings through narrative explorations (Erikson, 1977; Howard, 1991).

- Groups form a bond where self-reflexivity and co-creation naturally become part of the process. We all play the role of the therapist and participant at some point in time. Ultimately transformation/poetic moments lead to the construction of new personal and social realities (Deissler, 1996; Yalom, 1985).
- Language embraces our words, gestures, facial expressions, personal metaphors, ways of thinking and physical interactions. Language opens possibilities for dialogue, creative co-creation and knowledge (Andersen, 1992).
- Postmodernism creates a therapeutic space for “shaping significance in performance” (Schiebe, 2000, p. 116). Whereas social constructionism creates a self-reflexive space for alternative forms of understanding.

## Chapter 4

### ***Complication (A personally constructed research design)***

*The most dramatic shift imaginable in the field of psychotherapy is to free it from the tight embrace of medicalism and scientism and connect it to the creative wellsprings of the arts.*

*Bradford Keeney*

Experiences of and literature on drama, movement, therapy and research informed me on how I would like to execute this research project. I believe that these concepts will come together and form a constructive trinity at the end of the project. In this chapter, I attempt to share with the reader my views on therapy and research approaches. From there on, I look at what I really want to know, who is going to form part of the research project, what will be considered data and how I would like to synthesize data or the knowledge created.

#### ***What informs my view of therapy?***

In my mind, therapy is a site for the enactment of narratives of various kinds. The therapist and client participate in a process of creative change. Keeney (1991) remarks that “the creative therapist cares less about loyalty to texts and institutions and more about experiencing, utilizing and sharing the creative inventions of one’s own imagination” (p. 23).

I imagine that reality is created through language that consists of more than just the spoken word. Movement and drama becomes a narrative that opens different conversations in creative therapy.

My construction of therapy is informed by ethnodrama and therefore does not draw a line between the dramatic and the therapeutic. Cowley (as cited in Bagley & Cancienne, 2002) states that ethnodrama explores the world of drama in therapy without fully removing the line between aesthetic drama and therapeutic performance work. Audiences collectively share responses and join in. “Critical ethnodrama has become a qualitative vehicle capable of reaching a wider cross section of the community in a meaningful and accessible way” (p. 37). Bagley and Canciene (2002) view theatre as a collaborative art form which deals with problems in a collaborative manner.

James and Prout (as cited in Christensen & James, 2001) indicate that ethnography provides researchers with an opportunity to carry out participant observation with children which allows for a detailed understanding of their cultural meanings and everyday interactions. In this light I will reflectively explore the world of therapy and drama with an adolescent group, focusing on the therapeutic gains which may be applicable in certain social fields and facilitated by the development of the movement drama. Therapy is drama, and drama is life!

Drama and movement create a therapeutic space of dynamic possibilities where the visible and invisible become partners within linguistic action. As a therapist/actress I want to combine the art of dramatic movement with narrative therapy within a spontaneous space. By adding the analogical concept to this construct of therapy, I set the scene for change because tension exists between verbal language and active language. I like to extend the description of language and therefore the construct of therapy. This relates to Shotter’s (1996a) description of therapy. “It is its very lack of specificity, its lack of any pre-determined human order, and thus its openness to being specified or determined yet further by those involved in it, in practice, that is its central defining feature” (p. 310).

### ***What I would like to know in the end***

The aim of the research project will be to explore the poetic moments created by adolescents together with a facilitator in a group as they share narratives as part of creating a movement drama. The ultimate focus will be on:

- Exploring how group therapy happens along the way as part of the process.
- How creative therapeutic interventions can benefit the adolescent and facilitator in contemporary counselling.
- How transformative dialogues/poetic moments open and construct a creative and therapeutic space.

### ***The cast of characters (participating group)***

Against the backdrop of creating a movement drama, a random number of adolescents were selected from a free-participant drama group, representing a specific social group as well as a convenient sample (Durrheim, 2004). The adolescents were between the ages of thirteen and seventeen. Jacobs, Harvill and Masson (1994) suggest that the ideal size for a group is between five and ten. Larger groups are more dissatisfied and show less consensus than smaller groups (Yalom, 1985). I took group therapy critiques into consideration when I planned the group meetings and process. Therefore the cast of characters taking part in this research project consisted of 10 participants and met on a weekly basis for 10 weeks.

Most group therapists agree that a minimum of 60 minutes per session is required for warm-up activities and for the unfolding and working through of identified themes of a session (Yalom, 1985). Working with adolescents in a creative environment where a performance will ultimately play a part in our process, I found that 90 minutes per session per week were adequate.

We met in a large multipurpose room with chairs, drama blocks, a sound system and some props. The room “affords privacy and freedom from distraction” (Yalom, 1985, p. 276).

Although group therapy and specific preparation forms part of this research project, I adhered to the following words of Yalom (1985, p. 297):

A systematic preparation for group therapy by no means implies a rigid structuring of the group experience. I do not propose a didactic, directive approach to group therapy but, on the contrary, suggest a technique that will enhance the formation of a freely interacting, autonomous group.

### **How do I want to find what?**

*Knowledge is in the end based on  
acknowledgement.  
L. Wittgenstein*

From an epistemological point of view it is difficult to highlight one set of rules or one ultimate approach to how things can be known. If “epistemology specifies the nature of the relationship between the researcher (knower) and what can be known” (Terre Blanche & Durheim, 2004, p. 6), I would use the metaphor of the director rehearsing with a group of actors and an unknown script. As an actress/therapist/ researcher I speak the language of an artist and therefore agree with Viljoen’s (2004) statement that

the approach any researcher uses develops as a process in language and is a result of the voices that inform the creation of the socially constructed self. In this way one uses aspects of different approaches (some of which may be in conflict), at different times in the process. There is no metatheoretical perspective, metanarrative or single overarching epistemology. (p. 60)

As a constructivist therapist or researcher I am "... suspicious of great subjects and all encompassing theories... because no social theory can make claims to validity outside a particular context and value system" (Hoyt, 1998, p. 2). Meaning is always part of constantly changing narratives. Research therefore becomes a form of conversation between researchers, participants, writers, supervisors, examiners and future readers of the dissertation. The research context constantly moves and changes. Feyerabend (1993) means that

successful research does not obey general standards: it relies now on one trick, now on another; the moves that advance it and the standards that define what counts as an advance are not always known to the mover. (p. 1)

Social constructionists do not like to place research or data collecting methods in a preconceived structure or category. They are sceptical of defining certain kinds of data more authentic than others (Terre Blanche & Durheim, 2004). This ultimately implies that I used a variety of data collection methods which suited the type of study, the group and our process.

Within this research project an explorative focus will be on the adolescent group, the facilitator, feelings, creative techniques and externalising conversations (White, 1993). The performative and creative process will create a therapeutic community of discovery (Bagley & Cancienne, 2002) and growth which will also be observed and explored as part of the research project.

Externalising movement and conversations (White, 1993) (transformative dialogues/poetic moments) will encourage the adolescents to provide accounts of the effects of meaning created in the therapeutic space, on their lives in a language of action. "To talk about relationships requires adequate translation from the analogic (non-verbal) into the digital (verbal) mode of

communication” (Watzlawick, Beavin & Jackson, 1967, p. 66). Through exercises, engagement, the use of images and different forms of talk we will eventually construct a movement drama that could be seen as a metaphor for the journey we went on.

In the context of the development of movement drama the participants may start appreciating the process of jointly constructing meaning and all being responsible for it. Self-reflexivity is one of the contributions/ methods offered by transformative dialogue/narratives. In Montgomery’s (Baxter & Montgomery, 1996) terms, this demonstrates one of the most important dialogical skills, namely the “ability to recognise multiple and simultaneous systems” (p. 199). In the co-creation space the adolescent participants will experience visions of the end product (movement drama). These imaginary moments sew the seeds for construction and cooperation (Gergen , McNamee & Barret, 2001).

In the process of creating a main narrative to work with, a relationship will develop between the speaking and moving of narratives. The body and mind becomes one via narratives and the space creates a sense of creative inquiry. Snowber (2002) calls it the inquiry of body and soul.

As the group becomes more creative and spontaneous self-understanding, insight an interpersonal learning (Yalom, 1985) will be constructed in a natural way and be observable.

### ***Data collection methods***

#### ***Exercises***

Different units of analysis will be generated through creative exercises that will stimulate self-exploration, narration, creativity and groupwork. Any exercise that facilitates the ability of participants to express themselves openly and directly while creating a feeling of comfort and shared interest will be useful.

According to Jacobs, Harvill and Mason (1994, p. 215), exercises in groups are used to:

- Generate discussion and participation
- Focus the group
- Shift the focus
- Provide an opportunity for experiential learning
- Provide the group leader with useful information
- Increase the comfort level
- Provide fun and relaxation

The exercises used in the programme were divided into categories, in order to give the reader a sense of direction. These categories were incorporated in the programme format that is reflected upon later in the dissertation.

Exercise Categories:

- Drama exercises
- Movement exercises
- Explorative exercises

The use of exercises and creative therapeutic techniques took place over a period of seven weeks. The data was recorded in writing and on video. The recorded material inevitably created more voices to contribute to our co-creative process. It also created a context where group members could check the process and themselves. According to Vander Zwalmen (2000), audio-visual feedback can enhance the client's understanding of their own attitudes and interactions. For Vander Zwalmen (2000) the recording of a session is furthermore useful as learning material for the therapist, "who is thus in a position to analyse the sessions afterwards with a twofold aim: studying his (*sic*) client's problems more closely and improving his (*sic*) own understanding of therapy (p. 293)".

### ***Conversations and performances***

Central to this research project was a methodology that drew on narrative and performative inquiry from a social constructionist viewpoint. The movement drama originated from the narratives of or dialogues with the adolescents.

According to Snowber (2002), the relationship between dancing and speaking a narrative evolves as a place of performative inquiry through interaction with all of those involved. "Performative inquiry lends itself to the uncovering of layers of insights. The very reality that there is room for ambiguities allows the space for a continual unfolding of images and thoughts to solidify into a bodily wisdom" (Snowber, 2002, p. 31).

Narrative inquiry relates to Deissler's (1996) suggestion that in interwoven conversations people are trying to understand, create, transform and organise realities. It is through this kind of 'self-invention' process that the project's therapeutic affects may become sustainable and 'performative' outside the research context (White, 1993).

As a social constructionist I would focus on different narratives within the data collection process. These narratives may consist of self-narratives. This is the task of arranging experiences and events in sequences across time to arrive at a coherent account of the self and the world around us (Freedman & Combs, 1996). White (1993) writes that cultural stories also determine the shapes of our individual life narratives. "The poetry of research - a poetics of research - holds the capacity to bring the lines and the lives together. The lines that run through our lives and the lives that run through our lines" (Rasberry, 2002, p. 106).

Within the domain of arts-informed research (Blumenfeld-Jones, 2002) I would explore the narratives of adolescents in a way that would be creative, self-reflective, interactive, conversational and finally performative.

### ***Identifying poetic moments***

Identifying poetic moments suggests that the researcher should become more aware of the obvious taken-for-granted moments in the group therapy context and trust the co-constructed reality. The importance of arresting or moving moments sometimes passes therapists by in the search for ultimate meaning and knowing. Wittgenstein (1953) says that we should be drawn to “observations which no one has doubted, but which have escaped remark only because they are always before our eyes” (p. 115).

In this research project we were constantly interacting as languaging agents, suggesting that poetic moments would be part of many creative processes. Remember that poetic moments can be “a glance or a gesture, but it may also be a word” (Wittgenstein, 1953, p. 218). As we took part in exercises, improvisations and informal talk poetic moments were created continually. As the group viewed the data and listened to each other, new perspectives and issues were discovered to work with. These natural discoveries, which form part of the creative process can be viewed as poetic moments. As the process moved along, the creation of the actual movement drama started taking on form around an abuse/power theme the adolescents identified during those arresting and obvious moments, as socially applicable, and which they started interpreting critically.

As researcher I had to be aware of these poetic moments and utilise them in a constructive manner. I observed and became aware of changing dialogues, fresh perspectives, new relationships and changing narratives. As the group became more talkative, insightful and moveable I became aware of the creation of poetic moments. As the creative therapist I highlighted these meaningful poetic moments by sharing it verbally with the participants. It was incorporated into their constructions of who they are, who they want to be and what they want to share. Becoming moveable meant that the participants became more aware of who they are in their bodies, and what their bodies can physically feel and accomplish. This leads to an embodied meaning making process which combines the body and the mind in an active process that is more layered (Haber & Weiss, 1999).

As one reads this dissertation and views the end-product it will be clear how poetic moments had a therapeutic, integrating and changing effect on these adolescents.

### ***Reflections***

With all the participants in the group playing the role of the researcher, the material and interpretation thereof became inevitably richer. In the end a partnership approach (Alderson, 2001) led to the development of original thoughts and new theories. The group of adolescents constantly acted as their own reflecting team like in narrative therapy (Andersen, 1992). On the other hand I observed, listened and reflected on how adolescents talk, what they talk about and how they share in the developmental process of creating stories and a movement drama, using a social theme and projecting their understanding of it.

The piece was performed in front of a live audience, which consisted of members from their peer group, friends, family, community members, and teachers. The performance also formed part of the representation of the research project in the form of a DVD. The performance ultimately reflects what we have explored and created. Once more conversational contexts would open up for those who share in it.

### ***Movement drama and improvisation***

*The process of improvisation and creation  
in all arts is an embodied ritual,  
which leads into not knowing, and ultimately  
into knowing.  
Snowber*

In the research project we improvised, moved and talked about different stories. Eventually the group created a movement drama of narratives they identified, shared and created in their language. At this point in the project

structure and understanding started to emerge and gave shape to our experiences. Our knowledge creation became an end in itself. “In knowing relationally, knowledge become part of us, in the same way as food nourishes us. It enriches us, and we become more whole because of it “(Park, 2001, p. 86). This process made the explorative journey one where the visible and invisible became intertwined.

From a social constructionist point of view, I see life as drama, and because the group created or constructed a movement story related to their meanings, I like to call it a movement drama. The key to creating a movement drama is that those taking part in it do not always know where the piece of art will take them. I believe the process and creation of the movement drama guided the group through multiple realities and experiences.

### ***Situating the chapter***

In this chapter my understanding of therapy was discussed. I positioned myself against the backdrop of social constructionism as a researcher. I introduced the cast of characters that formed part of the construction process and focussed on some aspects of group therapy. I shared the aims of the research project and highlighted research approaches and data collection methods that could enhance this type of study.

## Chapter 5

### ***Climax (Co-creation and construction of poetic moments)***

*Many of us live with the notion that our research writes us. That is research dictates writing, it tells us what to write once we have finished researching. Others, myself included, embrace writing (process) in their methodological and epistemological wrestlings with research.*

*They follow their writing to find out what it is they are researching.*

*G. Rasberry*

#### ***Introduction***

I am aware of the fact that it becomes increasingly difficult to remain fully objective while being part of the research project. That is why I give the reader conversations and thought processes that both led to and influenced the actual research project. I furthermore reflect on each session of group participation. I believe that in order to construct a research programme one needs to be creative. Ultimately the two processes go hand in hand and overlap: creativity assumes construction, and constructing is a creative act.

Within social constructionist research, the synthesis phase does not take place after the data has been collected; it rather embeds itself into different phases. The objective of this research project is to utilise the tools of movement, drama and the narrative in order to facilitate multi-level conversations in the creation/construction of a movement drama. This feeds back into the relational field of the participants' lives. According to Terre Blanche and Durrheim (2004, p. 10):

The realisation that knowledge-making is in itself a form of intervention has led to an increasing emphasis on planning and executing research in such a way as to make explicit provision for how the research is to fit into its real-world context.

Within the personally constructed research design, different processes and conversations are taking place simultaneously. With this in mind I attempt to reflect on these processes in a similar way without being alien to the reader. In the construction context all the processes become one.

### ***Co-creating a construction process filled with poetic moments***

In the research construction process, I aimed to create a community of shared knowledge. In doing so I had a conversation with a person that has a similar background to mine. The idea was to confirm some of my ideas in relation to this research project. By having this co-creative conversation, I could check whether the programme and my orientation were on the right track.

Later in this section the focus shifts to a programme outline and finally a reflection on the actual programme, the sessions, exercises and explorations.

### ***Conversation with an actor/psychologist on October 7, 2005***

Pieter Brand is a drama lecturer at the University of Pretoria as well as a clinical psychologist in private practice. During a conversation with a friend in July 2005 I expressed my need to speak to someone who studied drama and later psychology: Pieter's name was mentioned.

At the beginning of October I came to a point in the research process where I was stuck in content. I needed the proverbial push. Another friend also mentioned Pieter's name. It was clear we were meant to get in touch. We immediately set up an appointment.

Pieter and I received our training at the same drama department, but at different periods in time. He received training in clinical psychology, whereas I am training to be a counselling psychologist. Yet we related to each other in the intricate way drama influences the way we work as psychotherapists. Pieter shared his approach of teaching with me, relating to the role of the director, which can be 'played' by the psychotherapist and the client alike. This remark links to my perspective of the actor/observer role we all play at some point in therapy.

In addition we spoke about timing in the co-creation process. According to Pieter the creative therapist should "keep distance, but be present" (Pieter Brand, personal communication, October 7, 2005). In my mind the facilitator sometimes consciously has to take a back seat in group processes to let certain poetic moments come to the fore.

I worked with improvisation during the first part of the programme; I wanted to hear Pieter's views on improvisation in the therapeutic context. He exclaimed that he was able to see that the transformation starts taking place when he involves a third person part of a process. In this manner a group context is created. The engagement becomes more layered. "Insightful pauses leads to realisation" (Pieter Brand, personal communication, October 7, 2005). In my view this is a perfect description of the birth and life of a poetic moment. Poetic moments are created when processes become more contextualised, meaningful and layered.

Lastly we spoke about the fact that language gives a sense of empowerment. We shared our views on different nuances of language and the fact that they are not just embedded in the spoken word, seeing that in my research project there is no physical dialogue in the movement drama. There is only a sense of it in the background on the back-track recording. A dramatic movement image with a message and some specific recorded lines/words give the audience something to talk about. On the other hand, in the process of creating the image, the group had many verbal conversations. Pieter described the power of movement drama by comparing it to the powerful

'silent scream' of Brecht's *Mother Courage* (1966). This metaphor will make sense to the reader as they view the DVD of our movement drama. *The Silent Scream* could also become the title of our movement drama.

The conversation with Pieter gave me an integrated insight into what I am doing, what I am trying to describe and share through this research project. His insight, understanding and artistry filled me with a new-found energy, which pulled me through the last stretch of this project.

***The programme comes to life (sessions, exercises, explorations and reflections)***

*Words are a form of action,  
capable of influencing change.*

*Ingrid Benges*

In creating this creative therapeutic programme, I undoubtedly had some subjective expectations. In the planning phase of the programme, voices from literature gave me guidance on a possible programme outline.

I created the following diagram to reflect on what I expected to happen in the creative therapeutic process of transformative dialogue and poetic moments during group sessions. This inevitably became a circular process that could be observed in individual sessions but also as part of the complete programme. The table combines what I perceive as academically and practically possible in creative therapy from a social constructionist point of view. The table is also an outline of what I communicated to and facilitated in the group context, as we created poetic moments.

## Transformative programme outline



### ***The group comes to life***

In this part I will focus on the pre-planning stages and how I went about in choosing exercises and creating a workable group structure. The actual programme structure and my mindset as the creative therapist are explained and how the process will eventually lead to the creation of a movement drama.

Group therapy presupposes pre-planning. Being trained as an actress and therapist, I have basic knowledge in how to conduct a 90 minute session.

According to Jacobs, Harvill and Masson (1994), one usually makes use of warm-up activities, engaging activities, conversations and a closing experience. Although structure gives the research programme a framework, Yalom (1985) urges therapists to make a group as autonomous as possible so

that an effective group is a group that takes maximum responsibility for its own functioning. Doesn't an excessively active therapist who structures the group tightly create a dependent group? Surely if the leader does everything for the patients, they will do little for themselves? (p. 478)

Before the actual 10 week programme commenced, I shared the possible outcomes and process of the research project with the 10 participants in a pre-get-together. In the 10 week programme our focus was to become aware of our bodies and beings as part of a group process. I explained to the group how we would interact in new and creative ways, incorporating poetic moments and socially constructed meaning into the creation of a movement drama.

I verbally introduced them to the types of exercises we would focus on. These included Yoga, relaxation, improvisation, movement and drama exercises. I furthermore shared the basic transformative programme outline (as discussed earlier) with the group. The participants were also made aware of possible minor physical risks involved, and of the fact that data was going to be video recorded to be possibly used in the future for academic articles and further research. They were informed about confidentiality and their rights as research participants. Both the participants and their parents/guardians completed consent forms and received research letters.

Finally, I shared with the participants what I expected from the process and how we would want to create something tangible and performative in the end. I also made it clear that this was a creative process in an open space, where

anything and everything was welcome. I informed them that spontaneous moments (poetic moments) in creation lead to insight and would lead our process. I knew from previous experience that the programme usually becomes only a framework of what develops through improvisation in process.

The adolescents all attended the pre-get-together. They were free to ask questions and were introduced to the rest of the group. After our conversation they said they felt more informed and excited about what may be created during this process.

### **Exercises**

In this part of the chapter I focus on specific exercises used in the group sessions. I reflect on the explorations of the group and relate the created constructs to those discussed earlier in this dissertation in relation to social constructionism. The exercises used in the programme have been chosen specifically because they give participants the opportunity to explore their minds and bodies in new ways. The hope is that these exercises will create poetic moments. This links to my view on therapy as discussed in Chapter 4.

The chosen exercises inform the participants on different levels of experience and at the same time create a space for narratives to naturally unfold. Exercises used also relate to those used in Image theatre ('Mandala Center', 2004), which is designed to uncover certain truths about society, culture and the self.

According to Yalom (1985), structured exercise can be seen as accelerating devices as

- They attempt to speed up the group with warm-up procedures which bypass the hesitant, uneasy first steps of the group.

- They speed up interaction by assigning to interacting individuals tasks that circumvent ritualized, introductory social behaviour.
- They speed up individual work by techniques designed to help members move quickly to get in touch with suppressed emotions, with unknown parts of themselves and with their physical body (p. 447).

The exercises used in the research programme are briefly defined. The type of exercise is given in brackets. The exercises and *reflections (in italics)* are shared with the reader in the form of a dialogue in a drama script. This creates an action/reflection loop (Hoyt, M. F. 1998).

### **Session 1**

**Exercise:** Group storytelling on HIV/Aids theme (explorative exercise).  
The big group is divided into two smaller groups who each have to develop a story line with a beginning (exposition), middle (complication), a climax and an end around a specific theme. Every participant has a speaking part.

After we watched and listened to both stories (playing the part of both actor and observer), the combined groups had an interactive and reflective conversation.

**Reflection:** *The Department of Psychology at Pretoria University (Mamelodi campus) encourage its masters' students to have an Aids focus within their research projects. From this point of view it felt plausible to me as researcher to explore it as a theme with the adolescents.*

*Following a conversation surrounding the theme of HIV/Aids, it was clear that this specific group of adolescents felt overexposed (saturated) to the HIV/Aids theme, almost hostile. We explored the apprehensive feelings creatively in a story-telling exercise (session 1) and underlying feelings were brought*

*to the surface in the participants' choice of words and the storylines itself. As the facilitator I commented on these feelings and negative metaphors in our interactive and reflective conversation which lead to sexual themes related more to this group's context.*

*As facilitator, who has worked with HIV/Aids clients living in poor socio economic areas, I was shocked and amazed at the black humour and cynicism surrounding HIV/Aids in the adolescents' conversations and storytelling. Although these reactions were the opposite to what I would have liked to have heard or expected from a group of adolescents from my own cultural background, the reactions stimulated the thoughts and emotions of the group. As facilitator and therapist I stayed open and continually in process. This generated a spontaneous discussion on adolescent sexual behaviour. The group was less hostile and more truthful about what is going on in schools and how they handled it and will tackle certain scenarios if it had to cross their paths, HIV/Aids in particular.*

*After the 'almost' forceful exploration of a specific theme I decided to let it go. Being over-structured in a creative group setting can be suffocating. As the 'creative facilitator' I should have been on the lookout for power hierarchies and rigid teaching methods which can hamper the explorative journey. Narrative therapists strive to privilege clients' unique socio-cultural situations and own understandings about their concerns (Smith & Nylund, 1997). When therapists focus on socio-cultural aspects in therapy they also introduce power structures into the group context. Keeping this in mind the therapist should be aware of their own socio-cultural views and biases in reflecting on them in the group context.*

*There is always an unequal distribution of power in the therapeutic context, regardless of the steps that are taken by therapists to render the context of therapy more egalitarian... the potential for this unequal distribution of power to be disqualifying and objectifying of people is greater in team contexts... it is important that steps are taken to counter possible toxic effects of this power imbalance, to reduce the potential harm. One contribution to such steps is for the reflecting team members to assist each other to deconstruct their responses. (White, 1995, p. 187)*

*As a group we played the roles of actors and audience members or observers at the same time, making reflection a part of our way of interacting and talking. In this way we reflected on ourselves, each other and the process. It also implies that we touched on negative and positive aspects of who we are and what we create. This assumption requires therapists (and group members) to be comfortable with ambiguity and to embrace multiple realities.*

*After the HIV/Aids theme was opened up we proceeded with our sessions exploring ourselves as individuals and a creative group in a constructive environment. I hoped that this process would naturally and creatively bring us to current dominant themes in the lives of the group members. This made the theme-exploration process much more personal, truthful and current. It also made my job much more complicated, having to identify poetic moments in ambiguous processes, and then having to decide when or where to start creating and facilitating a*

*structured movement drama. The processes flow into each other, but as the facilitator I had to be aware that I had to use the group's construct within a 10 week period.*

*The major challenge that confronts us then, is not generating warm and cosy communities or conflict free societies. Rather, given the endemic character of conflict, how do we act in such a way that ever emerging antagonism does not yield aggression, oppression, or genocide - in effect, the end of meaning altogether.*

*(Gergen, McNamee & Barret, 2001, p. 697)*

## **Session 2**

**Exercise:** Yoga exercises on mood music (explorative and movement exercise). Yoga exercises are focused on the body and breathing and explore how they are intimately connected to the mind. Participants received basic background information on yoga as well as a copy of the specific exercise which they could study at home. During the Sun-Salutation warm-up exercise the participants stretched and breathed in certain positions which are aimed at instilling a feeling of balance and harmony.

**Reflection:** *This exercise helped the group to focus and become comfortable with themselves and the space. It usually takes a group a few sessions to get into basic yoga exercises. The adolescents found it difficult to breathe, move and concentrate simultaneously. The body and mind connects in a novel way.*

**Exercise:** Relaxation and imaginary trip (explorative exercise). During this exercise participants lie on their backs and focus on their breathing and relax the body and tense up muscles. I

took the group on an imaginary trip where they ‘became’ little aeroplanes that fly higher and higher over the world and finally into space. As the aeroplanes return to the room the participants were relaxed and rejuvenated. After the imaginary excursions the participants shared their trips with the rest of the group.

*Reflection: Total relaxation makes the adolescents aware of their bodies, tension and later their special thoughts and images. In sharing them, we were aware of ourselves as individuals but also the fact that we were becoming part of a new group and process. As the group generated information in sharing their individual ‘trips’ with each other, I became aware of different dynamics, ways of communication and of relevant themes. I recorded the themes in a movement drama diary. This was useful information to be used later in the process to assist the group.*

**Exercise:** Creative advertisement exercise on laughter theme (drama exercise). Two groups were expected to create an advertisement that sells ‘Laughter’ as a product. During the creative and improvisational activity the participants were expected to listen to each other, work together and take group ideas and utilise it into something presentable: an advert.

The adverts were video recorded and form part of Appendix 3

*Reflection: Conflict and power always play a part in these processes. Incorporating it as creative components, shifted the group’s focus, and opened the conversation space and developmental process. The theme of laughter brought everyone in contact with different emotions without it being verbalised as such. It also provides fun.*

### **Session 3**

Exercise: Yoga exercises (explorative and movement exercise).  
See previous explanation on Yoga exercises.

*Reflection: The exercise helped the group to focus and create harmony/synthesis in silence. The group started to internalise the movement, exploring new possibilities and making it part of their bodies as they became more acquainted with the different positions.*

Exercise: Fake relaxation exercise on 'Laughter' CD (explorative and drama exercise). The participants lie on their backs and start focusing on breathing and relaxing the tension in their bodies as they focus on the sounds around them. The creative therapist suddenly plays a CD with different people laughing. The participants had to listen to the CD for approximately three minutes before they were allowed to sit up straight.

The participants then had a great giggle and conversed about what different laughs sound like and what their own laughing actually sounded like.

*Reflection: Building on the theme of the previous session, the group physically became aware of the effects of laughter and happiness. The conversation provided an opportunity for experiential learning.*

Exercise: Listening exercise (explorative exercise). Pairs sit back to back. One participant instructs another to draw a cross on a piece of paper, without mentioning the symbol's name. Afterwards the participants shared their drawings with each other and the rest of the group.

The participants had a conversation about listening skills and group interaction.

*Reflection: We were exploring human being in all its forms, looking past the basic communication tool (talk) and also exploring the rest of our beings (senses and the body). In doing so we were starting to create and active language related to relational knowledge (Barrager-Dunne, 1997).*

**Exercise:** Columbian Hypnosis – Boal (explorative and movement exercise). Two participants (a pair) stand close together with their faces turned towards each other. One participant's hand is close to the partner's face (approximately 2 cm). He or she moves the hand slowly around in front of the partner's face. The other participant must remain the same distance from the hand and slowly follow the movements of the hand with the entire body. The hand can even lead the 'following' participant around a room. The partners change after five minutes.

*Reflection: Suddenly intimacy, not called by its name, subtly forced us to focus on the unnoticed. We also became aware of insecurities, emotions, beauty and truly focusing on the here and now. In a way we were experiencing a new language. This exercise also positively affected the group's cohesiveness. The participants became more accepting of one another, supportive and ... inclined to form meaningful relationships in the group" (Yalom, 1985, p. 69).*

**Exercise:** Mood music/Drawings/Feelings (explorative exercise). The participants sit in a circle and draw feelings and images on paper, while listening to different types of mood music, e.g. Art of Noise, Lori Anderson, Brian Eno, David Bowie and Antonio Vivaldi. They move along the circle as the music stops and changes. In the

end different pictures with meaningful messages had been created by all.

The participants discussed the drawings and shared possible interpretations and meanings connected to it.

*Reflection: We took the Columbian Hypnosis one step further and utilised music to assist us in getting to know ourselves and each other better. The drawings were also concrete evidence of the process we just explored. As the facilitator I used these conversations to disclose here-and-now feelings. I shared my own pleasure, puzzlement, irritation and enlightenment with the group (Yalom, 1985).*

**Exercise:** Experimental movement exercise (drama and movement exercise). Based on the drawings from the previous exercise, two separate groups have to verbally create/improvise a story with a climax and a message.

The improvised stories were video recorded.

*Reflection: The improvised stories were a co-created product from different points of views which made sense to us as a group. We became aware of different powers, forces, talents and ways of thinking and acting/performing. Participants became well acquainted with their bodies.*

**Exercise:** In the next week participants had to record their dreams on paper (explorative exercise). We had a general conversation surrounding dreams and its possible meanings and messages.

*Reflection: This exercise helped the individual to become aware of themselves in a private space and moment. It also increased personal focus.*

#### **Session 4**

Exercise: Yoga exercises on relaxing music (explorative and movement exercise). See previous explanation on Yoga exercises.

*Reflection: The Yoga exercises became our salute to say we are together, focused and open to explore whatever will be created in this time and space with our bodies and minds.*

Exercise: Share favourites (explorative exercise). During this conversational exercise the group members share things like their favourite sport (watching/participating), song, time of day, movie or person.

Participants had a general discussion surrounding their favourite things.

*Reflection: The group shared daily activities and ways of life. In doing so they also shared cultural beliefs and personal interests. In addition it is an informative and unstructured way of interviewing the group members. It provided me with useful information.*

Exercise: Fake relaxation exercise on Laughter CD (explorative and drama exercise). Participants explore different bodily reactions in their own bodies to the laughter they hear. We shared what we felt and where exactly in the body it was experienced. We related these bodily experiences to how we see our own bodies and how we neglect our bodies' communicative attributes.

Smile Game (explorative and drama exercise). The group sits in a circle. One person is to ask another: "Darling, if you love me, smile", the respondent is to reply three times without smiling "Darling, I love you, but I can't smile". The questioner can sit on the person's lap, play with hair, or any other manner of physical movement (as long as it is appropriate for the space) to cause

the other person to smile. If the person does not smile the questioner has to ask another person in the group until someone does eventually smile. Both the questioner and the respondent must look each other in the eye whilst talking constantly.

Reflection: *Getting adolescents to share emotions is sometimes very difficult and time consuming. Using a different entry point into an emotions-conversation is necessary. I used 'laughter' as a metaphor. This specific exercise made participants aware of their social skills, ways of interacting, personal space and their bodies.*

*They connected with each other on a psychological and physical level, without really knowing it. The exercise created an uncomfortable yet explorable context, under the safety net of a game.*

Exercise: Columbian hypnosis on mood music (explorative and movement exercise). See previous explanation of Columbian Hypnosis.

Participants had a general discussion. See Appendix 2.

Reflection: *We needed to focus on what just happened (on the unnoticed), and reconnect with what we really explored and created.*

Exercise: Improvisational movement exercise (drama and movement exercise). Two groups have to create a movement piece using their bodies to communicate the emotions "love and hate". They have to incorporate the basic movement principles experienced in the Columbian hypnosis. The same mood music is used as a creative input/backdrop to which to perform the movement pieces.

Participants had a general discussion about the embodiment of emotions and the storylines that underscore it. In this way we were not only focusing on individual embodiment metaphors but also related our experiences with social stories that came to mind when we created a movement story.

*Reflection: Taking the 'emotions' a step further and shifting the focus. The group had to make use of their own knowledge base and languages, combined with the feelings and thoughts experienced in the previous two exercises, to create something meaningful. They started to recognise inner rhythms and experiencing the co-creation process.*

**Exercise:** Dream chat (explorative exercise). We talked about the dreams some of the participants had the past week and were willing to share with the group.

*Reflection: It became clear that adolescents love talking about their dreams. It provided fun and also created a sharing space and the opportunity to identify social and individual metaphors.*

## **Session 5**

**Exercise:** Basic relaxation (drama and explorative exercise). During this exercise participants start by executing basic stretching movements prescribed by the creative therapist, to make the body receptive to the imaginary trip. After the stretching they lie down on their backs and focus on breathing and relaxing. The creative therapist then facilitates an imaginary trip, similar to the one described in session 2.

*Reflection: Working with the body and mind presupposes that we should get them 'in tune' when we started our sessions. The stretching helped the participants to relax, focus and to become aware of their bodies. The breathing slowed us 'down' in terms of*

*thinking and activity. The guided imagery trip gave each participant the freedom to become aware of where they wanted to be and where they were going when they could really connect with themselves in mind and body.*

Exercise: General conversation about life (drama and explorative exercise). The participants shared stories and happenings from their daily lives. I triggered the conversation by asking the group to reflect on the following question:  
What was the highlight and low point of your week? See Appendix 2.

*Reflection: The basic relaxation exercise opened up the body and the mind for conversation and experiential learning. We were now focused on/in the 'here and now'. One of the aims of this research project is to explore personal and social issues in group therapy with adolescents.*

*In this exercise participants shared stories of their lives, what happened in the past week in the community, school and family. We were creating a community of discovery just by talking, reflecting and listening.*

Exercise: Music/movement game (movement and explorative exercise). The creative therapist plays different styles of music. The group walks in circle while the music leads them into movement based on feelings experienced. They may interpret it individually but sometimes the group start moving in a naturally coordinated way. When the music stops, they have to touch something or form a group consisting of a specific number of people. The leader shouts out the required number of people. A process of elimination takes place.

*Reflection: One of the main foci of this project was to make the participants more aware of their bodies, its capabilities and its way of thinking and talking, if it is allowed to do so. In this exercise the adolescents became aware of their bodies in a very natural and fun way. The different pieces of music also made the group aware of different styles of communicating and different ways feelings can be portrayed. In freely interpreting the music with their bodies the group started to successfully embody poetic moments.*

**Exercise:** Bodies in big spaces (movement exercise). The participants move to a big space outside. The focus is on body awareness. Participants are to write and dance their names in the air. They then turn to a partner and write a word in the air that the partner has to decipher.

*Reflection: If we can be more aware of our bodies, we can be aware of whom we are in different contexts. Becoming aware of what your body is capable of doing in an unobtrusive manner helped the participants to feel safe enough to explore their own physicality. Dancing your own name, gives your body a kind of identity, and links it to your mind and who you are. The body is not simply a vessel.*

**Exercise:** Parachute game (explorative and movement exercise). The participants stand in a square shape and hold on to a big cloth (parachute size) with a ball lying on top in the middle. They have to throw the ball in the air and catch it together as they move around. The focus is on ball handling and body awareness. Chanting is introduced by the creative therapist and from thereon it spontaneously happens when the ball goes into the air.

*Reflection: Balance is one of the main components in body work and body awareness. When we played this game participants had to be aware of their own balance, and also on creating balance and trust in the group. The underlying principle was to create balance between the body and the mind, as well as between the group and the individual. The chanting element bounded the group to the action.*

**Exercise:** A general discussion on group work elements and co-constructive conversations is lead by the creative therapist who elicits and builds the conversation by asking certain questions and reflecting on group processes (drama exercise). Basically the group sits in a circle and is asked to reflect on what happened, how it happened and how it made the members feel.

*Reflection: The way we spoke to each other had an effect on meaning and affirmations. Gergen, McNamee and Barret (2001) call this 'semiotic shading'. Irritation, anger, pain and tension can be heard and are interpreted according to what they mean to the listener. In the dramatic context it becomes avenues of emotions that we can explore as active 'actor' participants (Cecchin, 1992) with our bodies, senses and minds. Conversing about our group exercises created an action/reflection loop (Hoyt, M.F. 1998). This process enhanced the possibilities of making meaning part of our bodies and minds.*

## **Session 6**

**Exercise:** Columbian hypnosis (explorative and movement exercise). See previous explanation of Columbian Hypnosis. The exercise is executed to relaxing music with new partners. This time with their eyes closed.

*Reflection: We used this exercise to refocus our inner and outer realities on the 'here and now'. It created a context where we firstly*

*connected on a physical level, then on spiritual level and lastly we shared the experience verbally. Changing partners and closing our eyes meant new bodily experiences and thoughts ran through the system. It opened us up to more experiences.*

**Exercise:** Name game (drama exercise). The group sits in a circle and each participant chooses and announces a vegetable name. The participants memorise all the names and then have to call each other in a chanting manner at a great speed by their vegetable names. The focus is on group ritual, concentration, enhancing memory and building self-confidence.

*Reflection: Having to rely on memory and the mind in the company of others can be very stressful for the adolescent. In this way we explored those feelings and definitions in a fun way. Facing obstacles and finding that we are only human and can deal with it - also experiencing that people are different and that it is acceptable to be different.*

**Exercise:** Emotions and facial expressions (drama exercise). Different emotive words are given to the group by the creative therapist and they have to individually give facial expressions accordingly, in as many different ways as possible.

*Reflection: To watch others faces as they explore emotions can be very funny but also humbling. We started by sharing a new language: a body language that we explored for performing purposes but which also may be of great use in everyday life.*

**Exercise:** Mime – hand movements (drama exercise). Basic daily activities, like writing a letter and putting it in an envelope, are explored in detail. Participants verbally analyse and break the various movements into different units. The movements are then executed very slowly by the group.

*Reflection: This exercise sounded so simple and the adolescents thought it would be boring. But as we started to execute small, seemingly non-significant movements we became aware of how finely tuned our bodies are, and the effect our mind can have on it when we are aware of it (and vice versa). Experiential learning was taking place.*

**Exercise:** Improvisation exercise (drama exercise). Two groups have to pull three cards from a list compiled by the creative therapist, which contains names of people, places and objects. The group then has to use the three cards as stimuli for an improvisational scene.

The choices:

Place – Mars, beach, school

Person – policeman, bodybuilder, bank teller

Object – pen, feather, handkerchief

*Reflection: This exercise is/was a metaphor for the daily activities we take/took part in. No matter where you are, there is usually a context, things, people and something happening. We were creating stories from life, where acceptance and understanding always plays a role. The adolescents were also exposed to many deconstructions (White, 1995), discussions and analysis surrounding different ideas, stories and personalities.*

*This group became aware of different habits and ways of communicating. Undoubtedly this led to heated debates. In this process the group was creating a sense of belonging and a language of interaction through focusing on a mutual task.*

*During the creative process group cohesiveness led to self-disclosure, risk-taking and the constructive expression of conflict*

*in the group (Yalom, 1985). The creative process became a metaphor for successful therapy.*

*Dramatic improvisation was used in the therapeutic context to promote self-expression. The voice, text and movement brought out aspects of character, personality, emotion and diversity of self-image which facilitated self-understanding. "The drama development of children, the movement through embodiment, projection, roles, gives a framework for observing their play within which their struggles, attachments and core stories are enacted" (Jennings, 1998, p. 37).*

### **Session 7**

**Exercise:** Yoga (exploration and movement exercise). See previous explanation on Yoga exercises.

**Reflection:** *Body and mind focusing were becoming second nature to some of the participants.*

**Exercise:** Sharing general themes (exploration exercise). Focusing on general issues, peer group themes and community life – participants explore different views on cultural and social themes in a conversation stimulated by the creative therapist, who shares real-life stories and social observations.

**Reflection:** *We had a general discussion about themes embedded in their improvisational work and themes embedded in our daily lives. The group was open to share their views and doing so in their own 'language' (swearing and slang words included).*

**Exercise:** Unknot game (movement exercise). The group stands in a circle with two participants not holding hands. These two individuals move around, over and under the group to create knots and then take hands. The group then has to unknot while

holding hands. No talking or instructing is permitted, simply body talk.

*Reflection: The introduction of a quiet game after a general sharing activity facilitated the internalisation of constructs that were verbalised. The group also became aware of the importance of their bodies and how their bodies can speak a language of their own.*

**Exercise:** Mime – hand movements with only one arm (movement exercise). Similar to previous hand-mime exercise, but now participants are only permitted to use one hand.

*Reflection: By not being able to use both arms, participants became aware of the importance of some parts of the body. On another level they experienced what it was like to deal with a physical inability or disability.*

*We spontaneously shared stories of people we know who copes with physical inabilities or disabilities. The possibilities of exploring such a theme in future naturally came to mind.*

**Exercise:** Sports game (movement exercise). The participants mime a cricket game in large space where they are instructed by the creative therapist to change roles constantly. Detailed movements are then combined with pauses where everyone has to freeze and hold it for 30 seconds. The focus is on body awareness.

*Reflection: This exercise enhanced body awareness and a sense of performance, seeing that stage work implies bigger gestures and facial expressions. The ‘pausing’ effect not only made us aware of our bodies and its capabilities but lent itself to developing stagecraft.*

**Exercise:** Sticky paper game (drama and movement exercise). The participants divide into two smaller groups. Group members in each group have to stand as close as possible together. The members' body parts (no arms or hands) have to hold a piece of paper in tact (not falling to the ground) as they start to move around.

**Reflection:** *As we moved closer to start developing a specific dramatic movement piece it was important that the group felt comfortable with each others' bodies as they would have to 'move' and create together. This exercise created a closeness that would otherwise be uncomfortable for some participants. Exploring the intimate functioning of the body this way, seeing that adolescents generally have body issues and may easily feel embarrassed, we created a fun, explorative environment.*

**Exercise:** Identifying a main theme (explorative exercise). After group cohesion was established and beliefs and ideas were contextualised, a poetic shift took place in the group. Now was the time to introduce possible themes that had been observed and identified by me over the past few weeks. The participants and I shared a conversation on "Women's place/role in the world".

**Reflection:** *After all our exploration and sharing it was time to pinpoint a relevant theme that we wanted to run with in terms of a performance. "When the life of a group has begun to get established and the patterns of this have become apparent, the therapist has the opportunity to guide the group depending on its needs at that exact time..." (Couroucli-Robertson, 1996).*

*The themes of abuse, stress and female oppression were evident in many of the creative works the group produced in process. As most of the group consisted of girls, it can be*

*argued that women issues were more prevalent in their creative processes. These themes were observable in the participants' stories, improvisations and informal conversations. After we explored ourselves as being part of embodied speech acts and social realities over a period of seven weeks, I shared some of the main themes that naturally developed or 'popped' up over the past weeks with the group. The group's responses were less hostile and closed than with the HIV/Aids explorations and everyone immediately gave their views surrounding such a theme.*

*The group was at a point where they were not scared or apprehensive to explore, indicating emotional and bodily growth in each and every one of them. The subtle change was clear to see, hear and experience within the group (poetic moments). Therapeutically they have shared dominant stories, lurked into unknown alternative stories (White, 1996) and were now ready for a creative and empowering journey.*

*A question in group processes is what resources a group have to their disposal in tackling challenges. Each group has its own unique resources and from a social constructionist point of view 'dialogue' seems to be a good option to start with. From a creative and expressive point of view, movement and drama seem to be extra options.*

*In our conversations surrounding women's issues we explored a 'different kind of conversation' where the participants were asked to speak as unique individuals, expressing their own ideas, rather than as a representative of adolescent thoughts or morals. They were voicing their own ideas, creating unique outcomes (White, 1993) and taking ownership of the process. The participants were asked to respond to these questions:*

1. *What do you know about this issue?*
2. *What is your personal experience with this issue?*
3. *Do you experience any uncertainty, concerns, mixed feelings or grey areas concerning the issue?*

*In wanting to create poetic moments I had to ask myself, what hurdles stand in the way of transformative dialogue. According to Gergen, McNamee and Barret (2001), our traditional way of communicating, presuming that there are single truths, and our cultural background keep us morally accountable for our actions or dialogues. In this way alienation takes place. In Western tradition, hostility is a normal response and people hold each other responsible.*

*It is in this context that we may start appreciating the process of jointly constructing meaning and all being responsible for it - 'relational responsibility'.*

*The participants were asked to respond to the following patterns of relating:*

1. *Who do you sound like?*
2. *Whose belief system do you apply?*
3. *Where do abused women fit in, related to gender differences?*
4. *What effect does women abuse have on communities and families?*

*Self-expression played a pivotal part in transformative dialogues. Telling stories of a personal nature gave a fuller understanding of what message a participant wanted to share. "Stories can invite fuller audience engagement than abstract ideas... Personal stories generate acceptance and as opposed to resistance" (Gergen, McNamee and Barret, 2001, p.702).*

*Personal stories naturally opened the dialogue space up for more stories because people can share lived experiences with more feeling and insight. This concept relates to Anderson and Goolishian's (1988) hermeneutic approach where familiar conversations are extended so that limited understandings preventing successful coordination with others can be dissolved. Their goal is to create a safe environment where a free flow of previously unsaid stories and new realisations can occur. We created a safe environment by means of creative group therapy and were at a point where we wanted to perform some of our unsaid stories and new realisations. By creating our own story and performance we were affirming each other's voices.*

*The affirmations of another's story give meaning to a relationship. "To affirm is to grant worth, to honour the validity of another's subjectivity" (Gergen, McNamee and Barret, 2001, p.703). To embrace different ideas, always stay curious and open to oppositional perspectives becomes part of the transformative or constructionist dialogues within our group process. This is how poetic moments are/were created.*

*As a group we were in the process of creating a movement drama that explored different ideas and views on women abuse. The process of constructing a story lent itself to the process of constructionist conversations. The participants were now in a space where they needed to listen, appreciate and incorporate different views and stories not only as a group but also as individuals, to be able to present an end product - a mutual interest. Transformation therefore took place when affirmations moved into agreement and ultimately meaning. Dialogue inevitably became a form of dancing/movement/drama.*

*At this point in time I could experience the transition from 'me' to 'us' in the group. This was a poetic moment where real growth*

*and sustainable construction were observable. Organising individual stories was a valuable resource. To place these resources in group-motion sowed the seeds for alternative visions of the future (Gergen, McNamee and Barret, 2001). New realities and meanings were created. The group constructed a new unit in which they existed together.*

*Up to this point in the research process the context of our explorations had prepared the adolescents' voices to be heard. This conversation included the following questions: How do you see women in society? What 'language' do these women speak? I share the adolescents' responses verbatim to give the reader a sense of what they were thinking and feeling at this stage in the process. These questions were asked and answered verbally in session 7. I recorded their responses in a movement drama diary.*

Group responses on women in society:

"Boys mess girls around."

"Girls get more attached."

"Men don't listen to women's opinions."

"Women are victimised."

Movie examples: Erin Brokovich,

Mona Lisa's smile

"When a woman does not do what a man wants, he punishes her."

"Men are always right, women are always wrong."

"Women are more defenceless than men. That's why they get raped and abused."

"Sexual harassment and manipulation take place all the time."

"Men dominate and control women."

Group giving responses/one liners to the question: what 'language' these women speak:

“Why me?” / “Hoekom ek?”

“Fear and anxiety strangle me.” / “Vrees en benoudheid verwurg my.”

“I deserve more.” / “Ek verdien beter.”

“Pain is endless.” / “Pyn is eindeloos.”

“It was a dark night outside.” / “Dit was ‘n donker nag buite.”

“All that I wanted was love.” / “Al wat ek wou gehad het was liefde.”

“Love me or leave.” / “Wees lief vir my, of loop.”

*Reflection: The participants’ voices were heard. They were at a point in the creative process where they were ready to share their personal meanings and point of views without feeling out of touch with who they are and where they belong. The embodied journey and insightful poetic moments had brought them to this place of discovery. I decided to share the English and Afrikaans one-liners, seeing that the Afrikaans versions were used in the actual recording of the back-track.*

## **Session 8**

**Exercise:** Back-track recording (drama and explorative exercise). The group visited a professional recording studio to record their voices expressing the one-liners and to combine it with emotive pieces of music.

*Reflection: I organised a professional recording studio to create an original back-track for our dramatic movement piece. In this way the explorative process and creative journey became more tailor-made and personally expressive. The participants looked forward to being exposed to a professional setting and the sound engineer enjoyed going on a creative journey with us. We gave him a brief background on what we envisaged and I supplied him with different pieces of music which I played to the adolescents beforehand. Listening to and interacting with*

*different pieces of music and deciding what I think would work for our movement drama construction also became a personal journey for me as facilitator. I felt I was part of this process on a level that surpasses that of the classical psychotherapist. I developed, changed and adapted to what the group created and what the process asked of us. By developing a language of sharing and creating over the past seven weeks, I had become aware of new understandings which led me into a co-created 'knowing' stance.*

*In studio we recorded the participants' one-liners, as documented in session 8. This stimulated reflective conversations and gave the adolescents' confidence and an amount of social power by saying what they think, feel and mean, and by listening back to it. The music-making and technological process gave a new kind of structure to my view of our movement drama and where it could possibly take us.*

*As the process continued the participants had to leave and I had to take over as group representative. It became a powerful personal journey of creation. It called for letting go of typical truths and taking a new creation with its own language to the frontier (stage), taking a chance and believing in the group and their powers. The end product is a symbol of what we have created and explored over the past two months and it gave us a glimpse of what we may create in the end.*

*A week later I played the end product to the group and they were amazed and proud at the same time. The musical back-track showed how powerful creative art, therapeutic elements, emotions and social commentary can be used together to explore and share who we are and where we are going and chose to go.*

## **Session 9**

**Exercise:** Workshopping – movement drama (drama, movement and explorative exercise). The participants now became part of constructing a concrete movement drama that had to be performable in front of an audience.

**Reflection:** *As a group facilitator I can easily control the creative process and supply the group with ideas pertaining on ideas surrounding women abuse that they shared in the previous sessions. Yet I refrained to place myself in that position. It limits the creative possibilities and cultural knowledge of the group. I shared these views with the group and asked them how they could possibly give inputs. We decided to divide them into two groups. Each group were asked to tell a mime story on their view of women abuse.*

*In this manner the group started utilising some of our previous exercises into two stories. After presenting the mimes and having a conversation about the final construction of a performing piece it was decided to present both stories as both had powerful messages to share with an audience. The decision also made all the participants and their ideas feel included. Here my dramatic training skills were helpful in a technical sense.*

*From here onwards we started to workshop around the theme and the music. I usually played the music and asked participants to improvise on the spot. In this way I gathered visual information that can be used constructively in the movement drama. I also gave everyone a chance to share their embodied language and make it an integral part of our process.*

## **Session 10**

**Exercise:** Rehearsing - movement drama (drama, movement and explorative exercise). The participants had to rehearse the created movement drama to reach the standards of a performance piece. This was a gruelling activity that tested their physical, mental and constructive interacting capabilities.

**Reflection:** *As we rehearsed our workshopped product, the movements and basic storylines, ideas and constructs developed all the time. Up to a point in the rehearsal process I attempted to incorporate as much as possible. The process was constantly opening to new ideas and interpretations. This ensured that the group process was kept a creative and therapeutic endeavour.*

*The adolescents' commitment toward the group was also evident during this period in the programme. Group cohesion (Yalom, 1985) let the participants stay focussed and in tune with the rest of a group. Rehearsals were sometimes tiring and complicated, yet we could handle these factors because we had worked through so many of them earlier in the process. In rehearsals poetic moments still emerged when participants changed moves and interpretations. Each time this gave us the opportunity to listen, learn and create. In communicating a new language we connected our bodies and minds in a new and more honest way. We all have voices that may be heard, we are all embodied parts of a performance and a social message. At the end we all belonged to this group and its changing activities.*

## **Movement and drama DVD**

At this point in the dissertation I want to ask the reader to watch the movement drama DVD as it will open up conversations that will be explored in the following chapter. It relates to the concept of Invisible theatre, where

issue orientated scenes performed in public settings stimulate a dialogue involving the public ('Mandala Center', 2004).

Being in the physical space (theatre) as an audience member seems to give the performance a much more powerful atmosphere and message. I thus considered it to be a good idea to share the basic story outline of the movement drama with the reader. In this way I am trying to make the movement drama more accessible to the reader, hoping that the reader may experience something of what our audiences did.

In watching the movement drama, I believe the observer/audience member get a sense of the tension that exists between the body and mind, and the language that they attempt to speak separately (especially in scenes 1 and 2). The women on stage are seeking a voice in a physical world. The audience becomes part of the process and the ambiguity that is taking place on stage. As the movement drama develops, these body/mind concepts become more integrated as we focus on the physical element of the mind in scene 3. In the end the title of the movement drama supports the integrating language that is shared with the audience.

### ***The Silent Scream***

#### ***Scene 1***

Participants create an embodied statue representing abused women. The audience shares a sense of their disbelief and pain, listening to their unique voices and becoming part of their disembodied movements. A male figure demanding 'love' ends up off the scene - establishing a negative power that controls these figures that may be called women.

#### ***Scene 2***

In the next scene the participants explore two stories in a mime fashion. One scene shows a woman whose drink gets spiked at a party, whereafter she is raped and falls pregnant. She eventually goes for an abortion and

commits suicide. The other scene is about a young girl that happily falls in love, becomes pregnant, is abused by her spouse and eventually kills him. The power of the two messages is shared with the audience in a stylistic fashion. The two scenes are performed at the same time and visually they give the audience insight into similar yet different forms of women abuse.

### **Scene 3**

In this scene the participants focus on emotions and feelings and share them with the audience in a metaphorical fashion using their bodies as messengers (body language). The message becomes physically powerful for those taking part and watching. In the end we share the message of hope by the creation of new embodied statues of empowered women.

*The need to protect the integrity of our bodies  
is part of a struggle for equality and changing  
unequal power relations.*

*Nomboniso Gasa*

### **Situating the chapter**

In this chapter the actual programme and active construction processes were shared with the reader. I shared an insightful conversation with an actor/psychologist and reflected on views we share. A transformative programme outline was presented and sessions as well as specific exercises were described. I reflected on the programme and how I observed change taking place through the creation of poetic moments.

In bringing the programme to life, I am not only referring to the group taking physically part in it, but I also refer to how I hope this chapter brought it to life for the reader.

It is clear that in a group process the programme framework is sometimes adapted and improvised to suit the poetic moments that are created. The content of the sessions indicated how we were able to arrive at poetic moments and what the adolescents made of these insightful creations and conversations.

At this stage in the process it is also evident that the process of therapy directly relates to the creative process in establishing a movement drama. It can also be compared to the actual movement drama *The Silent Scream* as shown in the DVD. In the first scene we are making a statement that needs to be explored. In scene two we share facts and different views on a topic. In the final and third scene these constructs become embodied understandings which finally lead to insight and change – the ultimate poetic moment.

The DVD also makes the adolescents' process more clear. Our movement drama becomes an event to be proud of. By sharing it with an audience we affirm what we learnt and created. The message makes us part of society and our views and feeling become tangible.

## Chapter 6

### Curtain call reflections (Final thoughts)

*... it is rather of the essence of investigation that... we want to understand something that is already in plain view. For this is what we seem in some sense not to understand.*

*L. Wittgenstein*

#### **Introduction**

The aim of this chapter is to share with readers what I believe we have created and established in the therapeutic process of creating a movement drama. I like to encourage psychotherapists to embrace some of the learning experiences contained in this research project. I believe that narrative drama therapy has only started to be used constructively in therapy in South Africa.

#### **Creating and constructing harmony**

During our explorative process we created a movement drama with a social theme; we did not consciously focus on specific personal problems. In doing so we did not try to solve problems but rather created “stories that did not support or sustain problems” (Freedman & Combs, 1996, p.16). “Drama and narrative together can open and expand therapeutic space and possibilities for alternative stories, self-descriptions, and change” (Barragar-Dunne, 1997, p. 72). Within the creative conversational space the participants explore ideas surrounding personal problems as well as ideas surrounding the creation of a movement drama without defining it as such. An ongoing action/reflection loop (Hoyt, M. F. 1998) is created throughout the process and is repeated continually.

As part of the process the group was exposed to spontaneous poetic moments of change. These moments were observed by me as researcher, but also by the group. Our interaction and talking became much more

layered, integrated and focussed during the sessions, up to a point where we were able to construct an embodied language and a meaningful movement drama. These poetic learning activities can be compared to experiential learning, where group members learn by studying the interactional network in which they themselves play a part. They learn by being confronted with on-the-spot observations of their own behaviour and its effects on others; they may learn about interpersonal styles, the responses of others to them, and about group behaviour in general (Yalom, 1985). Poetic moments constructed an experiential therapeutic relationship in a group therapy context.

### ***What I learnt***

*Psychology is an investment  
in new thinking.  
Brian Eno*

In the beginning of this dissertation I made it clear to the reader that from a social constructionist point of view I play an active part in the meaning-making process. My transformation as a therapist is part of the constructs established in this research process. Therefore I share an important and insightful conversation I had with actors that relates directly to how therapeutic and creative processes are similar. I also self-reflect on what I have discovered about myself as a therapist.

### ***Therapeutic and creative processes***

As an artist I played the role of a director during the first part of 2005 for a play that was performed at an arts festival in South Africa. The play in question was a dramatic life story about a brother and sister. As rehearsals kicked off I immediately sensed that when I was watching the actors, it was as if I was sitting in a therapy room listening to a client. When giving notes to the actors I made use of transformative dialogue, incorporated poetic moments (Deissler, 1996), and naturally incorporated their voices and opinions into the creative process.

I knew something was different to how I would have directed a play five years ago. For some reason the cast never went through the typical rehearsal phases of extreme contentment and hysteria (experienced as part of my drama training and many theatrical endeavours). It was a journey that changed my life! I decided to make a creative conversation/interview I had with the actors after the run of the play, part of this dissertation. It reflects some of my basic beliefs about therapeutic processes, drama and constructing poetic moments. The conversation/interview thickens the aspects reflected on and explored in this dissertation.

The conversations with the actors about their process, explain some of the concepts that form part of the creative process in the social constructionist research. The conversation and the actors' co-constructions support what I have learnt from this research project and how others might interpret and understand this process.

Constructionist researchers believe that whatever meanings are created between a facilitator and participants/conversational partners in an interview, are treated as co-constructions (Terre-Blanche & Durheim, 2004). "In an approach that favours understanding above knowledge, conversation as a method of constructing understanding seems to be appropriate" (Viljoen, 2004, p. 87).

### **Conversation with actors about process, July 10, 2005**

The play I directed was *Hello and Goodbye* by South African playwright Athol Fugard. It was performed at the Grahamstown Arts Festival in July 2005. The cast consisted of two professional actors. After our run at the festival I had the following conversation with the actors. Our conversation is in *italics*.

*E: Are directing and therapy maybe the same? How did you find the process of working with me as a director?*

I never direct or 'apply' therapy in a specific structured way. The form

and quality of my questions are not standardised. Hoffmann (1992) refers to this way of creating therapy as the “therapists’ narrative”. Many colleagues with artistic and therapeutic backgrounds have remarked how I sound very human in professional contexts, raising the tone and intensity of my voice, working with pausing and sounds, as well as facial expressions. According to Wilder, (1997) I am ‘being analog’. I also believe this embodied approach opens the therapeutic conversation up to new definitions, languages, poetic moments and unique ways of searching.

“Once people subscribe to a given discourse...they promote certain definitions about which persons or what topics are most important or have legitimacy. However, they themselves are not always aware of these embedded definitions” (Hoffman, 1992, p. 14).

*S: Very gentle process. Chaotic in my head in the beginning... Now that I look at it... it's the smoothest directing process I ever had. I had no anxiety attacks; I never had a feeling of 'shit, I'm f-ing this up'. You let us in beautifully. It was left up to our own devices and then you led us from there and moulded us. I never worked like that before. It made me realise we do not have to be guided every single step.*

*E: For me it was like... you are professional actors...and...*

*T: Yes, especially in the beginning. I was missing the typical process. Like try it this way, try it that way. More extremes. In retrospect it did make sense.*

Postmodern therapists/directors do not believe in essences. Knowledge, which is socially arrived at, changes itself in each moment of interaction. Therefore the therapist will expect new and hopefully more useful narratives to surface during the conversation (Hoffmann, 1992). Hope and trust become major therapeutic tools for the postmodern therapist. This hope is not embedded in the therapists’ make-up or knowledge but in the process.

*S: It was the right way to deal with us and this play. I think it was a gradual procession. Also because it was split up over such a long period of time. Right at the end I felt now we are catching it. The journey was divine but we needed something. It was pulled together in the last three days and you timed it perfectly. We needed that. It was divine.*

*T: The vibe that one gets from you is 'very calm, safe...' In control... Because we acted in a serious play so long ago I thought I needed more, more... I don't know what? See that's the thing. It was weird in a way.*

The actors were depended on structures and ways of working from past training (power discourses). Traditional methods are accepted and perceived by all actors and directors as 'appropriate' and as the only 'correct' way of applying knowledge.

*E: You wanted more exploration and structure? More power?*

*S: Wanting to know we're going in the right direction. But I think you knew we were.*

*E: Yes, trusting that... the process*

*T: That's the thing. Yes, I found the method in your madness.*

*S: We both felt a bit unsure.*

Ambiguity and uncertainty have become part of social constructionists' therapies. In this way it leaves the process open to change and adaptation all the time. It is interesting how the directing metaphor (verb) might change to a direction metaphor (noun), ultimately becoming a destination in the process. It is also clear that theatre is becoming a metaphor for therapy, and in my case it did and continues to do so.

*E: How did you feel about C (the producer) being part of the process?*

*S: I did not enjoy it at the beginning!*

*T: I ... Uhm, I cope, I am naturally a calm type of person, generally I don't like someone who doesn't necessarily have the know-how, he knows something, but not more than me. And don't really appreciate it when someone like that wants to give me notes. But I respect it; he's the producer, so it didn't kill me. Especially at first.*

As human beings we tend to believe that our knowledge of ourselves and our fields of expertise is untouchable to those from the outside. Yet, “on the other hand we have a tendency to attribute our own behaviour mainly to situational causes, but the behaviour of others mainly to internal causes” (Baron & Byrne, p. 59). This is called the actor-observer effect and relates to ambiguity in human relationships because it attributes error in our explanations of others' behaviours.

Even as psychotherapists we tend to not give clients a space where they may be ambiguous or 'crazy', just for the sake of their definition of it. It was unnerving for the actors having to listen to someone from outside the acting circle presenting his thoughts. This way of making conversation removes the safety blanket of learned talk and standardised ways of rehearsing and even doing therapy.

*S: That felt a bit odd. It was interesting, your 'calmness' as well. Also letting B come watch, a lot of people would have said: no, we are in the rehearsal process and this is the place where we are experimenting and it becomes a safety zone.*

I believe in creating new conversations and insights in every conversation/rehearsal we had. Andersen (1992) said the following on teams reflecting; “Maybe our talk will bring ideas that could be useful for your conversation” (Andersen, 1992, p. 58). Being trained as a postmodern therapist, it makes sense to me as director to trust my instinct and knowledge concerning group processes and making it our own. We talked to one another

and participated in the “co-development of new meanings, new realities, and new narratives” (Anderson & Goolishian, 1992, p. 29).

- E: And with the shows in Grahamstown, how was it with me being present, the notes and focusing?*
- S: Great, fabulous to have you there to work us through that.*
- T: Safe. You are easy to communicate with. If there is something which really bothered me I could...*
- E: Have you had directors who have not given you that space, or where there was a sense of...?*
- S: Yes, I think so...sometimes you are not at the liberty to say what you think.*
- T: And often you can say what you think, but they immediately disregard it. It just ticks me off, actually.*
- S: You respected us, our opinions and what we wanted to do.*

Co-creation/construction implies that we develop ideas together. Therapy and directing therefore becomes a process of continuing conversations with the intention of facilitating/co-creating/co-authoring new narratives with actors or clients.

- E: I respect your background and knowledge and try to facilitate. Not like 'directing'...that's my attitude*
- T: It is a fresh approach, different, but I like it. 'It was especially weird in the beginning. She is not telling us exactly what to do... Notes that I got from people that came to watch the show reflected on the flow, the give and take. They could really get that... It was an entity from the start.*

It seems to me that the relationship formed between actors and the audience possibly contains elements of that which transpires between directors and actors. This could be an indication of how therapeutic change could be generalized to social contexts outside that of therapy. Everything becomes 'improvisational', whether it is a fixed script or a therapeutic conversation.

## **Self-reflection**

*All great deeds  
and all great thoughts  
have a ridiculous beginning.  
Albert Camus*

I discovered that “if you know what to do it limits you. If you know more what not to do, then there is an infinity of things that might be done” (Anderson & Goolishian, 1988, p. 68). The ‘not-knowing’ position (Anderson & Goolishian, 1988) invites the adolescent to teach me as the therapist/facilitator. Keeney (1990) also encourages the therapist/researcher/artist in me to listen to my voice and to draw upon my own resources and limitations. An open invitation to reflect, invites poetic moments for therapist and client alike. As therapist I share in the responsibility for the context that emerges in therapy (Cecchin, 1992).

I have learned that hope and trust infuse new co-created realities, not only as part of the process but also as part of the future of those who took part. This relates to the notion that “relational knowledge endures and grows through a commitment on the part of the parties involved to persevere through good times and bad” (Park, 2001, p. 86).

I believe people are unique, resourceful and lifelong experiential learners. That is why I am a social constructionist. I like sharing my mindset, listening to others’ and constructing new ones. I always expect the unexpected and know that around each bend something new and interesting is waiting to be explored or transformed.

My issues coloured the process and the data especially concerning the way I see male-female relationships. How I interpret abuse and the reactions to it, and what I would like to believe women can do for themselves. In the months

leading up to this research programme I went through many personal crises and triumphs. I also observed and acted in many women related issues with friends and clients alike. The art of looking at ourselves (Boal, 2000) makes the therapeutic experience self-reflexive, experiential, and more engaging.

Finally I have always wanted to act and interact creatively through the medium of drama with audiences and students, now I can do the same with clients in therapy. This makes the dissertation journey not only scientifically valuable but personally integrated. What will I call my therapeutic approach... poetic therapy or therapeutic poetics perhaps?

### ***What the adolescents learnt***

*In the act of creativity, the artist is left with  
his greatest responsibility:  
a commitment to truth as he sees it.  
Neville Dubow*

A follow up interview with the adolescents a month after we performed our movement drama gave me some insight into what the creative process meant to them in the end. I asked them to reflect in conversation on our creative therapeutic process. I share their responses with the reader in a way that makes the adolescents voices heard. From the representation I believe the reader can see and hear them speak: thus becoming part of their conversation.

Group responses on our creative therapeutic process:

*What have you learnt about yourself, the group and relationships?*

“I made new friends”

“I am not so shy anymore”

“I’ve got more self-confidence”

“I feel good about myself/special”

“I’ve learnt not to stress unnecessarily”  
“I now think before I speak”  
“Don’t judge a book by its cover”  
“I am now able to think on my feet”  
“The more you give the more you get back”  
“This is me and I am special”  
“I’ve learnt how to move, talk and think at once”  
“Sometimes I did not feel like attending, but then felt somehow ‘uplifted’ afterwards”  
“I should sometimes keep my mouth shut...”  
“I’ve learnt how to communicate with others on a deeper level”

*What did you learn from each other in the group context?*

“It is difficult to be part of a new group, especially in the beginning”  
“I’ve learnt to respect others”  
“Sometimes there are personality clashes. You think someone’s a bitch, but when the mask falls of it’s another story”  
“I know now that it is OK to sometimes make mistakes”  
“I’ve got the right to have a voice”  
“Quiet people sometimes have the best ideas”  
“The hyperactive ones have become more subdued”

*What effect had the movement drama on your and others’ views of women?*

“After our performances I felt good about myself, because it felt like what we gave the audience meant something, maybe changed some lives”  
“Some people see themselves in our movement drama”  
“In the beginning I felt a bit uncomfortable portraying such a message, but later I could see the point of it”  
“Women abuse is shocking and it sometimes leaves me speechless”  
“My mother said the message was an eye-opener”  
“We should send strong messages to the community”

From listening to the adolescents’ voices and experiences, it is clear that a deeper awareness of the self and others by means of creative therapeutic

techniques lead to personality integration and enhanced relationship building. A sense of empowerment was established by creating harmonious language between participant's minds and bodies. We also created a sense of social empowerment by 'enabling our environment' in creating and staging a performance with a strong human message (van Vlaenderen & Neves, 2004, p. 452).

Being in conversation with the facilitator and the group in a creative context, led to unique insights into what fellow group members believe and like to believe about themselves and the world they live in. According to Yalom (1985), group members recognize similarities to others and start seeing themselves as others do.

The movement drama created a social and psychological connection with the outside world in its performance, making the group more aware of the role they play in communities. Being in performance, relying on each other and having to trust your fellow group members create a feeling of warmth, acceptance and closeness in a group (Yalom, 1985). Giving something back always implies a sense of belonging and new meanings.

### ***What the reader might learn***

As members of the audience, the readers of this dissertation would hopefully have experienced the therapeutic benefits of creating a movement drama focusing on poetic moments being created throughout the narrative process in a therapeutic manner. In doing so an awareness of our own biases, reactions and ways of doing psychotherapy with adolescents are echoed.

Working from a social constructionist paradigm might also give the reader/therapist a sense of becoming more 'aware' as one works from a 'not-knowing' stance (Anderson & Goolishian, 1988). In this therapeutic context therapists are not in a one-up position. Therapists are put in touch with their own feelings, become more self-aware, and on the other hand more aware of the client's constructs.

This dissertation would like to draw traditional therapists' attention to unnoticed distinctions and responsive moments that have always been part of therapy but have been overlooked. Poetic moments can now play a part in practical understanding. It can also enhance the so-called 'here and now' process, because it assists the therapist in staying in the moment and not constantly focusing on an end goal. This co-construction approach connects the client and the therapist in a new way producing genuine mutual interaction. In this dialogical context they shape language, reality, share knowledge, commitment and therapeutic outcome. "Art activity provides a concrete rather than a verbal medium through which a person can achieve both conscious and unconscious expression, and can be used as a valuable agent for therapeutic change" (Dalley, as cited in Couroucli-Robertson, 1996, p. 2).

Drama and movement have shaped the form of this inquiry. I hope that this new way of doing and alternative form of looking at questions in therapy, may have a positive effect on the uses of this type of inquiry in the future of research in South Africa. Ultimately psychotherapy is a performing art (Keeney, 1990) and therapists need to shape significance in performance (Schiebe, 2000).

### ***Shortcomings***

The potential benefits of the therapeutic effects of poetic moments in the creation of a movement drama with adolescents will only be realised when these approaches are more readily used and when their impact become apparent and can be studied further and in more detail.

One of the shortcomings of this research project is the fact that participants were not selected on grounds of race, gender or other socio-economic variables. Participants voluntarily participated in the study. If one includes a wider spectrum of people and contexts, it may be that more constructive findings will come to light.

## Future ideas

I believe the way this research project was presented to the reader gives way to a fresh approach that makes the material more accessible for the academic and novice readers alike. It also makes the researcher more vulnerable and human, which I believe is part of being a social constructionist therapist.

I also believe psychotherapists and artists need to work closer together without being threatened professionally. We can learn from each other and open new spaces for conversation that can lead to more integrated and practical ways of using some of the aspects I touched on in this research project. Workshops and DVD's on the programme itself may assist others in applying creative and social constructionists' ideas with more insight and confidence.

In re-reading and reflecting on the research project it is clear to me that I know what this dissertation might mean today. I also know what I am today and look forward to new endeavours, meanings and possibilities that may be explored creatively and academically in the future.

*Die probleem met skryf is dat dit jou nie los nie.  
Sodra jy 'n boek voltooi het,  
belowe jy jouself om dit nooit weer te doen nie.  
En voor jy jouself kan kry, spook jy weer met 'n  
nuwe idée.  
Deon Meyer*

**- Curtain -**

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