

**REIMAGINING THE PUBLIC SPHERE:
ADDRESSING THE CRISES OF DEMOCRACY THROUGH APPLIED
DRAMA**

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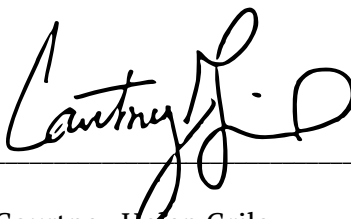
Courtney Helen Grile

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Courtney Helen Grile

SUMMARY

REIMAGINING THE PUBLIC SPHERE: ADDRESSING THE CRISES OF DEMOCRACY THROUGH APPLIED DRAMA

By Courtney Helen Grile

Liberal democracy is under threat and in a state of crisis around the world. This crisis of democracy is characterised by a rise in right-wing populism, an increase in political “strongmen,” and an undermining of liberal democratic norms. One contributing factor to these developments is the escalating polarisation of citizens within liberal democracies. This study aims to theorise and propose a new method for citizen engagement in the public sphere through the use of applied drama praxis, dubbed Creative Democracy. Creative Democracy is the proposed interdisciplinary approach to civic engagement which straddles the fields of political science and drama/theatre. It is both a form of deliberative democracy and a form of applied drama.

To make the case for this new, hybrid practice this study will first explore the well-established relationship between liberal democracy and the field of drama/theatre. This exploration will reveal a link between democratisation and dialogic forms of drama/theatre practice. Next, drawing from democratic theorists Jürgen Habermas, Hannah Arendt, Chantal Mouffe, Charles Tilley, and John Dewey, the study will then put the values of liberal democracy and the practices that support it into conversation with applied drama, a highly dialogic form of drama/theatre.

Through an exploration of six guiding principles of applied drama, the form is shown to have the capacity to support the type of democratic learning and community-building that characterises a healthy public sphere.

Moving from the general to the more specific, the study then looks to deliberative democratic theory and critiques within the practice to inform a new approach using applied drama praxis: Creative Democracy. This theory is then tested through a survey and interviews conducted with applied drama facilitators from around the world, measuring the quality of democracy and deliberation within the actualised practice of the study participants. Applied drama is revealed to be highly supportive of both democratic and deliberative aims in practice, as well as theory. However, the study also revealed areas for concern within the theory of Creative Democracy that require special attention and navigation in order to support a deeply democratic and deliberative process: (1) dealing with issues of power; (2) navigating moments of high contention; and (3) facilitation style/technique. To conclude, a case is made for the continuation of this line of inquiry through a field experiment of Creative Democracy.

DEDICATION

For Connie,
who instilled in me a love of story
and a deep sense of social justice.

Always in my heart and my actions.

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This research project is part of a long journey of exploration and interrogation into my beloved art form that began back in 1996. It would be impossible to acknowledge all of the people, places, performances, workshops, and conversations that have, in some way, impacted my practice and research. However, I would like to make note of the people whose advice, support, mentorship, and friendship were essential to this particular undertaking.

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Introduction: Re-engaging with Democracy

“But even though participation — in art and in politics — is not always pleasant, the belief that one can take part in shaping society is a necessity for democracy.”

– Florian Malzacher (21)

Amidst the rise of right-wing populist political movements such as the ones led by the French National Rally, Alternative for Germany, and the United States Tea Party since the start of the twenty-first century, and following the Brexit vote in the United Kingdom to withdraw from the European Union and the election of Donald J. Trump to the presidency of the United States of America in 2016, political and social scientists around the world declared a global crisis of democracy. Michael J. Abramowitz and Sarah Repucci wrote in their 2018 article for the *Journal of Democracy*, “Democracy is in crisis. The values it embodies — particularly the right to choose leaders in free and fair elections, freedom of the press, and the rule of law — are under assault and in retreat globally” (128). In his 2018 article “(Re)Constructing Democracy in Crisis,” K. Sabeel Rahman posits that the solution for fighting the current de-democratisation lies not in attempting to return to old approaches that in practice failed many, but rather to “develop radically new democratic institutions, organizations, and practices” (1555). This research responds to his proposition by recommending a new method — Creative Democracy — that uses applied drama praxis as the basis for rethinking the public sphere, specifically within the context of deliberative democratic practice. This new approach is a re-conception of deliberative democratic projects that have taken place around the world since 2000. Key questions include: What can be learned from analysing the historical relationship between

drama/theatre and democratic governance? In what ways does applied drama practice align with democratic ideals? How can applied drama methods inform the political process to more actively engage citizens and strengthen democratic values?

To address these questions, I will begin by analysing the historical relationship between drama/theatre and democracy from the late 1700s through to the late 1900s, with a special focus on the moments in which there was a transition into or out of democracy by a state. Focusing on these crucial periods of democratisation and de-democratisation will elucidate further how drama/theatre was used in those processes to support or undermine democracy. Next, I will extend the argument for the advancement of applied drama praxis as ideal for use in liberal democracies by constructing parallels in the principles and values of applied drama praxis and liberal democratic practice. Building upon this connection between the ideals of liberal democracy and applied drama, there will be an analysis of deliberative democracy and the critiques that have been made of the practice. This will be done with an eye toward how applied drama might aid in responding to these critiques and detailing how applied drama supports and deepens the current move by democracies such as the Republic of Ireland toward integrating deliberative practices within government. Finally, in an effort to move from theory into an understanding of the realities of applied drama praxis, a series of surveys and interviews with current practitioners in the field of applied drama will further illuminate the deliberative and democratic qualities of applied drama in practice.

A series of interlocking arguments organise the dissertation as a whole. First, I argue for the legitimacy of the relationship between drama/theatre and democratic politics by providing a contextual history of that relationship in Chapter One. Second,

I support the argument by deliberative democrats that civic engagement is a crucial aspect of liberal democracy throughout this writing. Further, I link acts of civic engagement to drama/theatre practice in Chapters One and Three. This link is heightened in periods of dynamic democratisation or de-democratisation, as will be described in the first chapter by the escalation of protests and demonstrations during these times. This escalation is marked not only by an increase in the number of these displays of political activism, but also by an increase in the number of participants involved. The third and final thread of my argument is highlighted in Chapter Two and further explored in detail in Chapters Three and Four, in which I argue that the physical engagement of applied drama is an ideal practice for use within liberal democracies. Informed by understandings of democracy in political philosophy, parallels are drawn to similar values in applied drama praxis to demonstrate how the art form upholds and reinforces liberal democratic ideals. The democratic philosophies of John Dewey, Chantal Mouffe, Michael E. Morrell, and Jürgen Habermas aid in the articulation of a proposed framework — Creative Democracy — by which to incorporate applied drama praxis into democratic governance.

The current crisis in democracy is marked by external factors such as an economic crisis, a rise in right-wing populist movements, and a rise in authoritarian leaders, as well as internal factors such as the erosion of democratic norms of operation that have been observed over the past two decades (typically inflicted by the authoritarian populist leaders).¹ In addition to the values of popular sovereignty,

¹ For more information on the causes of the current crises of democracy, see Gershman, “Democracy and Democracies in Crisis.” *World Affairs Journal* (November 2016) and Abramowitz and Repucci, “Democracy Beleaguered.” *Journal of Democracy*, 29.2 (2018), pp. 128–142.

freedom of the press, and rule of law mentioned above by Abramowitz and Repucci, the democratic values of open discussion, debate, criticism, and “responsiveness of the government to the preferences of its citizens, considered as political equals” have also been eroded in practice (Dahl 1). While the causes and symptoms of this current crisis in democracy are multi-faceted, it is imperative to underscore this crisis by acknowledging the systemic issues that have always existed within liberal democracies that have made it an “unrealized ideal for too many communities, for too long” (Rahman 1555). Rahman is referring to the continued struggle for various disenfranchised groups over the past three centuries to gain full and equal citizen rights, such as women, the LGBTQ+ community, and African-Americans (in the United States of America). The current crisis calls for innovation of democratic practice to address not only the new concerns, but also older systemic ones.

Democracy is not a final state of being; it is a form of government that works *toward* achieving the *ideals* of equality and freedom for all. The study of democracy is the study of the ongoing process of democratisation and/or de-democratisation within governments. It is in the spirit of innovation that this research considers the use of applied drama praxis, which also places emphasis on process over a final product, to strengthen democracy in practice through invigorating the political relations between elected officials of the government and citizens by reimagining the public sphere.

This research aims to expand not only the discipline of drama/theatre, but also political science and sociology, in creating a sustained method of civic engagement within liberal democracies through the use of applied drama techniques. Creating a sustained practice designed to foster open dialogue, collaboration, and creative problem solving has implications for each field of study involved in this

interdisciplinary enquiry. This original contribution will promote arts practices as being a vital necessity to liberal democratic society, challenging the phenomena that Margot Morgan discussed in her book, *Politics and Theatre in Twentieth-Century Europe: Imagination and Resistance*: “today it is simply taken for granted, even among most academic scholars, that politics is politics, and art is art, and the two domains share no obvious or essential connections” (1). For the fields of political science and sociology, this research provides the potential for a new, imaginative, and creative form of participation within a democracy, something that Moses Finley states a need for in his contribution to *Democracy: Critical Concepts in Political Science*. Applied drama is constantly shifting between the intensely personal and the communal (mirroring the tension that exists between liberalism and democracy), ideas and action, and the concrete and the imagined, operating within a liminal space which constantly responds to context and shifts in the room. Moving within this space allows for the imaginative interrogation and creative problem-solving that is so vital to liberal democracy. Yaron Ezrahi emphasised a need for this type of work within the field of political science when he declared that “the imagination is probably the most neglected form of power in the field of modern political science and, in particular, in political theory” (7). Creative Democracy has the capacity to reenergize citizens to participate in an active, creative, engaged, and sustained way in political and social spheres.

Applied drama praxis centres around work with live participants and champions the transformative experience created through the process. As such, this research will also engage in questions around live, in-person experiences versus the digital space, which is being contemplated by researchers in the arts as well as

political science. Within the field of political science there is a division between the push for greater use of virtual engagement through online tools (such as social media) to connect citizens and the push for physical engagement (such as in-person deliberative democracy projects and live political rallies, marches, and protests) to achieve political ends.²

The proposed approach to reimagining the public sphere is informed by classical and radical deliberative democratic approaches, the vision of Jürgen Habermas’s public sphere, and the model of agonistic pluralism put forth by Chantal Mouffe. Creative Democracy cultivates a public sphere within which all citizens can communicate their concerns and/or debate possible solutions with the understanding that consensus may not emerge. Unlike the model put forth by champions of classic deliberation, not all participants will be “reasonable” or “impartial” in their views. Human beings are, by nature, informed not only by their intellect, but also by their emotions. David P. Redlawski, Andrew J. W. Civenetti, and Richard R. Lau highlight this finding when they write, “important research in neuroscience has suggested that there can be no reason (or effective decision making, at least) without emotion” (152). This is where Mouffe’s concept of agonism becomes critical, and it is supported by applied drama praxis in which increased communication, collaboration, and empathy skills are employed by participants to put forth their varying views/solutions on political/societal issues. While a consensus could be reached in some cases, that is not the goal. The intent is to allow the creation of a container in which political

² See Chwalisz “Citizen Engagement in Politics and Policymaking: Lessons from the UK.” Westminster Foundation for Democracy (2017) or Holst and Moe “Deliberative Systems Theory and Citizens use of Online Media: Testing a Critical Theory of Democracy on a High Achiever.” *Political Studies*, 69.1 (2021): 129-146.

issues can be addressed, citizen participants are free to express their concerns, and the citizens are genuinely listened to by their elected officials and each other — all of which will contribute to a more nuanced conversation between the governors and the governed.

While it is ultimately up to elected officials how they move forward with the knowledge generated within this space in representative liberal democracies, citizens have the power of their vote to put someone into the position who will listen to them. The process advocated for within this dissertation does not seek to solve all the problems of political adversity, but rather to create a space in which this adversity can be expressed, explored, and excavated in a congenial manner. Moreover, this process aims to create a space that opens up opportunities for expression that are not bound to written or verbal skills, which some people possess in greater or lesser abundance (thus creating barriers for participation), but through the language of drama/theatre that makes use of oral, visual, aural, kinaesthetic, and written forms. Charles Tilly writes, “Democratization means net movement toward broader, more equal, more protected, and more binding consultation” between the state and its citizens (14). This research will demonstrate how the practice of applied drama embodies and upholds the ideals of liberal democracy and, if adopted into practice of deliberative democracy, can lead toward Tilly’s idea of greater democratisation and away from the current state of crisis.

Grounding the research: catalyst and context

The motivation for this research is the embodied knowledge I possess through working with communities in a wide array of contexts over the past fifteen years. This experience and insight continue to contribute to this research by allowing space for

reflection, rich description, and creative innovation around the subject. Due to this, there will be sections within this dissertation which will be written through the lens of the practitioner from the first-person perspective, starting with this section.

It was listening to an NPR news report about the US Congress' inability to work together and legislate while I was sitting in San Francisco traffic one day in late 2015 that prompted this entire research journey. I began thinking about how my practice in applied drama was effective at getting people to work together, create meaningful communicative exchanges, and allow participants to empathise with those they disagreed with — which generally led to deeper exploration of ideas, rather than a complete shutdown in communication. I then imagined politicians using applied drama to communicate with each other — and I let out a chuckle. In my gut I felt it would be effective, but I also felt that the chances of that ever happening would be slim.

As an artist and facilitator desiring to work in community contexts, I take great caution to ensure that what is created within the workshops and performed for an audience (if there is a final performance) represents the views and ideas of the participants: “From my deep reverence for the individual and story comes concern for staying true to the voices of the individuals in the communities with whom I work” (Grile 56). To this end, my MFA research, entitled “Creating Art That Truly Reflects the Community: an Exploration into Facilitation of Devised, Community-Engaged Performance,” sought to identify and characterise an approach to facilitation that minimised influence by the facilitator and ensured that the community's voice and intent were honoured as fully as possible. That research led me to identify five crucial qualities for a facilitator that I actively work to embody in my practice: honesty,

curiosity, attentiveness, flexibility, and patience. While this research was focused on facilitating “a devised performance piece with a community of citizen artists that truly reflects their voices and articulates their aesthetic” (Grile 69), ultimately it revealed a deeply democratic approach to facilitation (though I was not aware of this at the time). It is in retrospect that I am able to see my PhD research as a logical extension of this earlier research and my artistic aesthetic.

Within all of the contexts I have worked in there was conflict and varying quality of initial relationships amongst participants (ranging from best friends/family to strangers). In every case, the use of applied drama praxis broadly created an environment and means through which these communities were able to form social bonds (thus developing empathy for the diverse range of participants), communicate more effectively (I cannot even accurately recall the number of participants who have marvelled over the experience of having felt truly heard), and collaborate to solve problems (some to create a piece of theatre, some to tackle larger community issues, and some just to solve small obstacles presented via the work). Of course, there were moments of struggle in this. As James Thompson wrote, “There are always glitches, changes and less-than-satisfactory moments” (*Applied* 67). The moments of struggle become part of the process, and usually act as a catalyst for breakthrough moments. My perceived effect of my practice was that it broadly encouraged the generation of social bonds and genuine dialogue, which led to imaginative freedom and collaboration.

The idea that applied drama held potential for alleviating the gridlock and ever-increasing polarisation that had been rising in liberal democracies world-wide lingered with me. Aware of Boal’s Legislative Theatre, I began reading more widely

about it while working at an American regional theatre company in the San Francisco Bay Area. I became fixated on the notion Pratt and Johnston unveiled in their article looking at Headlines Theatre Company's project, *Practicing Democracy*, that ultimately the government refused to take the input generated through the project seriously. The difference between the success of Boal's Legislative Theatre and projects like those at Headlines Theatre was that Boal was able to bring legitimacy to the process through his position as an elected official. So, my question became, *how* do I bring legitimacy to this form of civic engagement, so that citizens are listened to by elected officials and able to affect change?

My assumptions of the suitability of applied drama as a democratising force are thus rooted in my experiences. However, convincing those in power of the same will be a sizable challenge. Despite evidence to the contrary (noted above), I still recall the message that has long loomed over politics and arts discourse: politics is politics, and art is art. In embarking on this research journey, I cannot help but feel that this historically rooted rhetoric, and its resulting attitudes, constantly pushing against my research aims — though I imagine it to be similar to the turgor pressure within plants that drives growth and development. It has led me to approach this research in a much more interdisciplinary way, incorporating terms and ideas from political science around liberal democracy and deliberative democracy to bolster the provocations made concerning applied drama's potential role within governmental frameworks. Additionally, an interdisciplinary approach will help to shape the new practice of Creative Democracy (operating within liberal democratic governmental structures) as a niche within the applied drama collection of practices, as well as deliberative democratic approaches. This corresponds with Thompson's assertion

that the various fields within which applied drama seeks to work (health, criminal justice, education, etc) “are cultural practices that have their own explanatory discourses...not neutral containers into which theatre is placed” (*Applied* 87). Not only is working in this way important for any perceived “legitimacy” of practice, it is important for the situating of applied drama within this new context.

It is crucial to clarify that I am not suggesting that applied drama praxis is the key to solving all the ills of liberal democracy — or even all the challenges of increasing and sustaining civic engagement. The scale and scope within which applied drama is able to operate is much smaller than the enormous amount of activity and guardianship within liberal democratic states. However, what is advanced through this research is the ability of applied drama praxis to act as a deeply democratising force — and further, that it should be incorporated within governmental practices and procedures. The offering is that applied drama has something to contribute to the overall efforts and continual progress of the democratic experiment.

Methodology

This research was conducted by relying upon both interdisciplinary and reflexive research practices. Creating the theoretical framework for Creative Democracy proposed in this body of text required drawing from literature in the field of political science and democracy studies, as well as the field of drama/theatre and applied drama. This development process required engaging with the approach, methodologies, and knowledge from each discipline and putting them into conversation with one another. Each new insight led to a sharpening of focus, and informed the continued path of the research. This manner of working is woven

throughout the research process and encompasses the data collected via the surveys and interviews conducted for this project. However, specifics around the research study outlined in Chapter Four involving surveys and interviews will be more specifically detailed within that chapter.

In many ways, this approach mirrored the process of applied drama itself: “The process is a journey. Like any journey, it has a beginning, a route, and a schedule, but it does not have a predetermined destination” (Rohd 3). Further complicating the above iterative process of knowledge-production was the inclusion of an autoethnographic approach, allowing for insight from the researcher/practitioner. In addition to the active, ongoing reflective practice taking place during the research process, journals dating back to 2006 containing contemporaneous reflection of personal practice, including observations, reactions, and considerations at the time became data for use in this process. Additionally, the journals contain notes of conversations about the field with colleagues and provocations offered by them through workshops and conferences, as well as descriptions, impressions, and critical reflections of the researcher/practitioner’s work at the time.

This hybrid approach to working was developed to meet the needs of the broader fields of political science and drama/theatre, as well as the specific practices of deliberative democracy and applied drama. An interdisciplinary and reflexive approach enabled a deep interplay between the ideals and theories of liberal democracy and applied drama, while the autoethnographic process aided in grounding the work and the actual practice. In an effort to bring in the voices and practices of more applied drama facilitators (to bring the theory and practice into

deeper conversation) surveys and interviews were incorporated that both affirmed and complicated the proposed practice of Creative Democracy.

Defining Terms

Throughout the course of this research, I will be employing labels that are often contentious and ambiguous in their definitions: populism, drama, theatre, applied drama, democracy, empathy, theatricality, and so on. To a large extent, I will make a point to clarify my use of these labels for this research as they appear. However, some terms permeate throughout this research, so it is therefore crucial to clarify these in advance.

To begin, I would like to frame how the terms “performance”, “theatre” and “drama” will be employed in this writing in an effort to be as specific as possible. Because the characterisations of “drama” and “theatre” hinge on an understanding of “performance,” I will begin there. Notwithstanding the vast array of uses of the term across multiple fields, for the purposes of this research a “performance” will refer to a completed action that has a beginning and an end that is aware of itself as having an audience of some kind (Fitzgerald 27–28). Fitzgerald’s framing of performance is well-suited for this research, as it provides a specific understanding of what it is, but allows for a broad framework in which it can take place. This interpretation makes space for the use of performance not only by artists, but also by persons operating within the political sphere as it pertains to this research. For the purposes of this research, “theatre” will refer to performance that is crafted and intended for a specific audience who are outside of the creative process. There may also be mention of a theatre in reference to a physical structure, at which time it will be specified. The term “drama” is often used to refer to the written text of a play as well as to delineate

a genre of performance. However, there are also those in the field who associate it “with the type of meaning-making and interaction that occurs between participants and/ or audience and performer” (Dawson and Klein xiv). Additionally, the Greek root of the word drama is *dran*, which means “to act.”³ For this research the term will primarily be used to speak about performance that is not intended for an audience outside of those who are actively participating in the creative process. This definition is closely linked to the practice of Creative Dramatics, predominantly used in the sub-field of Drama in Education. In a Creative Dramatics context, students participate in the creation of a world of play through games, improvisations, and role-playing to explore various topics/themes. To refer to the entire field of the art practice, “drama/theatre” will be used.

Furthermore, it is imperative to define and give prominence to the term “applied drama,” which lies at the heart of this research. Closely linked with applied drama is applied theatre and applied performance. Some scholars, such as Helen Nicholson, do not feel it is necessary to distinguish between the three terms; she writes, “Despite difference of inflection, the terms ‘applied drama’, ‘applied theatre’ and ‘applied performance’ are often used quite flexibly and interchangeably” (2nd ed. 5). Other scholars, such as Time Prentki and Sheila Preston, preference the term “applied theatre” as applying varying participative relationships that delineate between theatre “for,” “with,” or “by” a community (10). In light of the decision made to employ the terms “drama” and “theatre” as I have, I am distinguishing the term

³ See Lyman and Scott, *The Drama of Social Reality*. (Oxford University Press 1975), p.2 and Nicholson, *Applied Drama: The Gift of Theatre 1st Edition* (Palgrave Macmillan 2005), p. 4 for more information on the origins of the word “drama.”

“applied drama” as the approach used in dialogue and collaboration which does not have an outside audience intended (falling into Prentki and Preston’s theatre *with* a community category). This framing is in line with Monica Prendergast and Juliana Saxton’s caveat that what delineates applied drama praxis from applied performance/theatre is that the latter essentially involves a performance for/with an outside audience. Kate McCammon also favours this interpretation, writing that applied drama is “largely process oriented and not designed for a larger audience; it [is] performative only in that the participants ‘perform’ for themselves” (946). “Applied drama” will be used to refer to the process-based practice of using theatrical games, improvisation, and other artistic skills of drama/theatre to work with participants who engage as both performer and audience in order to explore issues of concern. It “is a social laboratory for developing critical consciousness” (Saxton and Prendergast, 2).

Next, my argument depends on the usage of “democracy” and “liberal democracy”, two terms that are also often used interchangeably, due to the fact that liberal democracy is the dominant form of democracy in the world today. Marc F. Plattner elaborates on this misconception, writing:

‘Democracy’ is derived from a Greek word meaning rule by the people, while ‘liberal’ and ‘liberalism’ derive from a Latin word meaning free. Today, however, democracy often is used as shorthand for liberal democracy and thus is thought also to incorporate the protection of individual freedom. (6–7)

However, democracy without the ideals of liberalism simply signifies a state in which all citizens are equal, and decisions are made via majority rule. In ancient Greece this

was practiced directly, with all citizens⁴ having a say in political conversations. Today most democracies exist as representative democracies in which all eligible citizens vote for representatives (politicians) who will then be responsible for creating laws, etc. Liberal democracy infuses the ideals of equality and majority rule with the ideals of human rights, rule of law, and individual freedom, and together they work to limit the government's ability to infringe on the rights of individuals and minority groups. Chantal Mouffe writes, "what cannot be contestable in a liberal democracy is the idea that it is legitimate to establish limits to popular sovereignty in the name of liberty" (*Democratic Paradox* 4). The democratic paradox Mouffe writes about in her book will be highlighted further, as the limitations that liberalism places on popular sovereignty come under fire by populist movements.

Further, the term "propaganda" will be employed throughout this body of writing, and thus requires framing. Philip M. Taylor defines propaganda as "the *deliberate* attempt to persuade people to think and behave *in a desired way*" (6). Using that definition as a jumping off point, it is important to highlight that prominent scholars disagree on whether propaganda is "perverse and wicked" (Rusu and Herman 118) or could be used for social good. W.E.B. Dubois "held that propaganda could be used for good" (Wood 382), while other scholars such as Alain Locke "held that all propaganda corrupts our thinking" (Wood 382). Maria-Lucia Rusu and Ramona Herman, in their article "The Implications of Propaganda as a Social Influence Strategy," describe how propaganda can be used in both positive and negative

⁴ It should be noted that women, children, slaves, and resident foreigners were excluded from citizenship during this time. See Charles Tilly, *Democracy*, (Cambridge University Press, 2007), p. 26

fashions, drilling down further to form distinctions between propaganda “in which the information issuer is declared, assumed,” propaganda “where the author of the messages is unknown,” and propaganda “in which the declared messenger is not the real one” (120). Their claim is that the types of propaganda that use “misinformation as a basic tool,” or are “less easily distinguishable due to lack of information about the source” are negative and harmful (Rusu and Herman 120).

Jason Stanley, on the other hand, categorizes propaganda as either “supporting” or “undermining” (Maitra 315). “Supporting propaganda” is “a contribution to public discourse that is presented as an embodiment of certain ideals, yet is of a kind that tends to increase the realization of those very ideals by either emotional or other nonrational means,” while “undermining propaganda” is “[a] contribution to public discourse that is presented as an embodiment of certain ideals, yet is of a kind that tends to erode those very ideals” (Maitra 315). Whether supporting or undermining, “[p]ropaganda is about persuading people to do things which benefit those doing the persuading, either directly or indirectly” (Philip M. Taylor 6). With that in mind, “propaganda” will be used in this research to denote a “form of persuasion” (Wood 382) that “manipulates acceptance by preying on an individual’s emotions” (Fitzmaurice 64) which can be either positive or negative depending on the level of transparency regarding who is controlling the narrative and the absence/presence of misinformation, partial truths, coercion, and/or censorship.

Finally, the argument is also reliant on how the term “empathy” will be applied within this body of work, as it is a crucial element of both liberal democracy and applied drama. It comes from the “German word *Einfühlung*, literally feeling-in or feeling-into” (Morrell, *Empathy* 41). While there are theorists who choose to focus on

outcome-oriented definitions, this research will emphasise Michael E. Morrell's conception of a multidimensional process-oriented view of the term that considers both affective and cognitive components. Morrell's view is based on the organisational model of empathy outlined by Mark H. Davis, who asserted:

Empathy is broadly defined as a set of constructs having to do with the responses of one individual to the experience of another. These constructs specifically include the *processes* taking place within the observer and the affective and non-affective *outcomes* which result from those processes. (12)

Davis divided his model into four categories: antecedents, processes, intrapersonal outcomes, and interpersonal outcomes. This incorporates "all the key components of *Einfühlung* and empathy: emotion, projection, and understanding" (Morrell, *Empathy* 55). Working from this model, Morrell chooses to emphasise process and then focus on "the mechanisms by which it occurs" and "the various outcomes that can result" (*Empathy* 62). He makes one other adjustment to Davis's model:

To indicate the possibility of [the] feedback loop between affective and nonaffective outcomes, which also more accurately captures the possible interactive nature between affect and cognition, I divide the affective and nonaffective outcomes into separate components of the model and include a feedback loop between the two. (Morrell, *Empathy* 63)

With all of this in mind, "empathy" will be understood in this dissertation as "a process through which others' emotional states or situations have an affect upon us" (Morrell, *Empathy* 62). While empathy has long been associated with artistic expression, especially within drama/theatre, it will also be shown to be critical for social cohesion and liberal democracy.

Civic Engagement and Liberal Democracy

A fundamental component of any democracy is the engagement of its citizenry. Speaking on the *Democracy in Danger* podcast in March 2021, Srđa Popović⁵ emphasises that:

for effective democracy it is not enough to have democratic institutions, free and fair elections — you need people to participate. No free and fair elections will hold if people don't participate in it. No institution will be democratic long enough if people don't keep it accountable. (Hitchcock and Vaidhayanathan)

Though civic engagement is most commonly evidenced through the act of voting, it can also manifest in the form of town hall forums, acts of protest, and membership in political organisations (among others). Freedom House, an independent organisation devoted to the expansion of freedom and democracy, considers political participation as one of the key aspects for analysing the state of democracy in any given country. Cass Sunstein asserts, “active citizen engagement is necessary to promote not only democracy but social wellbeing too” (*#Republic* 56). Given the importance of citizen participation in liberal democracy, Phil Parvin notes that, “the last two decades have seen a growth in research by political scientists into the problem of low rates of political participation among citizens of liberal democratic states” (32). In the section that follows, I will touch upon trends of civic engagement in the United States, the United Kingdom, and the Republic of Ireland in order to give a sense of the conversations occurring around the concept of civic engagement within anglophone liberal democracies.

⁵ Srđa Popović is a Serbian political activist and was the leader of the student-led resistance movement that helped topple Serbian president Slobodan Milošević.

In response to the political upheavals of 2016, large-scale civic engagement and political activism has been on a sharp rise in the United States. The turnout for the 2018 midterm elections in the US was the highest it had been in a century, with 50.3% of the voting-eligible population taking part (McDonald). The average turnout in the midterm elections (not including 2018) for the past forty years is 39.4% (McDonald). In regard to civic engagement beyond the ballot box, National Public Radio's (NPR) Laura Sydell quotes sociologist Dana Fisher as saying that, "the election of Donald Trump ignited progressive activism at a rate never seen before in American politics". Fisher's focus on "progressive activism" is a reminder that conservative activism in the US saw a rise (on a smaller scale, but still significant) with the Tea Party movement that began in 2008. Despite right-wing conservatives getting a bit of a head-start in 2008, sociologists still "credit Trump for inspiring people to become politically engaged on the right," indicating that there has also been a boost in civic engagement amongst conservatives since 2016 (Sydell). Numerous news agencies reported that the Women's March in 2017 may have been the largest single-day protest in US history. In reference to the work of tracking the number of protesters done by Erica Chenoweth at the University of Denver and Jeremy Pressman at the University of Connecticut, *The Atlantic* published:

Adding up their 'low' estimates suggests 3.33 million protesters took to the streets. Add up their high estimates and you arrive at a total of 4.63 million protesters. Knock one million people off the low estimate just for kicks and you've still got one of the most massive single-day protests in American history (Friedersdorf par. 5)

Framed as a call for social change (though undeniably also an anti-Trump protest), the 21 January 2017 Women's March, originally conceived as a march on Washington

D.C., became a global protest. Demonstrations were held on all seven continents,⁶ amassing to more than 670 events (Rafferty).

The spike in protests and activism in recent years, ranging from the Black Lives Matter and March for our Lives movements to the various marches for science, along with the markedly high 2018 midterm election turnout, signify a sudden and strong interest in active civic engagement of citizens across the political spectrum that had been dormant in US society for several decades. This momentum continued into 2020, notably that “[m]ore votes were cast in the 2020 presidential election than in any other U.S. election in history, and the turnout rate was the highest in more than a century” (Montanaro par.1). The two Georgia Senate runoff races in January 2021 that followed the November 2020 general elections also shattered voter participation records for Georgia runoffs, with sixty percent of eligible voters participating (Rakich, et al.). The last two Senate runoff elections in Georgia only garnered thirty-two percent and twenty-six percent voter turnout in 2008 and 1992, respectively (Rakich, et al.).

This increased engagement is in contrast to the trend that Robert Putnam was writing about as early as 1995, in which he calls attention to the decline in civic engagement in the US in his article for the *Journal of Democracy*, stating that there is “striking evidence, however, that the vibrancy of American civil society has notably declined over the past several decades” (65). He goes on to cite study after study demonstrating a decline in civic engagement since the 1960s through decreased voter turnout, organisational membership (political party membership, labour unions,

⁶ See Ahusa. “Yes, even people in Antarctica are joining the Women’s March movement.” *CNN*. 21 January 2017.

churches, parent teacher associations, etc), and membership in/volunteering for civic and fraternal organisations. He also argues for the importance of active political participation by citizens, writing:

networks of civic engagement foster sturdy norms of generalized reciprocity and encourage the emergence of social trust. Such networks facilitate coordination and communication, amplify reputations, and thus allow dilemmas of collective action to be resolved. (Putnam 67)

With the overwhelming evidence that citizens are ready and eager to engage in a sustained fashion (for example, beginning on 16 July 2018 there were nightly protests in front of the White House that lasted over a hundred days), it is time to focus meaningfully on reviving (and restructuring) outlets for sustained civic engagement that support healthy dialogue and collaboration. Nevertheless, Hollie Russan Gilman writes:

One challenge to engaging community residents in civic life beyond simply voting every two or four years is that there is no consensus about what a more robust, participatory model of democracy — one in which people more actively participate in the civic fabric of their community — looks like in the United States. (par. 2)

What Gilman identifies as a key challenge presents an opportunity for the introduction of applied and socially-engaged drama practices into civic and political spaces.

A few months prior to the right-wing populist-fuelled victory of Donald Trump in the US, “drawbridge-up populists” in the United Kingdom (UK) prevailed in their efforts to secure the vote to withdraw the UK from the European Union (EU)

(“Drawbridges Up”).⁷ Akin to the United States, “statistics suggest that participation in key aspects of UK formal politics has been declining over the past 50 years, such as voter turnout in general elections and political party membership” (Slade and Hobbes). While voter turnout in the UK is substantially higher than the US (general elections averaging 72.9% from 1918–2017), it hit its lowest point in over a century (59.4%) in 2001 but jumped back up to 68.8% by 2017 (Dempsey 3). The Westminster Foundation for Democracy commissioned researchers to study civic engagement in the UK, and among its many findings, the report cites that “it has been argued that the feeling that people’s voices do not count in the decisions taken by elected representatives has been one of the forces fuelling support for the two nationalist parties: the United Kingdom Independence Party (UKIP) and the Scottish National Party (SNP)” (Chwalisz, “Citizen Engagement” 6). The report goes on to say that because citizens did not feel heard by their government, the populist messages used in the referendum on EU membership like “take back control” were particularly effective. Participation in the 2016 referendum had the largest turnout of any UK-wide referendum in the past 100 years, with 72.2% of the voting-eligible population taking part (Audickas and Cracknell). Since the 2016 referendum, polling has found that “seven in ten people (68%) in the UK also think that the system of governing Britain needs to change — one of the most popular changes is to give citizens more of a voice in public decision-making” (Chwalisz, “Citizen Engagement” 6). With citizens in the UK indicating their desire for greater engagement with the government, there

⁷ For more information on Donald Trump’s winning presidential campaign and the right-wing populist efforts that catapulted him to victory see K. Sabeel Rahman, “(Re)Constructing Democracy in Crisis.” *UCLA Law Review*, 65.6 (2018): 1552–1572.

is recognition of a need to create a method of engagement that is sustainable. In light of all the energy around the use of social media for engagement and activism, it is important to note that in her report, Claudia Chwalisz writes:

Despite the advent of new digital tools available, the need for in-person participation will never disappear. Involving citizens in public decision-making which requires them to consider trade-offs and try to understand a problem from all angles is better done when people can meet face to face, fostering social bonds which are difficult to form online. Trust and empathy require a human touch. (“Citizen Engagement” 5)

I will elaborate further on the inefficiency and harm of online tools alone for addressing the current crises in democracy in Chapter Three.

While the Republic of Ireland has not experienced the right-wing populist movements at anywhere near the same scale that the US and the UK have, the country is critical in this exploration. As Rosemary Byrne phrased it in her opening address at the Crises of Democracy and Cultural Trauma Conference held in Dublin in late 2018, Ireland is at the “nexus between what is happening in Europe and what is happening in the United States” in regard to the current global crisis of democracy. It is also crucial to note that Professors David Farrell and Brian Fanning warn the citizens of Ireland in their article in *The Irish Times*: “We should not assume that Ireland will escape the rising tide of populism without pre-emptive action.” Fortunately, Ireland has already pioneered three encouraging examples of national citizens assemblies piloted through the 2011 *We the Citizens* project, followed by the 2012–2014 Constitutional Convention and the 2016–2018 Citizens’ Assembly. Writing about *We the Citizens* in 2013, David Farrell, Eoin O’Malley, and Jane Suiter remark, even then, about the impending feeling of a crisis in democracy, stating:

The sense of democratic crisis is not unique to Ireland. A fair deal of pessimism has been expressed generally about the state of democracy today. Evidence seems to be mounting of democracy in trouble, whether it is the fact that fewer of us bother to vote in elections, to be active members (or even just members) of political parties, to engage in wider civic society, or that more of us feel detached from, unhappy with and mistrustful of the representative institutions of democracy. (100)

Political reform in the mode of active citizen engagement was a key area of emphasis for all political parties in Ireland in the 2011 general election, providing advancement of the idea that politicians were “open to the idea of greater citizen involvement in efforts to redesign Ireland’s representative institutions” (Farrell, et al. 100). The *We the Citizens* democratic participatory project was a direct response to this call for reform and aimed to “demonstrate the virtue of deliberative approaches” by holding a pilot citizen’s assembly (CA) (Farrell, et al. 102). In this initial experiment, “clear evidence that participation in the citizens’ assembly had a positive impact on levels of interest in politics and willingness to become more actively involved” is evidenced in the data (Farrell et al. 106). Additionally, Farrell et al. found:

As a result of their participation in the CA weekend, the CA members showed significant shifts of opinion both in terms of feelings of efficacy and interest in politics, and also with regard to key substantive issues in politics. They took on board trade-offs and became more willing to make hard choices. (110)

Following this pilot project in 2011, an Irish Constitutional Convention was established and run from 2012–2014, and the Irish Citizens’ Assembly was established by the government in 2016 and continued to operate into early 2018. This marks Ireland as being at the fore in experimenting with and promoting this deliberative model of democracy and makes it an ideal location for continuing this experimentation in the form of introducing applied drama practices and ideas to the deliberative process.

The recent upswing in civic engagement in all three countries is notable, as it shows an interest and willingness of citizens to reclaim civic power. It is fortunate to have this momentum and appetite for civic engagement align with the great *need* for civic engagement for deepening democratisation, as it makes the task of generating interest in involvement a little easier. However, this should not be taken for granted, and much remains to be done to keep citizens motivated to stay involved, so that another decline in active citizen engagement does not follow in years to come. The rise in populism in recent years has managed to activate large swaths of citizens around the globe, however, this movement is not engaging citizens to the benefit of liberal democracy and will be addressed next.

The Populist Threat to Liberal Democracy

As stated previously, the past fifteen years have ushered in a sharp increase in right-wing populist movements around the globe that are thought by many political and social scientists to be a threat to liberal democracy. William A. Galston postulated:

the Great Recession that began in late 2007 represented a colossal failure of economic stewardship, and political leaders' inability to restore vigorous growth compounded the felony. As economies struggled and unemployment persisted, the groups and regions that failed to rebound lost confidence in mainstream parties and established institutions, fueling the populist upsurge that has upended U.S. politics, threatens the European Union, and endangers liberal governance itself in several of the newer democracies. (7)

The term "populism," however, is highly contentious in its use and ambiguous in definition. The *Cambridge Dictionary*, which proclaimed "populism" as its Word of the Year in 2017, defines populism as "political ideas and activities that are intended to get the support of ordinary people by giving them what they want." This definition

hardly paints populism as an odious threat to liberal democracy. By this definition alone, populism could be viewed as strengthening democracy, because of its ability to engage citizens. Why, then, are so many scholars concerned about the fate of liberal democracy in the face of the populism present around the globe today? To begin, Benjamin Moffitt and Simon Tormey noted, “like many terms in the lexicon of political science, populism is marked by a high degree of contestability” (382). Additionally, there is the issue that the brand of right-wing populism that is currently prevalent is often labelled simply as “populism”, further adding to the confusion and complexity around the term.

Within this section I will make use of the left-right political spectrum, which is a binary approach used as shorthand to categorise politicians and movements within the political field. Within this framework, the political philosophy of the left side of the spectrum is generally defined as having more expansive views on government and focus on civil rights, while the right side of the spectrum is more conservative, prioritising smaller government and focus on individual rights. With that in mind “the political spectrum, and where people and parties stand on it, is confused, complicated and full of contradictions” (Enright). This left-right spectrum will be further complicated when it intersects with the ideas of populism and the new “political faultline” between open and closed borders (“The New Political Divide”).

In “Unbundling Populism,” David Fontana more clearly delineates between “populism” and the “right-wing populism” we are currently experiencing by framing it in terms of bundled and unbundled populism. Unbundled populism, he explains, “relies on a basic definition of political claims-making that a large number of ordinary citizens are being excessively and unjustly disempowered by a narrow and

largely disconnected and unsympathetic elite” (Fontana 1485–1486). This is rhetoric and behaviour exhibited by a wide range of populist leaders situated on the left and right of the political spectrum. He argues that the right-wing populism permeating liberal democracies today is a form of bundled populism that also includes authoritarian and xenophobic sentiment. This bundled populism that Fontana describes is the brand of populism that is of greatest concern at the moment, though the argument that I will present makes the case that any form of populism is a threat to liberal democracy.

In their article “Rethinking Populism: Politics, Mediatisation and Political Style,” Moffitt and Tormey advocate for definition of the term through the lens of political style. Within this context of populist political style, “‘the people’ is both the central audience of populists, as well as the subject that populists attempt to ‘render present’ through their performance” (Moffitt and Tormey 391). Populist leaders invoke the idea that they alone represent and are “the voice” of the people, while also claiming that they alone are the only ones who can “fix” the country. This is illustrated in Recep Tayyip Erdoğan’s speech in July 2017 on the first anniversary of the failed coup attempt against him. Referring to this speech, Omar Al-Ghazzi wrote:

Clearly, the speech is representative of Erdoğan’s broad discursive strategy: equate oneself to the people, claim the status of a victim under threat, establish a stark choice between heroism and submission, project that onto past and future temporal terrains, and reiterate that one’s leadership is the only way of achieving Turkish greatness (55–56)

Additionally, Moffitt and Tormey add that:

a function of the appeal to ‘the people’ as the arbiters of ‘common sense’, the ‘way forward’ and of the urgency of the matters with which populist figures are concerned is a coarsening of political

discourse. Much of populists' appeal comes from their disregard for 'appropriate' ways of acting in the political realm. (392)

Even without the additional authoritarian and xenophobic qualities inherent in bundled populism, behaviours such as raising oneself above all others as the only person who can speak for the country and address the country's issues is problematic for liberal democracies.

Populism, especially bundled populism, seeks "to drive a wedge between democracy and liberalism" (Galston 5). Plattner describes the distinction between the two concepts that are linked so commonly today:

Democracy and liberalism may be understood as addressing two different questions: Democracy is an answer to the question of who rules. It requires that the people be sovereign. If they do not rule directly, as they did in the ancient Greek polis, they must at least be able to choose their representatives in free and fair elections. Liberalism, by contrast, prescribes not how rulers are chosen but what the limits to their power are once they are in office. (7)

Egalitarian liberal notions that the government should step in to protect individuals and minority groups is looked upon unfavourably by populists as impeding the majority from having their way, and thus being "undemocratic."⁸ Populists feel emboldened to undermine liberal democratic institutions such as freedom of the press and the judicial and legislative branches of government, while working to consolidate executive power.⁹ This can be most obviously evidenced by the proliferation of the label of "fake news" that has come into common usage by Donald Trump in the US, as well as populist leaders in Syria, Poland, and Venezuela (among

⁸ See David Fontana, "Unbundling Populism." *UCLA Law Review*, 65.6 (2018): 1482–1505 and William A. Galston, "The Populist Challenge to Liberal Democracy." *Journal of Democracy*, 29.2 (2018): 5–19.

⁹ See William A. Galston "The Populist Challenge to Liberal Democracy." *Journal of Democracy*, 29.2 (2018): 14–15.

others).¹⁰ Ruth Ben-Ghiat, a historian of authoritarianism is quoted as saying that the label now has a clear meaning: “It’s anything that contradicts with a leader’s version of reality” (Schwartz par.24).

Populist leaders’ tendency to speak for “the people” as if “the people” are a homogenous group, with one voice and a single will, ignores the reality of diversity that exists within most liberal democratic nations today and attempts to raise the status of one social group over others. Galston writes, “to the extent that this occurs, populism becomes a threat to democracy, which, as Müller puts it, ‘requires pluralism and the recognition that we need to find fair terms of living together as free, equal, but also irreducibly diverse citizens’” (13).¹¹ Layered into the rhetoric that populist leaders use in speaking for “the people” is an intentional polarization. Populist leaders specifically identify an “in-group” (us) and an “out-group” (them); “we” are inherently righteous and good, and “they” are evil and corrupt. This phraseology can even be employed to account for numerous “out groups” even in one political setting. Donald Trump’s rhetoric identifies “the elites,” “Mexicans,” “Muslims,” and “the fake news media” (to name a few) all as being evil/corrupt and against his identified “in group,” which is predominantly white, rural, Christian, conservative citizens.¹² In India, Narendra Modi has “licensed his supporters to explicitly hate a range of people from perfidious Pakistanis and Indian Muslims to their ‘anti-national’ Indian

¹⁰ For more on the “fake news” label versus the genre, see Egelhofer and Lecheler, “Fake news as a two-dimensional phenomenon: a framework and research agenda.” *Annals of the International Communication Association*, 43.2 (2019): 97-116.

¹¹ Democracy within the quote above refers specifically to liberal democracy.

¹² See Joan E. Grave, “Mitch McConnell’s viral Black voter comments cause widespread furore.” *Irish Times*. 21 January 2022; and Katie Rogers and Nicholas Fandos. “Trump Tells Congresswomen to ‘go back’ to the countries they came from.” *New York Times*. 14 July 2019.

appeasers” (Tisdall par. 6). This tactic of polarization is injurious for liberal democracy because:

Decision making in circumstances of diversity typically requires compromise. If one group or party believes that the other embodies evil, however, its members are likely to scorn compromises as dishonorable concessions to the forces of darkness. In short, populism plunges democratic societies into an endless series of moralized zero-sum conflicts; it threatens the rights of minorities; and it enables over-bearing leaders to dismantle the checkpoints on the road to autocracy. (Galston 13)

In light of the myriad ways in which populism, including bundled right-wing populism, undermines liberal democracy, it is clearly not the civic engagement solution needed for the task of strengthening liberal democracy. The political style/performance of populist leaders, however, does much to undermine the “tendency to locate the arts in the private sphere” (Love and Mattern 7). While placing art firmly in the private sphere “served to reinforce the ‘rationality’ of liberal democratic politics” (Love and Mattern 7), it has also managed to undermine theatre artists who would like to engage more deeply with politics/society. However, it has done little to block politicians from employing performance and theatricality in their dealings with the public. The use of the theatre metaphor within the political sphere will be explored further in the following section.

The Theatre Metaphor in Politics and Liberal Democracies

The relationship between the arts, specifically drama/theatre, and democracy has existed as long as the forms themselves. However, since the birth of liberal democracy, political theorists have worked to keep the two apart.¹³ This ardent

¹³ See Yaron Ezrahi, *Imagined Democracies: Necessary Political Fictions* (Cambridge University Press, 2012).

attempt at separation has resulted in the latent seeping in of the dramatic form onto the “political stage,” with the use of performance and theatrical staging by politicians and political parties as a means for propaganda. Yaron Ezrahi explains:

the liberal democratic compartmentalization of politics has never been more than an illusion, a fiction useful enough to delegitimize the unauthorized manipulation of the arts to influence politics by means of emotions, passions, and aesthetic experience, while professing to contain it within the boundaries of reason, transparency, rational deliberation, and moderation. (255–256)

This compartmentalization of politics has only worked to thwart artists seeking to engage critically with citizens and democratic systems. Jill Dolan wrote:

Civic engagement through theatre is obstructed by basic despair that real change can be effected in the most traditional space of performance. Such pessimism undermines the power of theatre to engage directly and urgently in public debate. (“Rehearsing” 2)

Meanwhile, politicians have incorporated the more didactic forms of the practice¹⁴ and the theatre metaphor has become “a favorite of the media” (Fitzgerald 21).

Much of the use of the theatre metaphor leans into the theatrical representation of public figures and their actions, with headlines such as “For Trump, Impeachment is a Show” (Blow) from the *New York Times* or “Brexit is the stage on which Boris Johnson acts out his theatre of provocation” (Kibasi) in *The Guardian*. Sandey Fitzgerald tackles the concept of the theatre metaphor in her book, *Spectators in the Field of Politics*, drawing out the characteristics that seem most relevant within the political sphere, writing, “It is structured, designed, selective in what it shows, artful, purposeful, and goal-oriented” (43). She goes on to say that “[t]his can make politics seem ordered, skillful, focused, purposeful, and meaningful on the one hand,

¹⁴ This is particularly exemplified in the actions of populist leaders, though all politicians use the more didactic (monologic) forms of the arts practice.

or determined, superficial, histrionic, deceptive, instrumental, and manipulative on the other” (43). Jeffrey Alexander also taps into this idea when he writes:

Presidential debates are plays within a play. Campaigns are dramas, not fact-finding missions, and debates are theatrical episodes, not academic tests. Everybody knows the televised debates are artificial, scripted, rehearsed, and choreographed. Rhetorical, not deliberative, more professional wrestling than political argument. (“Performance” 136)

It is the traits of deception, manipulation, and superficiality that seem to overwhelmingly occupy the public imagination.

Leaning further into the metaphor, Fitzgerald points out the effect that a purely representational analogy can have on ordinary citizens, saying that “the metaphor offers them a way out of political life because it produces the illusion that it is possible to be outside the effects and obligations of their political system” (54). Katherine Goktepe also links into this idea of citizens behaving as if they are outside of the effects when she writes that “[s]pecial interests become the general interest through the mirage (i.e. faked) ‘representation’ [...] as the space for spectacle grows, the space for citizens’ critical engagement — essential to the healthy functioning of our democracies — shrinks” (374). The theatrical metaphor is used to promote the fallacy of a division between actors and spectators within the public sphere, weakening it. Further, Fitzgerald makes sure to point out that:

The freedom to avoid politics is delusional, of course, since to leave a political system is not at all like leaving a theatre [...] but the illusion allows them to cast judgment on political life without having to get involved. Why would spectators basking happily in this position submit to being forced to become actors when they know both the pleasures of looking without obligations and the kind of scrutiny to which actors are subjected? (54–55)

The real-world impact of policy implemented still holds significance for each citizen, however, no matter the illusion.

What is lacking in the theatre metaphor that dominates the political arena in anglophone liberal democracies is any reference of the immense dialogic capacity of the art form. Goktepe laments, “As the metaphor stands now, under the accumulated dust of time, it reinforces the division between spectator-citizens and actor-leaders” (378). In 1997, while serving as the President of the Czech Republic, Václav Havel asserted:

The significant role that a theatrical sensibility plays in politics is two-edged. Those possessing it can arouse society to great deeds and nurture democratic culture, civic courage, and a sense of responsibility. Such people can also mobilize the worst instincts and passions, make masses fanatical, and lead societies into hell. Recall the gigantic Nazi congresses, torchlight processions, the inflammatory speeches by Hitler and Goebbels, and the cult of German mythology. We could hardly find a more monstrous abuse of politics’ theatrical aspect. And today — even in Europe — rulers use theatrical tools to arouse the kind of blind nationalism that leads to war, ethnic cleansing, concentration camps, and genocide. (par. 12)

In light of the realities of the relationship between drama/theatre and the politics of liberal democracy, it is time for the relationship to take a more formal and active shape — a shape that can harness the dialogic capabilities of the art form to revitalise the public sphere.

Chapter Outline

As attested to above, I have witnessed and experienced the efficacy of applied drama and therefore have a resolute conviction that if this practice is incorporated into the structures of liberal democratic governments via deliberative democratic engagements, it will lead toward greater democratisation and a sustained path for civic engagement. The investigation that follows will support this conviction through historical analysis to gain a broader understanding of what has come before and how

that impacted democratic states, a comparative inquiry into the ideals and underpinnings of applied drama and liberal democracy, a reimagining of what deliberative democracy could be in the form of Creative Democracy, and an analysis of the democratic and deliberative qualities of applied drama in practice, through a series of surveys and interviews with applied drama facilitators from across the globe.

Chapter One evaluates the relationship between drama/theatre and democracy, encompassing analysis on how various societies, governments and individuals have relied upon or used drama/theatre for political effect. Because this research is taking place during a time of global democratic crisis, I will specifically be looking at times in history when there have been large shifts toward or away from democratic practice. Case studies will be presented on the French Revolution of 1789, the Weimar Republic in Germany (1918–1933), the Velvet Revolution in Czechoslovakia in 1989, and Brazil (1960–2000). This chapter illuminates the ways in which varying practices of drama/theatre effect democratisation, providing historical support for the use of dialogic models of drama/theatre as a democratising influence.

Chapter Two addresses why applied drama praxis is ideal for use within liberal democracies. An understanding of the balance of the ideals and principles supporting liberal democracy are drawn from the democratic theories of Jürgen Habermas, Hannah Arendt, Chantal Mouffe, and Charles Tilley. From there, the work of John Dewey, Martha Nussbaum, Rabindranath Tagore, and David Matthews is engaged with to gain deeper understanding of the types of support liberal democracy needs through education and community-building/engagement. Next, the ideals and principles underlying applied drama praxis are outlined to then put those ideals and principles into conversation with liberal democratic ideals. This exploration

demonstrates how applied drama praxis aligns with liberal democratic ideals and how it could be used as a democratising force.

Chapter Three addresses how deliberative democratic practices already being championed within the political science field can be reimagined through applied drama praxis. The chapter will begin with a look at Legislative Theatre practices in the twenty-first century, on account of the practice being one of the inspirations for this research. Next, I will engage in the debate around “liveness” in performance (and political science) to address why online tools cannot be relied upon as the sole or predominant means for addressing democratic crisis around civic engagement. Following this, there is an exploration of the practices of deliberative democracy over the past twenty to thirty years and the major critiques that have arisen from it. Using these critiques as a guide, a theory of Creative Democracy through applied drama will be proposed and detailed.

Moving from theory into practice, Chapter Four outlines the research study conducted for this dissertation and shares the results and analysis of the data collected. The study was conducted to gain a better understanding of the quality of democracy and deliberation within the realised practice of applied drama practitioners from around the globe. This chapter will lay out the methods used for data collection, looking at research and interview design, as well as detailing the methods used for data analysis. Following this, the broad results from the study will be presented, revealing an alignment between theory and practice in regard to applied drama’s potential for democratisation and deliberation. However, the generalised results will then be further complicated through the interrogation of themes and issues of concern that cropped up through the qualitative data.

Within each chapter there will be a section entitled “practitioner’s perspective,” in which I will reflect upon the themes and ideas presented in the chapter through the lens of my practice as a socially-engaged artist and facilitator, as I did in the previous section. This is to firmly establish and situate the voice of the practitioner within the collision of theories and ideas introduced in order to question and consider the assertions made within each chapter. In Chapter One, this section is located at the very end of the chapter. In each subsequent chapter this section will move up toward the beginning, with it finally becoming the first section to be addressed in Chapter Four. This structural movement of the practitioner’s perspective is meant to symbolise the practice moving closer to the surface through the research journey, readying it for action and the next steps beyond the PhD.

In some ways this research is a continuation of Augusto Boal’s Legislative Theatre experiment in Brazil, though it will distinctly diverge from the form that Legislative Theatre took.¹⁵ What remains the same is an understanding of drama/theatre’s ability to connect human beings through the creation of a social community and foster robust and productive dialogue and debate. The current crises in democracy around the globe necessitate innovative approaches that foster a spirit of collaboration and empathy that can be deeply realised. While physical engagement cannot compete with the breadth and scale of exposure that online and mediated tools can produce, there is an argument for the greater depth and quality of engagement wrought through a live experience. Jill Dolan tackles this concept in her book *Utopia in Performance: Finding Hope at the Theatre* when she writes, “I’ve

¹⁵ Legislative Theatre will be expanded upon in the first chapter. For more see Augusto Boal, *Legislative Theatre: Using Performance to Make Politics* (Routledge, 1998).

witnessed the potential of the temporary communities formed when groups of people gather to see other people labor in present, continuous time” (40). In the coming chapters this research will engage with debates around liveness and technology, the separation (or not) of politics and art, and the harnessing of the tools of drama/theatre to manipulate through controlling the narrative or to create and foster dialogue in an effort to firmly establish applied drama as a viable option to help reconstruct the framework for deliberative democratic practices and the public sphere.

Chapter One: Entwined Existence

“If dialogue is essential, then its absence is a violation of the most profound sort. We must be able to signal back, to speak out, especially in situations where we feel we have been wronged. It is so essential that, when dialogue stops and is replaced by the oppression of monologue, we can feel deprived of our very humanity.”

— Michael Rohd (xii)

Introduction

In his first book *Theatre of the Oppressed*, Augusto Boal states, “Those who try to separate theatre from politics try to lead us into error — and this is a political attitude” (ix). Against that political attitude, this chapter presents a series of case studies taken from two centuries that cover the beginnings and evolution of the modern democratic state. Beginning with what R. R. Palmer refers to as the “Age of the Democratic Revolution” in the eighteenth century and travelling through to the end of the twentieth century, this chapter examines movements, playwrights, theorists, artists, politicians, governments, and peoples who wielded (or sometimes stifled) drama/theatre for political effect. This writing will focus on the relationship of democracy and drama/theatre, with specific nations chosen for investigation that recall moments when there is an evolution or revolution that shifts the government away from or toward democracy. Charles Tilley speaks of the state of democracy as being regularly in flux, highlighted when he writes, “democratisation is a dynamic process that always remains incomplete and perpetually runs the risk of reversal — of de-democratisation” (xi). While the smaller nuances of the process of democratisation or its opposite might change subtly from day to day within any given democracy, these moments in history of radical shifts on the democratic spectrum provide key insight for the crises of democracy that are currently underway.

This chapter and the next will further complicate what Margot Morgan boldly proclaims in the outset of her book, *Politics and Theatre in Twentieth-Century Europe: Imagination and Resistance*:

For thousands of years, the study of politics has been understood as inseparable from the study of social life as a whole. Art, religion, history, politics, and morality were all understood as interconnected, as constituted by and constitutive of one another. To segregate the study of each from the others would have been inconceivable to the ancient Greeks, ancient Romans, medieval Christians, philosophies of the European enlightenment, Romantics, and the radical intellectuals of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. An ecological conception of politics, which views politics as part of a dynamic whole that is best understood — and possibly, only understood — as a whole, it still operative in many cultures to this day, and it lost its position of dominance in the West only very recently. (1)

Morgan notes a decline in the more holistic view of the arts and politics in the West that has also been felt by artists.¹ However, it is notable that there are political theorists, such as Chantal Mouffe, who acknowledge “an aesthetic dimension in the political” and “a political dimension in art” (“Artistic Activism” 4). Further, it is telling that many political scientists use the language of drama/theatre to describe and speak about political happenings, such as Charles Tilly’s book entitled *Contentious Performances*, which looks at political struggle through the use of drama/theatre terminology. This chapter aims to elucidate the diverse connections between drama/theatre and democracy through a selective historical frame to provide a foundation for the advancement of the relationship between drama/theatre and democracy in the following chapters.

¹ See Anne Bogart, *What’s the Story: Essays about Art, Theater and Storytelling* (Routledge 2014).

Borrowing from theories of monologic and dialogic discourse used within education, as detailed by Gordon Wells in “Semiotic Mediation, Dialogue and the Construction of Knowledge,” the dramatic activity taking place during these revolutions will be classified in these terms. Wells posits:

one (monologic) mode makes the assumption that there is only one valid perspective, which is put forward with no expectation that there is more to be said, while the other (dialogic) mode embodies the assumption that there is frequently more than one perspective on a topic and that it is worthwhile to present and discuss them.
(261)

While the use of monologic and dialogic discourse theory does not capture all the nuance within drama/theatre, it provides a distinguishable way to speak about the practices of drama/theatre and how they relate to democratisation within these case studies. According to Catherine O’Connor and Sarah Michaels, monologic discourse is “less open to challenge, less open to change, [and] more ‘authoritative’” (277). With an eye toward this research, examples will include the use of censorship over what artists are allowed to create and perform, as well as propaganda used within theatres and by politicians adopting performance techniques to persuade an audience to conform to a point of view. Drama/theatre’s ability to tap into human emotion through thoughtful storytelling makes it a potential tool for use within Maria-Lucia Rusu’s and Roman Herman’s range of harmless/transparent to harmful/opaque propaganda. Alternatively, “[d]ialogic discourse is prototypically realized as discussion” and implies “possibilities for critique and creative thought” (O’Connor and Michaels 277). For the purposes of this research, practices of drama/theatre in which there is multiway communication fostered within the theatre space and/or within the dramatic activity taking place will be categorised as dialogic discourses.

Additionally, the term “theatricality” is employed throughout this chapter in reference to societies/events/people, and so requires definition. For the purposes of this writing, I will align with Sandey Fitzgerald in her assessment of the term, which “describes the conscious staging of an event for the purposes of producing a particular effect, the intentional grafting of theatrical elements onto ‘real’ life” (33). The theatrical elements she writes of include character, plot, staging, spectacle, audience, and aesthetics. This “conscious” staging (arrangement on a public platform/in a public space) includes planning how to present oneself (character) and/or an idea (plot) in front of a viewing public (audience). Employing the philosophy that guides theatre-makers (aesthetics), visually striking displays (spectacle) can be created for use in real life. Not all these elements of drama/theatre are employed in every theatrical event, but some combination is employed as presentation and performance to the public.

Specific case studies within the timeframe will be used in this chapter to show a progression of drama/theatre and its role in society and politics. The drama/theatre laboratory of France leading up to and during the Revolution of 1789 is explored first. Evidence of how audiences during the French Revolution pushed further to expand the limits of their power to use the theatre space to act as a censor or check on the government and assert popular rule is presented. There was a struggle for control within theatres between the governors and the governed. Playwrights and actors during this time also used the stage as a political tool for revolution, and despite the new leaders’ outward attempts to rid the government of theatricality, the new

Convention, National Assembly, and courtrooms became increasingly theatrical through the Reign of Terror,² leading to the fall of the new democracy.

Next, there is investigation of the developments in drama/theatre leading up to and throughout the Weimar Republic in Germany from 1918–1933. The struggle to engage the working class through theatre is illustrated, as the evolution of the Workers' Theatre Movement is traced. Additionally, the work of two prominent theatre artists of this time who actively grappled with the relationship between drama/theatre and democracy, Erwin Piscator and Bertolt Brecht, is presented. Piscator's influence was primarily through practice, as he honed the agitprop (agitation and propaganda) style that would come to be employed by parties on the left and right sides of the political spectrum. Brecht's lasting influence was predominantly theoretical and would have a greater impact on artists globally after the fall of the Weimar Republic and his emigration.

Next, the chapter analyses of the overthrow of the communist regime in former Czechoslovakia, in which theatres played such a crucial part in the revolution that Olga F. Chtiguel (1990) entitled her article on the subject: "Without Theatre, the Czechoslovak Revolution Could Not Have Been Won." This section touches upon the Prague Spring, exploring in deeper detail the subversive forms of theatre that developed in the aftermath. An accounting of the events immediately preceding the revolution and the events of the revolution are presented, with the organisational processes and language of drama/theatre emerging as valuable tools in the democratisation process.

² The Reign of Terror "was a period of state-sanctioned violence" against anyone perceived to be against the revolution lasting from March 1793 to July 1794 (Steinberg, 248)

The final case study deviates slightly from the previous three. While this section will begin and end in Brazil, noting the de-democratisation and democratisation that occurs in the country in the last half of the twentieth century, it will predominantly focus on theatre artist Augusto Boal. Boal's theorising and development of Theatre of the Oppressed throughout his exile from Brazil, and his continued honing of his practice through the creation of Rainbow of Desire techniques and Legislative Theatre offer a precursory model for the proposed practice of Creative Democracy within this dissertation. Boal continued in a similar vein as Brecht in his efforts to actualise his belief that, "the theater is a weapon, and it is the people who should wield it" (*Oppressed* 122), though breaking from Brecht in choosing to embrace the power of emotional sway along with critical thinking. Through the creation of and experiments with his Theatre of the Oppressed and Legislative Theatre techniques, Boal championed drama/theatre's ability to create community, foster constructive dialogue, and encourage problem-solving in a bottom-up approach. Ending the chapter, the practitioner's perspective serves as a reflection on the case studies presented, with connections made to past practice and intentions for future practice inspired by the case studies.

Through the exploration in this chapter, what becomes evident is the impact that using drama/theatre in specific and varied ways has on democratisation and de-democratisation. Correlation can be shown in how and why drama/theatre practices are employed and the expansion or reduction of democracy within a state. Times of decreased democracy correspond with times when the state tightly controls drama/theatre for use in state-driven propaganda, as well as the adoption of

performative techniques by a politician to manipulate and control audiences.³ In other words, periods when the tools of drama are employed for use in a monologic discourse and not open to critique or questioning, correlate with periods of a weakening of democracy. Through these case studies, a connection between increased democratisation and moments when drama/theatre is used as a site for collective assembly and participation, as well as when it is used to create constructive dialogue, will be evidenced.

Because this history focuses on drama/theatre as an active art form in preference to that of a literary form, specific plays are detailed only when they are essential to exposing the interaction between theatrical production and the political sphere. Emphasis in this writing is placed on the power structures involved in making decisions regarding drama/theatre and developing an understanding of what motivates those decisions. Analysing where, when, and how drama/theatre operated, as well as how it was received or acted upon by the audience in relation to the political atmosphere, will illuminate the relationship between the two.

France: The French Revolution (1789–1799)

The period between 1789 and 1799 was a time of tremendous turmoil in France, during which the monarchy was overthrown, a form of democracy was established, and then it was subsequently replaced by a dictatorship. In a time of such political and social turmoil, the theatre flourished. Scholars hold opposing views on

³ Neither “propaganda” nor “theatricality” is being condemned as always being used for nefarious purposes. This chapter will present examples when they are being wielded by the masses, as well as by individuals controlling the state. What is being asserted, however, is that monologic forms of drama/theatre are not as supportive of democratic practices as dialogic modes.

exactly what the relationship between theatre and politics was during the French Revolution, especially when it comes to the inherent theatricality of the political practice of the French Republic. David Wiles writes, “as in Cicero’s Rome and Machiavelli’s Florence, the theatre was a public space where political power was negotiated in time present” (180). The relationship between theatre and politics was fraught with complications, contradictions, and parallels in their development during this time. This can be seen in the use of drama/theatre as a space for asserting popular rule, legislative control over theatres and artists by the government, playwrights’ and actors’ use of drama/theatre as a political tool, and the built-in theatricality of the Legislative Assembly and the National Convention.⁴ Janie Vanpee writes that “each of these areas of public discourse fused with the others so that theatre became politicized and, conversely, political and judicial practice, theatricalized” (50). While many historians have placed great emphasis on the written text (due to the printing press) as being singularly crucial to the social developments of this time, more recently scholars have begun to acknowledge the pivotal role of theatre.⁵ As Susan Maslan notes; “theater was distinct from print culture, then, because it was experienced immediately, emotionally, and collectively” (*Revolutionary Acts* 33). The immediacy and collectiveness of drama/theatre, which aids in community-building, is central to its importance in politics. Additionally, in

⁴ The Legislative Assembly was the legislative body of France between October 1791 and September 1792. The National Convention was a single-chamber assembly and the first government of the French Revolution, lasting from September 1792 to October 1795. For more see Ian Davidson, *The French Revolution: From Enlightenment to Tyranny* (Profile Books Ltd. 2016).

⁵ See Marvin Carlson, *The Theatre of the French Revolution* (Cornell University Press 1966), Susan Maslan, *Revolutionary Acts: Theatre and the French Revolution* (John Hopkins University Press 2005), and Paul Friedland, *Political Actors: Representative Bodies & Theatricality in the Age of the French Revolution* (Cornell University Press 2002).

contrast to reading (which is often experienced as a solitary act), theatre was accessible to all people during this time, even those unable to read and write.

According to Marvin Carlson, thousands of new theatres were created to respond to the times, signifying the value of theatre to the people exceeding that of a place solely relegated to entertainment and leisure (v).

To gain insight into the expansion of theatres during the Revolution, it is important to take account of the status of theatres prior to this moment. While there were a handful of theatres in Paris before the start of the Revolution, three theatres enjoyed royal backing and dominated the theatre market: the Académie Royale de Musique, the Comédie-Française, and the Comédie-Italienne. Carlson reports on the state of things, saying, “three firmly entrenched national theatres, possessing among themselves an almost complete monopoly of all dramatic material, yet increasingly challenged by smaller theatres [were] forced to every sort of subterfuge to present plays” (12). The Revolution encouraged the opening of new, smaller theatres, taking power away from the three national-sponsored companies. Within this context the individual theatre companies began to take pronounced political stands with many of the new companies, such as the Théâtre National Molière, in support of the revolutionaries, and companies like the Comédie-Française holding views more sympathetic to the aristocracy. Their views were reflected in the plays selected for presentation and “certain theatres, most notably the Théâtre de la Nation, now made up of the conservative members of the old Comédie, refused to compromise, and continued to preach conciliation and respect for tradition even in January 1793, while the King was on trial” (Carlson 129). An instructive anecdote to set the tone for the

way in which drama/theatre would be used in the Revolution is the case of *Charles IX, ou l'école des rois*, by Marie-Joseph Chénier.

Maslan writes that *Charles IX* “was the focal point of what was perhaps the Revolution’s greatest debate over freedom of expression” (“Resisting Representation” 30). The play presented the St. Bartholomew’s Day⁶ massacre with a critical lens towards the monarchy and the clergy. The royal censor banned the play in late 1788, but Chénier continued to hold readings and advocate for his play. After the events of July 1789 his “struggle attracted the attention of the popular leaders, who saw in his play’s references to St. Bartholomew’s Day a means for stimulating Revolutionary opinion” (Carlson 22). During a performance of *Ericie* at the Comédie, Georges Jacques Danton, a Revolutionary leader, led a demonstration calling for the production of *Charles IX*. Maslan writes, “When the actors refused to accede to the audience’s demand, citing lack of official permission, the audience responded with the shout ‘No more permissions’, asserting that no permission and no command beyond its own were any longer relevant” (“Resisting Representation” 34). Carlson asserts that, “this demonstration was particularly significant in that it was the first time within memory that a play had been demanded by a political rather than literary agenda. It meant that the new popular leaders considered tragedy a legitimate form of political propaganda” (23). Protests continued in theatres while Chénier continued to protest in the press. In his writings, Chénier championed not only his play, but also freedom of the theatres to match the freedom that had been granted to the press.

⁶ This is an event that took place during the French Wars of Religion in which Protestant leaders were arrested and executed. For more, see James R. Smith “The St. Bartholomew’s Day Massacre and Images of Kingship in France: 1572-1574” *The Sixteenth Century Journal*. 22.1 (1991): pp. 27-46.

Many champions of freedom of the press opposed the same in theatres, agreeing with “Jean-Sylvain Bailly's rejection, in his capacity as Paris's first Revolutionary mayor, of the Comedie-Francaise's request to perform *Charles IX*: ‘I believe that freedom of the press is the foundation of public freedom, but the same cannot be said for the theater in which many men assemble and mutually electrify each other, all of which may tend to corrupt morals or the spirit of government’” (“Resisting Representation” 33).

Finally, on 4 November 1789, the play was approved for production. Maslan argues that, “*Charles IX* was performed and freedom of the theater was established because groups of people — rather than their representatives in the political field or the Habermasian public sphere — demanded that the play be performed” (*Revolutionary Acts* 49).⁷ The political controversy surrounding the production of *Charles IX* exemplifies many of the ways in which theatre would challenge and change politics during the Revolution. The theatre provided a democratic space of representation in which the people demanded that the power of censorship rested with them. This challenge to the royal authority is significant and led to the Freedom of Theatres⁸ legislation — though it did not last long once Maximilien François Marie Isidore de Robespierre and the Jacobins⁹ gained control. The story of *Charles IX* also demonstrates artists’ will to act in the political sphere. The play went on to be prohibited once more by the First Gentlemen of the Chamber, with audiences responding by increasing their calls for it, and winning once again. This struggle for

⁷ Ideas around the public sphere are explored further in Chapter Two.

⁸ This is also known as the Chapelier Law of 1791. It stated that any theatre could exist and choose its repertoire for itself. For more, see Emmett Kennedy. “Taste and Revolution” *Canadian Journal of History*. 32 (1997): 375-392.

⁹ The Jacobin Club was one of the prominent political parties during the revolution and oversaw the Reign of Terror.

control within the theatre between the governors and the governed manifestly illustrates the political power inherent in the form. Regarding representation within the theatre, historian Paul Friedland asserts the “premise that theatrical discourse and political discourse were two specific manifestations of a broader discourse of representation” (86). Friedland goes on to say:

[W]e should also not lose sight of an important fact: only theatrical representation was, at least for the moment, susceptible to innovation. New methods of theatrical representation and new power relationships in the realm of theatrical politics could be put into practice immediately in the theatre, rather than remaining eternally at the level of theory, as threatened to happen in the world of politics. (86)

His observations on the responsive and flexible nature of theatre (which allowed it to be more accommodating to the changing ideas of representation) and the more rigid response of the political sphere was a huge point of contention for the government during the Revolution.

After the establishment of the French Republic in 1792, the concept of representation became an urgent and serious matter that played out in theatres and led to elements of theatre practice being layered into the Convention. The new government grappled with issues of direct and representative democracy. Maslan explains:

the bourgeois understanding of political representation, as Albert Soboul has termed it, entailed the effective absence of the represented, but according to the popular conception, representative politics could only be legitimate when, as in the theater, the citizens themselves exercised immediate supervision, regulation, and control over representation. (“Resisting Representation” 28)

This created friction around the Convention amongst the representatives who had different ideas regarding their role. Some, referencing Jean-Jacques Rousseau, felt

they were rendered obsolete when large bodies of the population assembled because sovereignty reverted to the people, while most revolutionary representatives felt they were elected to represent, relegating the masses as useless beyond elections. This prevailing notion will be further evidenced when the theatricalization of the Convention and the National Assembly is detailed below. The dominant view of representation within the Convention contrasted sharply with what was playing out in the theatres: “because theatrical representation, unlike political representation, was thoroughly subject to direct popular control, the theater constituted, and was widely perceived as, an embodiment of direct democracy and, hence, an alternative to and potential rival of political institutions” (Maslan, *Revolutionary Acts* 30). The revolutionary citizens felt strongly that they should be a censor to the government, and they found a voice and power in the theatres.

Theatres provided a consistent space for popular assembly at which citizens could express their views throughout the Revolution, rivalled only by the gatherings at festivals. Sandey Fitzgerald writes:

In revolutionary France between 1789 and 1794, theatrical productions came under direct control of spectators. For this brief, ‘thrilling if terrifying moment,’ spectators were urged to be actors, making theater ‘a central institution of direct democracy.’ However, spectators rarely took to the stage as performers. Rather, they became more active as spectators. They interrupted and halted performances they did not like, challenged the representations that contravened revolutionary principle, and insisted on the right to decide what could or could not be performed. (146)

One example of the power wielded by the people was the political move to stop theatre on 12 July 1789, in an effort to force King Louis XVI to remove the foreign troops he had stationed around the city. By the fifteenth of July the king was forced to

withdraw the troops, and performances were able to resume shortly thereafter.¹⁰

Carlson also details another incident during which the Jacobins:

went in great numbers to the Théâtre du Vaudeville; it was their intention to avenge their friends Palissot and Chénier, mercilessly ridiculed in the clever playlet entitled *L'Autuer d'un moment*, which was performed that day. But the Jacobin clique was powerless, for the great majority of decent citizens succeeded in reducing the Jacobins to impotent silence. (121)

The audience wielded their power to assert new, democratic words within the space as well:

An actor wished to announce to the public that one of his company would not appear that evening and began, as was customary, with 'Messieurs...' He was interrupted by the observation that there/were no longer any titles but 'citizen.' 'Citizens' he began again, 'Mlle. Jenny...' Again an angry interruption drowned his words. 'So be it. Citizen Jenny...' (Carlson 163–164)

In addition to the heckling and shouting that occurred within the theatre, a practice of note-throwing became popular for a time. The first occurrence is recorded to have been at the Opéra on 22 January 1795, when two poems were thrown on the stage and the audience demanded that the actors read them aloud. Note-throwing was replaced for a short time by bust-throwing, which entailed members of the audience throwing down and destroying busts of Marat.¹¹ The theatres were made into political spaces, less at the will of the artists and those in control of the government — whether Royal or Jacobin — than at the will of the citizens in attendance.

Awareness of the audiences' power within the theatres led to governmental attempts to regulate and control these spaces for their own ends. Prior to the

¹⁰ See Marvin A. Carlson, *The Theatre of the French Revolution* (Cornell University Press 1966), pp. 13–14.

¹¹ Jean-Paul Marat was a journalist, politician, and Jacobin revolutionist. For more, see Peter McPhee. *Liberty. Or Death: The French Revolution* (Yale University Press, 2016).

Revolution, theatre was heavily regulated, as illustrated by the royal censor in the story of *Charles IX*. With the energy created in the beginning of the Revolution, theatres were granted freedom from censorship by the state in January 1791, which included granting rights to playwrights and allowing any citizen the right to open a theatre; however, that freedom only lasted until February 1792. The Jacobins, witnessing the vast influence of the theatre space during those thirteen months, decided to regulate the space once again: “A new and select ‘Commission for Public Instruction’ had been appointed to address the dilemma which theatre posed for the Jacobin government, at once uncontrollable and a cornerstone of education” (Wiles 169). Friedland writes, “[p]articularly after the government moved to the left, in the years 1792–1794, government officials played a greater and greater role in encouraging theatrical productions with overt political messages” (188). In the summer of 1793, the Committee of Public Safety began making “suggestions” and imposing regulations on theatre, banning all but the most extremely patriotic plays. Following the execution of Danton in April 1794, “controls on the theatres [...] increased sharply” (Carlson 192). Despite the tight restrictions, the Jacobin patriots, still interested in promoting their form of representative democracy, remodelled the Théâtre de la Nation to reflect a more democratic space. They removed all box seats and galleries to create an open gallery of seating filling up the audience space, and they renamed the space the Théâtre de l’Égalité (Equality Theatre). In late 1798, the Council of the Five Hundred passed a decree placing all theatres under the supervision of the Directory and restricted the number of theatres to six.

For all the regulations placed on theatres, they remained a vital outlet for assertion of popular will throughout the Revolution, and a potent vehicle for political

expression. For this reason, it is no surprise that elements of theatre began to appear within the ruling bodies in different forms than had existed during the monarchy. The monarchy, much like in ancient Rome, used theatrical elements of presentation to exhibit the divine right of monarchs in lavish displays. The revolutionaries, well aware of this use of spectacle, sought to rid themselves of all theatricality within the government. However, returning to the concept of representation and adding in a desire to rid the government of all theatricality through transparency, Maximilien Robespierre, a revolutionary leader and member of the Jacobin Club, relied heavily on the idea of surveillance by the people. Vanpee writes:

In contrast to the closed chambers from which a small group of royal councillors had governed in seclusion under the monarchy, the vast locales necessary to accommodate the various assemblies of delegates of a government claiming to represent the people resembled the public space of theatres, with a stage-like podium facing the delegates and with reserved space on three sides of the hall for the public spectators. (50)

The paradox of attempting to rid the government of theatricality while simultaneously inviting larger audiences for the purpose of surveillance was something with which the Jacobins constantly struggled. However, the Jacobins insisted that the spectators who assembled observe decorum and remain silent within the assembly halls, which could be viewed as an attempt to create audiences that could be disciplined and repressed. This is also evidenced by the decision to use the guillotine as public spectacle for punishment by the new government (considered to be more terrifying than public hanging). During a session of the Assembly on 4 June 1791, a statement was made asserting that punishment should not be made in consideration of the guilty, but rather in consideration of the public watching. They wanted to set an example, and to do so, they wanted to strike fear into the hearts of

the spectator (Huet 30). This aligns with Michel Foucault's assertion that "the public execution did not re-establish justice; it reactivated power" (49).

However, the behaviour audiences freely exhibited in the theatre (engaging directly with those on the stage) was often mirrored in the assembly halls during legislative or judicial matters. Despite great efforts by the Jacobins and strict regulation placed on the public aimed at making them silent observers, Maslan writes: "Throughout the Revolution, as the Convention's records amply demonstrate, the encouragements, insults, and threats shouted daily from the galleries effectively ratified, amended, and vetoed the deputies' decisions" (*Revolutionary Acts* 26). With the presence of an ever-watching populace in the assemblies, the legislators became actors of sorts. This dynamic is clearly evidenced in the strained relationship between Robespierre and Fabre d'Eglantine,¹² both of whom were distrustful of each other. Robespierre accused "Fabre not of being an actor himself but of making other representatives into actors. By having other deputies speak his words and express his sentiments, and by directing their actions, Fabre shaped politics into a dramatic production of which he was the author" (Maslan, *Revolutionary Acts* 123). Meanwhile, Fabre believed that Robespierre was the one operating behind a mask to gain power. Fitzgerald writes:

With everyone in the 'play,' opening up the legislative session led to such confusion over which citizens were authorized actors and which were acting as spectators engaged in scrutinizing those actors, that the government was forced to prescribe a costume to be worn by officials in order to differentiate between them and ensure

¹² Fabre d'Églantine was a French actor, playwright, revolutionary leader, and member of the Jacobin Club. Fabre had been a performer and playwright prior to the French Revolution and continued to write plays throughout. See Paul Friedland, *Political Actors: Representative Bodies & Theatricality in the Age of the French Revolution* (Cornell University Press 2002), 175-176.

that 'the site of sessions [would] no longer be an unstable scene.'
(146–147)

Thus far, the new government had incorporated from theatre practice the elements of audience, costuming, and “deceptive” actors (evidenced in the accusations levied against each other for behaving in a false manner). While “purging theatricality from politics was Robespierre’s central preoccupation,” the Convention nevertheless decided to make the trial of the king a public affair, further theatricalizing the matter and, in some ways, undermining the new Convention (Maslan, *Revolutionary Acts* 132).

The changing ways in which drama/theatre was used leading up to and throughout the French Revolution can be mapped onto the transitions occurring in the state moving toward democracy and then back to authoritarian rule. Prior to the Revolution, the theatres were controlled by the monarchy and subject to censorship by the state and the church. Three nationally sponsored theatre companies dominated the market, and the narratives within them were tightly controlled. As new, private theatres began to open and the theatre spaces transformed into venues that demanded dialogue between those in the audience and those on stage, so too did the state begin moving toward democratisation, with the formation of the National Assembly in 1789, one of whose tasks was to write a constitution. Susan Maslan explains that “[w]ithin the theater, audiences developed a distinctly popular conception of the legitimate relationship between the representative and the represented” (*Revolutionary Acts* 27). With more theatres operating and audiences demanding the production of taboo plays (such as *Charles IX*), the Freedom of Theatres legislation was passed in 1791, further democratizing the theatre. This ran parallel with another shift toward greater democratisation in the state, as a

Constitutional Monarchy was declared, and the King was forced to share power with an elected legislative assembly. With theatres finally free to produce diverse and opposing narratives and audiences secure in their ability to demand dialogue and assert their desires in the theatre, it is fair to argue that the transformation of the theatre into a fully democratic space was complete. Within a year of establishing a constitutional monarchy, the state progressed deeper into democratisation by abolishing the monarchy and establishing a constitutional republic. This would be the peak of democratisation in France during the Revolution. Theatres were engaging public spaces open for dialogue and free from censorship, and the state was a democratic republic with universal male suffrage. From this point the shift toward de-democratisation began, as the Assembly placed restrictions on engagement for the public who came to view the legal proceedings, and theatres came under censorship by the state again as the Reign of Terror accelerated. Friedland notes that “[g]overnment involvement in theatrical productions would reach its apex in the carefully choreographed festivals and state-subsidized political dramas of the Terror (not to mention the strange spectacle of political executions)” (188). The state began to control the narratives allowed in the theatres (as the monarchy had done) and attempted to end audience disruption within theatres; meanwhile, the new government continued the trend toward de-democratisation, distinctly marked by the dissolution of the National Convention in October 1795 and its replacement by the five-member committee of the National Directory, which suspended elections in 1795. All of this eventually led to Napoleon’s rise to power and the last push back into authoritarian rule.

The French experience of moving from rule by monarchy into a democracy, which was then quickly superseded by authoritarianism, is mirrored in the experience of Germany from 1918–1933. During this time, Germany transitioned from autocratic rule by Wilhem II into democratic governance, and then away from democracy again with the rise of Adolf Hitler. Another parallel to France’s experience is that the theatre was a similarly prominent fixture within the culture and society of Germany. The very same seeds that were planted regarding the power of theatre in French society were also planted in Germany. In 1784, German playwright Friedrich Schiller wrote, “The stage, more than any other public institution, is a school of practical wisdom, a guide through social life, an infallible key to the most secret passages of the human soul” (Schiller 28). Schiller’s influence extended into the nineteenth and early twentieth century:

Schiller’s idealized cult of the theater as an institution of personal cultivation and national consciousness was so pervasive in the imperial era (1871–1918) that nearly every social stratum expressed reverence for its uplifting spiritual power and national mission. (Stark 24)

While the early twentieth century brought innovations to drama/theatre in Germany, the same trends with the use of monologic and/or dialogic forms of drama/theatre at this time yield similar results. It is to “the radically experimental social, cultural, and political laboratory that was the Weimar Republic” (Elswit xvi) that this research turns next.

Germany: The Weimar Republic (1918–1933)

The fifteen years of the Weimar Republic, flanked by the imperial rule of Wilhelm II and the dictatorial rule of Adolf Hitler, was a tumultuous period in

German history marked by exceptional artistic and creative innovation across a range of fields. However, Walter Laqueur, author of *Weimar: A Cultural History 1918–1933*, remarks that “Of all the muses Thalia was closest to the heart of Weimar; the theatre expressed most faithfully the *Zeitgeist*, the stage became almost a national institution” (140). As German imperial rule was nearing its end, there was a push to use theatre as a means for engaging people (predominantly the working class) in dialogue and getting them involved in the political sphere. This is reflected in the inception of the Workers’ Theatre Movement (WTM) in the late nineteenth century and the establishment of the *Freie Volksbühne* (People’s Stage) in 1890. However, throughout the course of the fifteen years of the Weimar Republic there was a notable change, captured by Richard Stourac and Kathleen McCreery when they write about the “shift of emphasis from the agitational to the propagandistic” (119). Although they are referring specifically to the agitprop theatre movement, this shifting had huge impact and significance because of the weight political parties began to put behind agitprop. This adjustment from a focus on agitational theatre, which was meant to activate the audience, toward propaganda represents a move from a more dialogic mode of theatre to a bluntly monologic form — a form that would be successfully adopted by the National Socialist German Workers’ Party (NSDAP).¹⁵ Once the Nazi party gained control, censorship of the theatre (and the threat of imprisonment or death of active artists) was reinstated. What follows will trace this progression within German theatre, starting with a survey of what was happening within theatres leading up to World War I and the establishment of the Weimar

¹⁵ The NSDAP came to be known colloquially as the Nazi Party, and will be referred to as such throughout this chapter.

Republic. Following this, the section turns to the work of Erwin Piscator and Bertolt Brecht, noting their innovations to the theatrical form and explicit political aims. Finally, this section will explore how these new forms of theatre are employed by the major political parties in Germany at this time.

Gary D. Stark writes that “Theater stood at the center of nineteenth-century German culture” (22) and that it “served a quasi-political as well as a cultural function” (23). Stark’s chapter in *The Frightful Stage: Political Censorship of the Theater in Nineteenth Century Europe* outlines how censorship was used to intervene in foreign policy, sustain the image of the royal dynasties, prop up the military, remove any act of social rebellion, and stop the spread of liberal, democratic, and socialist ideas.

Stark notes:

Authorities successfully intervened against many dramatic performances perceived as threatening basic political institutions (such as the monarch, the Hohenzollern dynasty, and the military) [...] They were also able to successfully thwart or limit the use of drama in socialist gatherings, to prevent or restrict access of socialist audiences to tendentious or propagandistic socialist literature, and to prevent the performance of dramas that depicted social insurrection. (59)

Despite heavy censorship across a range of social and cultural activities, “theaters provided one of the few arenas outside church where regular mass gatherings were allowed” (Stark 24). This provided an opportunity for activists, seen most clearly in the establishment of the *Freie Volksbühne* and the WTM.

In the waning years of imperial rule, there was a push by theatre artists and activists to find means of flouting censorship by the authorities through the establishment of private theatre companies like the *Freie Volksbühne*. The establishment of the *Freie Volksbühne* was championed by “a group of workers, who took as their model the newly founded association *Freie Bühne* [The Free Stage] in

Berlin” (Bonnell 124). Taking the form of a private association allowed the *Freie Bühne* and the *Freie Volksbühne* “to evade the censorship that applied to public theatrical performances” (Bonnell 124). Over 2,000 people were present at the first and second meetings to establish the *Freie Volksbühne* (Bonnell 127). The structure of the company was extremely democratic, with all office-bearers being elected by members. Andrew Bonnell further describes the democratic operations thus:

The democratic organisation of the association, and features such as the drawing of lots for seats (as opposed to the class distinctions of different price seats in the commercial theatres), the experience of evading restrictions of police censorship, and the explanation and discussion of the plays’ content from a socialist perspective all contributed, as Brauneck sees it, to — at least partially — ‘building up that dialectical perspective which the plays themselves lacked, which was however a prerequisite for the possibility of the theatre becoming an element of the learning process within the proletarian mass movement’. (174–175)

Despite using the premise of being a private theatre company to evade censorship, it remained under constant surveillance by the police. In April 1895 the *Freie Volksbühne* members were told by police that their performances were essentially public, taking away the protections it had as a “private” company and leading to its dissolution in 1896 (Bonnell 172). However, the company was reconstituted in 1897 and would grow to have over 18,000 members by 1910. Throughout this time and until the founding of the Weimar Republic, the company would continue to have clashes with the police seeking to impose censorship on the company.

While the push for the *Freie Volksbühne* was happening as part of an effort to engage working class people through theatre and undermine censorship laws, the Workers’ Theatre Movement also had its roots in the late nineteenth century and would energetically pick up speed in the early twentieth century. Stourac and McCreery write:

Throughout the second half of the nineteenth century a number of didactic agitprop plays and sketches were produced. Topical and satirical, they were written by party functionaries or pamphleteers, by writers who emerged from the ranks of workers' organizations or by intellectuals who attached themselves to such organizations. (87)

The WTM is important because it not only made theatre more accessible to working class people and involved them democratically in elections of board officials as the *Freie Volksbühne* had done, but the movement also had working class people actively involved in the artistic process, from writing to directing to performing. Stark asserts that “[a]mateur workers’ dramatic societies and dramatic works by and about German workers played an important role in the organized German labor movement, both as recreation and as a means of disseminating reform ideas” (41). In 1909, a defender of the Bremen Free Stage wrote, “There are aspects of the proletarian struggle which become clearer through a play than through a speech for the working class because they *experience* the play... We do not want to reveal higher art... but to stimulate workers to think” (Stourac and McCreery 87). While the start of World War I “accelerated the breakdown of the great, united and balanced dramatic forms into a kaleidoscope of small forms” (Stourac and McCreery 88), the WTM would go on to be quite active during the Weimar Republic.

With the abdication of Wilhelm II and the establishment of the Weimar Republic, censorship on theatres was lifted, markedly exhibited by “a flood of obscenity and nudity” in the German cabaret scene (Lareau 475). John Willett notes that after the establishment of the republic “new directors and new theatres suddenly began coming up and were better able to excite a republican audience” (*Theatre of the Weimar* 98). This is evidenced in directors such as Ludwig Berger, Erich Engel, Jürgen Fehling and Leopold Jessner enlisting “Shakespeare in the defense of German

republican democracy” (Grange 92). For example, Jessner staged *Macbeth* in response to “[t]he murder of Foreign Minister Walter Rathenau in June of 1922 [...] and the idea that supported the production was that of a society thrown into chaos by political assassination” (Grange 93).

The dominant theatrical influence in the early years of the Weimar Republic was the Europe-wide trans-generic aesthetic movement generally known as Expressionism. While Expressionism “offered a kind of aesthetic faith that life could be made whole through an art of intense expression” (Kuhns 19), it was ultimately unable to attend to the political complexities of the time. Laqueur writes, “By 1923 Expressionism in the theatre was finished and the public was eagerly awaiting new plays dealing with real human beings and not with mankind in general. Two new stars began to shine brightly in the post-Expressionist era, Piscator and Brecht” (144), though they would each be shaped in part by Expressionism. Kuhns posits:

Expressionism attempted to revolutionize people’s lives for them within the theatre; Brecht simply sought to prod audiences into assuming this responsibility for themselves once they had left the theatre. (235)

Additionally, an Expressionist influence can be seen through the “emotional orientation toward activism” (Kuhns 230) that continued in Piscator’s work.

The first iteration of Piscator’s Proletarian Theatre opened in October of 1920, performing in various halls and assembly rooms. Piscator sought to bring theatre to the people: “The masses were to be met on their own ground” (Piscator 49). He viewed his choice of place as a political move, the first step toward a political theatre for the people. Tickets to the performances were inexpensive for all and free to the unemployed. Stourac and McCreery note:

Russia's Day, performed at the commemorative meeting of the third anniversary of the Russian Revolution, October 14, 1920, marked the opening of the Proletarian Theatre. It was the first uncompromising German attempt to place the theatre at the service of revolutionary agitation and propaganda. (93)

In agreement with Stourac and McCreery, Hugh Rorrison also contends that the Proletarian Theatre was founded as “an agit-prop (agitation + propaganda) group with the sole aim of developing class consciousness and proletarian solidarity for the struggle ahead, and Piscator pioneered the material which by 1928 was being used by agit-prop troupes in virtually every German town” (Piscator 37–38). In his early attempts at the form, Piscator tried to create space for input from the audience. He worked to eliminate the fourth wall by incorporating voting by the audience into the play, placing actors in the audience to encourage discussion for *Section 218*, and inviting members of the local community to join in the debate happening on stage (Jackson 74). Jackson writes, “Few productions of the time it seems went as far as this one [*Section 218*] did in actually incorporating debate and an audience vote within the play itself, but many did provoke heated discussion after the performance — the desired effect” (74). Stourac and McCreery provide further detail on Piscator’s approach:

He replaced the capitalistic hierarchy with a collective approach. The directing team, actors, writers, designers, and the technical as well as the administrative staff were bound together by their common interest in the work. This equal relationship was extended to the consumers of the product, the spectators. (94)

Piscator’s agitprop approach influenced the workers’ theatre movements in Germany, the United States, and Great Britain, which would prove to be an early inspiration for

what would eventually evolve into applied drama.¹⁴ However, as it was noted earlier by Stourac and McCreery (119), the form itself took a sharp turn away from the “agitational” and toward the “propagandistic” by the end of the Weimar period, leading Anthony Jackson to write, “perhaps no other form represents the propagandist end of the educational/interventionist spectrum more starkly, and energetically, than agit-prop” (67).

The German Communist Party (KPD), with whom Piscator identified, was not initially supportive of his efforts to create a political theatre: “The official line was that theater was Art, and propaganda was propaganda, and the two were not compatible” (Piscator 40). In a press appeal (which also functioned as the programme for *The Cripple*) there was an announcement that the Proletarian Theatre would become the official propaganda platform for the revolutionary workers of Greater Berlin, leaving little doubt that this brand of theatre would be purely about conscious propaganda for communist leanings. The first Proletarian Theatre closed in 1921 with the KPD still dismissing the political value it held.

In 1924, Piscator was contracted to direct Alfons Paquet’s *Flags* at the *Freie Volksbühne*. This production is the first to be described as “epic theatre” by the playwright. The production combined the use of projection screens, puppetry, and music with traditional staging to achieve their desired “epic” effect. This was the start of Piscator’s tenure with the *Freie Volksbühne*, in which he worked to push the company toward a more radicalised, political theatre that would activate audiences. Around this time the KPD “conceded that the theatre might have propaganda value”

¹⁴ See Helen Nicholson, *Applied Drama: The Gift of Theatre* (Palgrave Macmillan 2005), pp. 8-10.

(Rorrison 14)¹⁵ and commissioned Piscator to create a piece to influence “the parliamentary elections of December 1924” (Innes 42). Rorrison writes:

As part of its campaign to prevent votes reverting to the centre as the economic situation improved the KPD invited Piscator to produce a political revue and sent Felix Gasbarra, a Communist journalist, to help him with the script. The revue was a fitting mixture of jazz (by Edmund Meisel), revolutionary songs, acrobatics, slides, statistics and instant drawings. (14)

This performance was known as the *Red Revel Revue* (RRR) and “was meant to demonstrate the relation of events to individuals and to the social framework that gave rise to them and in which these individuals existed” (Stourac and McCreery 103). It was met with so much popular success that “the revue was repeated thirteen times in various districts of Berlin during the run-up to the December elections” (Stourac and McCreery 101). The KPD then commissioned Piscator to create another piece for the party’s tenth conference in 1925. Using historical political documents to inform text and staging, *In Spite of Everything*, a montage depicting recent German history through a communist lens using film, music, newspaper clippings, and photographs was created (Piscator 91–94). The performance spanned the onset of the war through the assassination of Karl Liebknecht, an early leader of the KPD. Recalling the opening night and the full house of attendees, Piscator writes:

Theater had become reality, and soon it was not a case of the stage confronting the audiences, but one big assembly, one big battlefield, one massive demonstration. It was this unity that proved that evening that political theater could be effective agitation. (Piscator 96–97)

The success of both the RRR and *In Spite of Everything* further energised the Workers’ Theatre Movement and inspired more troupes using agitprop theatre to form.

¹⁵ Potentially the start of the shift towards greater emphasis on propaganda in the form.

Piscator would continue to create political theatre in this vein in Germany until he was forced to flee to Moscow in 1933.

Bertolt Brecht, influenced by Piscator's work, endeavoured to expand upon the "epic theatre" set up in Piscator's production of *Flags*. Though it would not be "fully theorized until Brecht's time in exile, its origins can be found in Brecht's plays of the mid-late 1920s: *A Man's a Man*, *The Threepenny Opera*, and *The Rise and Fall of the City of Mahagonny*" (Morgan, "The Decline of..." 84). Further, exposure to and the embrace of the ideas of Karl Marx would heavily influence Brecht's work and ideas beginning in the late 1920s. Morgan contends:

The period between Brecht's first discovery of Marx in 1926 and his escape from Germany in 1933 marks the moment of Brecht's greatest success in achieving the marriage of artistic form and revolutionary political content. ("The Decline of..." 67)

The editors of *Brecht on Art and Politics* suggest that Brecht desired to move even further beyond Piscator's provocation of the audience:

Although Piscator's productions had begun to move in this direction by discouraging the audience from identifying with the perspective of the characters on stage, Brecht wanted to encourage the audience to be much more critical and questioning, by adopting the cool, investigative attitude appropriate to the scientific age. (59)

This eventually led to the "formulation of the *Verfremdungseffekt* (Estrangement-effect), the theorization of the importance of narrative techniques, and the rejection of catharsis in favor of critique" (Morgan, "The Decline of..." 84). The new approach to narrative and emphasis on encouraging critical thought were used to promote *Verfremdungseffekt*, roughly translated early on as the "alienation process", in which "[t]he spectator was no longer allowed in any way to submit to an experience

uncritically (and without practical consequences) by means of simple empathy with the characters in a play” (*Brecht on Theatre* 110).¹⁶ Morgan explains in her book:

By making the familiar appear ‘strange’, he sought to prevent the audience from connecting emotionally with the characters they are watching and redirect their attention to the way the performance is constructed, compelling the audience members to think critically about both the performance and the reality being portrayed. (56)

In general, the plays produced in/by Brecht’s circle concentrated more on the external social relationships of man rather than the internal forces that may cause an individual to behave one way or another. Though Morgan notes, “although the codification of the *Verfremdungseffekt* seemed like an effective way to promote critical thinking among the working class in theory, it had never been tested on the audience for whom it was meant” (“The Decline of...” 102).

Like many others before him, Brecht also observed and gave a great amount of thought to the tension between theatre’s ability and responsibility to instruct as well as entertain. In response to this tension, “Brecht further developed his epic style in the *Lehrstücke* [learning/didactic plays]” (Morgan, “The Decline of...” 84), which “removed the spectators and tolerated only practitioners” (Brecht, *Brecht on Theatre* 117) from 1929–1933.¹⁷ Morgan describes the *Lehrstücke*, writing, “[t]hese plays were short, required no acting training to be performed, and were parabolic in nature” (“The Decline of...” 102). Continuing, she adds that “*Lehrstücke* workshops

¹⁶ “Alienation” is the early translation of *Verfremdungseffekt* that has become influential in speaking about Brecht’s work. While the manner in which Brecht used this in relation to theatre is markedly different from its meaning in the work of Karl Marx, the idea of estrangement is present in both. For more on Brecht’s use of this term see Sean Carney, *Brecht and Critical Theory: Dialectics and Contemporary Aesthetics* (Routledge 2005), pp. 14-20.

¹⁷ Once again, the early traces of applied drama praxis, in which all are participants, can be seen in this approach by Brecht.

functioned as theatrical master-classes without a director. The actors performed the play repeatedly, switching parts as they went along, so that each could experience both judging and being judged” (“The Decline of...” 111). In response to feedback regarding *He Who Said Yes*, Brecht made a practice of pairing the *Lehrstücke* to provide contrasting viewpoints. This approach leaned further into a dialogic form of theatre, as it prompted further discussion for the students working on the pieces. Morgan writes, “[t]he practice of having the *Lehrstücke* plays performed in pairs seemed greatly appealing to Brecht, perhaps because pairing them highlighted the dialectical nature of the issues they portrayed” (“The Decline of...” 106).

By 1929, Brecht was fully committed to the cause of the KPD and found himself contributing more to the agitprop WTM. Stourac and McCreery note that:

in Brecht, Wolf, and to some extent Wangenheim in addition to the best amateur writers who originated in the agitprop troupes the movement at last had the playwrights it had lacked for so many years. (175)

Brecht contributed songs, such as “Solidarity Song,” which would be “performed to drum accompaniment with the backing of 4,000 worker athletes and choirs” (Stourac and McCreery 166). Morgan writes:

this was the only time when Brecht was able to produce works accessible to his intended proletarian audience; when unprofessional workers’ theatres were able to use his work to educate their own; and when Brecht was allowed to witness the interplay between his work and his working-class audience. (“The Decline of...” 67)

Unfortunately for him, it may have been too late to attempt a more dialectic approach, as the propaganda form championed by Piscator had taken hold not only within the KPD, but the Nazi Party as well, which will be discussed below. Brecht’s most expressly agitprop play was his “last production before the Third Reich, a highly

portable, didactic, agitational version of Gorky's 1905 Revolution story *The Mother*" (Willett, *Theatre of Weimar* 142). Produced in 1932, it "was designed to use Russian experience (as Brecht understood it) as political training for a putative German revolution" and "toured the Berlin suburbs, playing in various halls and meeting places, even on one occasion dispensing with Neher's very simple canvas set in order to get around police regulations" (Willett, *Theatre of Weimar* 143). Brecht would continue to work with the KPD and the agitprop Workers' Theatre Movement to fight against the Nazi propaganda forces until his exile in 1933.

Building on the success of the *Red Revel Revue* and *In Spite of Everything*, the Communist Youth League of Germany turned to creating an agitprop theatre group to have political effect. The first Red Revel they produced "was written and performed by its members during the campaign for the Eleventh International Day of Youth" (Stourac and McCreery 104), and the second Red Revel was inspired by "The nation-wide campaigns for the referendum on compensation for the Hohenzollerns (German monarchs until 1918) and other aristocrats" (Stourac and McCreery 105). Both revues were continually updated and performed throughout towns and villages. Stourac and McCreery quote a police report regarding the effectiveness of the revues: "We cannot overlook the fact that the KPD has found a new form of agitation affecting broad masses and making police surveillance extremely difficult" (105). In addition to the youth leagues forming agitprop theatre troupes, the Red Front Fighter's League (RFB) oversaw the creation of many WTM groups, and the KPD established the Workers' Theatre League of Germany "as the umbrella organization that was supposed to direct the activities of the agitprop troupes" (Bodek 68). The Red Rockets, a group based in Berlin, is noted as being particularly active:

The effectiveness of the Red Rockets can be partly measured by their success in recruitment for the KPD and the RFB and winning of subscribers to the Party publications. According to the group's report in 1928 they gave 184 performances in 100 cities to a total audience of 90,000. At 50 of them they recruited 648 members for the RFB. Twenty-five performances in Berlin-Brandenburg resulted in 42 new recruits for the KPD and 112 subscribers to the *Red Flag*. Fourteen performances in Pommern won 138 subscribers for the *Volkswacht* (People's Guard). (Stourac and McCreery 114)

This flurry of activity resulted in the creation of 150 WTM groups by 1930 (Stourac and McCreery 108). Leading up to 1930, the direction of the groups was largely agitational. However, the focus shifted more toward propaganda going forward into the 1930s.

Highlighting this the swift change in focus favouring propaganda is an article from the KPD monthly publication, *The Red Megaphone*, from April 1930: "Campaign-style agitation must now be complimented with more thorough propaganda" (Stourac and McCreery 136). The movement became more energised, and activity increased with Berlin-based groups performing "1400 times, to a total of half a million spectators, recruiting 6,000 members for the proletarian organizations" (Stourac and McCreery 148) in a nine-month period from August 1930 to April 1931. In response to this increase in activity:

The Social Democratic government passed the Law in Defense of the Republic which paved the way for the erosion of democratic rights and the German constitution and, in the end, for Fascism. It was frequently used against the KPD and its agitprop troupes. (Stourac and McCreery 136)

The Berlin police eventually banned agitprop performances at political meetings in 1931. While agitprop would continue to be used by the left through Adolf Hitler's appointment as Chancellor in January 1933 and even a bit during the early days of the

Third Reich, it slowly lost momentum as artists were forced to flee or were imprisoned.

The creation of a type of heavily propagandistic theatre by Piscator and the proliferation of its use by the WTM provided a potent vehicle for spreading the ideas and platform of the Nazi party. Susan Manning noted, in 1930:

In response to political extremism, the leftist-oriented theatre evolved by Erwin Piscator and Bertolt Brecht radicalized. The radicalized theatre chose affiliation with the Communist Party over Social Democratic reformism, and in so doing alienated the middle-class...As street battles between Communists and Nazis became daily occurrences, unemployed actors rallied to organize productions for Communist workers, and the Nazi *Kampfbühne* ('fighting stage') presented its own variety of agit-prop. (212)

Precipitating the rise of the Nazi party in 1930 was the party's use and adaptation of the theatrical tactics honed by Piscator for use by the political left, marked by the success of the 1929 Nuremberg Rally and the formation of their own agitprop troupes. Manning wrote about the creation of *Totenmal*, in remembrance of World War I, by Mary Wigman and Albert Talhoff in 1930:

The seeming contradictions within the script and between the script and staging pointed toward the ideological strategy of Nazi dramaturgy — projecting the illusion of a *Gemeinschaft* ('organic community') to mask the very real divisions of a *Gesellschaft* ('fragmented society'). (221)

Manning also asserted that *Totenmal* contributed to the development of the Nazi *Thingspiel*,¹⁸ a dramatic genre instituted by the Nazi party. It was also a purposefully chosen label, as Glen Gadberry explained:

¹⁸ For more see Henning Eichberg and Robert A. Jones. "The Nazi Thingspiel: Theater for the Masses in Fascism and Proletarian Culture." *New German Critique*. 11 (1977): 133-150 and Glen Gadberry. "The Thingspiel and Das Frankenberger Würfelspiel." *TDR*. 24.1 (1980): 103-114.

The word 'Thingspiel' itself was chosen with regard to political and era-evoking aims: 'Spiel' in this context means simply a dramatic work, a play; 'Thing' is derived from the archaic word 'Ding' meaning 'assembly' and connoting the sacred assembly site of the pre-Christian Germanic tribes, where the racially unified people passed judgment. (103–104)

Invoking a sense of community around the ideas and aims of the NSDAP became an important strategy for compliance and even support from citizens. The *Thingspiele* would also lean heavily on the theme of war remembrance and incorporate both movement and speech choirs, as *Totenmal* had (Manning 222). In February 1933, once the NSDAP consolidated power, “most of the civil rights granted under the Weimar constitution, including free speech, a free press, the right to assemble, imprisonment without trial and the secrecy of telephone calls and post” (McDonough 74) were suspended. Joseph Goebbels was appointed the Minister for the People's Enlightenment and Propaganda in March, at which time he “sponsored the Imperial Organization of Open-air and Community Theater (*Reichsbund der deutschen Freilicht- und Volksschauspiel*) in 1933 to facilitate the *Thingspiel* movement” (Eichberg and Jones 136). While Hitler was not formally announced as *Führer* until 1934, democracy essentially ceased to exist in Germany at this time.

While the ebb and flow between more monologic and dialogic modes of theatre seem to mimic the progression that had taken place during the French Revolution, German artists made their tactics much more explicit. The development of agitprop and the emphasis on propaganda solidified a monologic use of theatre directly tied to party politics, offering a weapon that could be wielded by all actors across the political spectrum, but one which did not ultimately promote the type of

communication and relationships needed to foster democracy.¹⁹ In this study, agitprop was used by those on both sides of the political spectrum, with all interested parties hoping to capitalise on the political effect it had. Employing theatre in this way is harmful for democracy because monologic discourse asserts that only one point of view is valid, and democracies require open dialogue with divergent perspectives. Though Brecht's theorising of a more dialogic model of theatre through his *Lehrstücke* and further development of Epic Theatre was not successful in turning the tide of de-democratisation that led to the end of the Weimar Republic, it would go on to have a far-reaching impact on artists around the globe throughout the twentieth century, notably, Augusto Boal in Brazil and theatre artists in Czechoslovakia.

Czechoslovakia: The Velvet Revolution (1989)

Czechoslovakia's journey toward liberal democracy fluctuated in the twentieth century. It was the only Eastern European country to maintain a democracy between the World Wars that was then able to re-establish democracy following the German occupation during World War II (Brook 40). However, in 1948 the Czechoslovak Communist Party took over, and "political democracy was suspended" (Brook 40) until 1989. The events that occurred in November and December of 1989 (commonly known as the Velvet Revolution) transformed the state into a liberal democracy. Theatre artist and activist Petr Oslzlý asserts that "[w]hat happened in Czechoslovakia on 17 November 1989 is, according to historians, the most momentous fusion of theatre and society in the entire history of world theatre" (97).

¹⁹ See Chapter Two for more on what type of communication supports democracy.

Dennis. C. Beck backs up this claim when he writes, “Establishing through empirical data the significant influence of Czech theatre artists on historical events during the performance of revolution itself is comparatively simple due to well-kept records” (“Setting the Stage” 202).

Immediately following the devastating assaults made by the police on a group of student demonstrators on 17 November 1989, while “[o]n the pavement near the National Theatre great pools of blood remained” (Oslzlý 104), a theatre student from the Faculty of Arts at Brno University interrupted a performance of *Rozrazil 1/88* to relay to the audience and staff what had just happened. Janet Savin writes that on the next day “six hundred Theatre artists and technical staff from the Czech Lands and Moravia gathered in the Realistic Theatre in Prague to react to the attack of the previous day and to the student initiative against it” (138). It was decided that the theatres would go on strike immediately, and that a general strike would be planned for the following week. The Obcunské Forum (Civic Forum), commonly referred to as the O.F., was created the next day, 19 November 1989, in the Drama Club theatre in Prague, with Václav Havel as its leader. Drama/theatre practice went on to inform and aid in the success and peaceful nature of the Velvet Revolution using theatres as sites for civic dialogue, theatrical working methodologies in organising and planning, and the effective communication techniques honed by theatre artists. What follows in this section is a review of the events and state of theatre in Czechoslovakia leading up to November 1989, followed by an analysis of the ways in which dialogic forms of dramatic practice were used to support the revolution.

In 1968 a brief gasp of democratic spirit, referred to as the Prague Spring, occurred in Czechoslovakia. Many of the leaders of this movement “were writers,

literary critics, and almost all were intellectuals of one form or another” (Shepherd 31), with playwright and director Václav Havel as a prominent member among them. The movement was bolstered by Alexander Dubcek, the First Secretary of the Communist Party, whose “idea was to allow freedom of expression, to encourage democratic participation *within* the Party, and to introduce *some* market principles into the economy” (Brook 44). However, the Soviet Union reacted swiftly, invading the country in August 1968 and replacing Dubcek in April 1969, effectively extinguishing the movement. In his book *Modern Revolution: Social Change and Cultural Continuity in Czechoslovakia and China*, Daniel Brook explains why the Prague Spring was not successful, especially compared to the Velvet Revolution almost two decades later:

The Prague Spring, further, was in essence an undemocratic approach to democratic change. The Prague Spring entailed a top-down change in policy, albeit one which acquired some autonomy against civil society. In contrast, the Velvet Revolution, twenty-one years later, was more radical and more democratic not only in its demands and tactics, but also in its nature and demographic composition. The Velvet Revolution was a successful effort by the masses, despite leadership by the intelligentsia and some former leaders of the Prague Spring, in a thoroughly bottom-up phenomenon. (52)

What followed Dubcek was a regime focused on “normalisation,” “which entailed a two-pronged attempt to repress public dissent and buy off the population with material benefits without modifying the party’s monopoly over power” (Glenn 193). In their article “Propaganda Stories in Czechoslovakia in the Late 1980s: Believe It or Not?,” Denisa Hejlová and David Klimeš wrote that “[n]ormalisation was a time when social communication was merely staged theatre, in which everyone knew his or her role” (218). Backlash against the intellectuals, especially writers (including many playwrights), was harsh, and “censorship of the media and arts was re-established the

following September” (Brook 46). This censorship endorsed monologic drama/theatre practice that presented one viewpoint — that of the Soviet Union. Olga F. Chtiguel writes, “[t]he plays of Havel, Josef Topol, Ladislav Smoček, Alena Vostrá, Milan Kundera, Ivan Klíma, Pavel Landovsky, and many others were banned, together with numerous fiction and nonfiction books, journals, and movies” (91). The regime’s use of force to stifle intellectual and creative voices, sets the backdrop for how theatre-makers would adapt and respond in an attempt to sustain the spirit of freedom and democracy.

Mainstream, state-funded theatres in Czechoslovakia were referred to as “stone theatres” and “[t]he activities of the stone theatres were largely administered by the Party’s members who were installed into controlling positions. Frequently, the actors themselves joined the Party in order to advance their careers” (Chtiguel 89). However, Petr Oslzlý describes how drama/theatre in the country resisted the Party’s control by pushing for greater dialogic engagement:

While the attention of the forces of totalitarianism was concentrated on the leading actors of the 1968 Prague Spring, while they were silencing such playwrights as Havel, Topol, Klíma, Kohout, and while they were closing down Krejca’s Theatre behind the Gate and expelling from the theatres such directors as Jan Grossman and Alfred Radok, such actors as Pavel Landovsky, Vlasta Chramostová, Jan Tríska, and others — while all this was happening, at the periphery of their sphere of vision, where their destructive activities scarcely reached, there arose experimental, open, alternative, fringe theatres. Theorists of the theatre later came up with the term ‘authorial theatres’ to describe them. (99)

These authorial theatres operated in what is commonly referred to as the grey zone, “a steadily growing, strong, intellectually dynamic and active sphere between official culture and the forbidden culture of the dissidents and the underground” (Oslzlý 101–102). The theories and techniques of the authorial theatres were “designed to

evade the authorities' control of authorial processes, influence on their productions, and ability to censor or, in a sense, even define their work" (Beck, "Gray Zone" 90). This made it possible to present perspectives that were divergent from the aims of the Soviet Union. The experimenting of authorial theatres led to the creation of many metaphorical, non-verbal performances focused on movement, gesture, and improvisation. Oslzlý writes about the predicament he and other theatre artists were experiencing, stating: "we had to seek a language of symbols, similes, metaphors, and models; we had to return to the past for living and up-to-date themes, we had to free ourselves from plays that already existed and create our own texts through a montage of prose works, factual literature, poetry, and inspiration from the world around us" (99). Authorial theatres maintained a close relationship with their audiences and found ways of getting feedback through direct dialogue with the audience from the stage, as well as "mini-interviews by coat check personnel" (Beck, "Gray Zone" 95). Setting the stage for the role drama/theatre would play in the Velvet Revolution, Beck writes:

Media and government controlled by a one-party regime could not act as public forums for engendering wider historical or social awareness. Neither could independent assembly, since a 'normalization'-era law prohibited twelve or more persons to gather without a permit. The theatre, as the most articulate of venues in which the public could gather lawfully, thus became the prime arena of public self-reflection. ("Setting the Stage" 210)

These small theatres operating within the grey zone formed a dense network throughout Czechoslovakia and "became the primary gathering place for makers and members of parallel culture" (Beck, "Setting the Stage" 215), which would prove to be invaluable in the revolution to come.

Several key events took place in the year leading up to the start of the Velvet Revolution on 17 November 1989. Sociologist Henry Schermer writes:

Since 1988, a power struggle had been developing between the government and the people. The immediate, overt and symbolic issue was the freedom to demonstrate. In principle, freedom to assemble was guaranteed by law. In practice, it was being denied even in private rooms in restaurants. (4–5)

Throughout 1988 a petition “demanding democratic freedom for society and the release of various writers and artists held as political prisoners” (Oslzlý 102) was circulated and gained popularity among theatre artists and audiences. In October, Theatre on a String and HaDivadlo premiered *Rozrazil 1/88* (On Democracy 1/88), what they referred to as a “stage magazine,” amidst large demonstrations in Prague that were broken up by police force. The production was “dedicated to the 70th anniversary of the founding of the Czechoslovak Republic” (Oslzlý 102) and, without mentioning Václav Havel (who was imprisoned at the time) by name, included his play *Tomorrow We'll Trigger it Off*. By December the production was banned. In January 1989 “a huge demonstration was held to commemorate the suicide of Jan Palach, the student who committed suicide in 1969 in Wenceslas Square” (De Candole 9), and Havel was arrested once again. In February, after great support from the public, Theatre on a String and HaDivadlo’s “stage magazine” was given permission to resume performances, and in March a petition for the release of Havel was circulated. By mid-May Havel was released from jail, and

[i]n mid-June a proclamation for freedom entitled ‘A Few Sentences’ was issued. A great many theatre people and other writers and artists were among its original signers. Many more theatre people were quick to sign it afterwards. (Oslzlý 103)

In July, the secret police failed in their attempt to prevent an international theatre festival in which the participants openly expressed solidarity with the artists and

people of Czechoslovakia. Each of these precipitating actions to the Velvet Revolution added fuel to the desire for democracy while also exhibiting the power of drama/theatre to act within the political sphere.

From the start of the revolution, theatre spaces served as public forums. It was in the National Theatre that a student demonstrator communicated to the public the severe police brutality that had been committed on 17 November 1989. The next day theatre artists gathered at the Realistic Theatre and decided to begin an immediate strike affecting all theatres and cancelling the performance of plays. However, it was agreed that:

the theatres would not be closed, but would remain open. Performances would be replaced by public discussions. Theatres would make rooms available for political meetings. The theatre strike spread like wildfire throughout the country. (104)

It was within and through theatres around the country that news of the strike was communicated out to the masses. Martina Klicperová-Baker writes about the significance of theatres in communicating information about what was happening in her article, “Czech Rhetoric of 1989 and Václav Havel”:

It was necessary to spread the news about the uprising. In 1989, electronic information technology was only developing and mass media were under communist control. The information campaign had to be led via personal communication: theaters canceled performances yet stayed open for free political debates — the first free public spheres since the democratization attempt during the Prague Spring of 1968. (S92)

Just as in France during the French Revolution, theatre spaces served as venues for public dialogue around important social and political matters. Theatres became the heart of O.F. activities, with Laterna Magica serving as the headquarters for Havel during the crucial early stages of the revolution. In his article “Competing Challengers and Contested Outcomes to State Breakdown: The Velvet Revolution in

Czechoslovakia,” John K. Glenn analyses why O.F. was successful in their effort to democratise the country, emphasising the role of the theatres and explaining that “the democratic outcome was not given by the breakdown of the Leninist state; rather, it was the result of successful mobilization by the civic movement that linked their demands with striking theater networks, which enabled them to overcome their organizational deficiencies” (187). Glenn’s focus on the theatre networks’ aid in the administration and facilitation of political affairs supports and demonstrates drama/theatres’ capacity to be instructive within political frameworks.

The long tradition of dialogue and collaboration within theatre spaces provided the framework for this peaceful and successful revolution. At a public rally on 22 November, Havel said, “The dialogue between the power and the public has begun. From now on, we all participate in managing this country and, therefore, we are all responsible for its fate” (Schermer 20). Each night during the revolution, theatres across the country “assembled a broad spectrum of social classes and age groups under relatively safe conditions, and provided them with two elements essential to co-ordinated mass action” (Savin 141). Savin continues, describing the two elements:

The first was current, uncensored information about rapidly changing developments. Initially theatres were the only regular source of such information because television and radio remained under Communist control until the end of the first week, and the more liberal Prague newspapers were not delivered to outlying cities. The second important element was leadership in discussion and organisation which, during the first ten days, concentrated on preparation of the 27 November protest strike, especially outside the capitals. (141)

The programmes for these nightly meetings were organised much like the productions of the authorial theatres, with a great deal of collaboration, music,

symbolic metaphor, improvisation, gesture, and movement. Much like an improvisational performance, these programmes were designed to be responsive to all participants, which included the audience. Additionally, personal testimony, daily news, and informational sessions on the current state of education, the economy, etc. were incorporated into the evening. At Theatre on a String, where Petr Oslzlý was an organiser, he wrote that “the evenings always began with the whole audience watching the news on a TV screen” (106). From there the content and focus of dialogue for the evening would often flow.

Outside the theatre spaces, public demonstrations conducted by O.F. were organised just as in the theatre:

Theatre people in Civic Forum drafted each demonstration, with Havel, the playwright, preparing a ‘scenario,’ to which others proposed additions and developed details. Structurally they reflected the strike evenings’ montage dramaturgy, with songs and readings providing an entertaining and emotionally cathartic complement to the speeches by various dignitaries, dissidents, and visiting émigrés. (Beck, “Setting the Stage” 204)

Oslzlý, who helped to coordinate many of these events, writes, “If we needed to come to quick agreement, we used theatre jargon” (107). Drama/theatre language and structure informed not only the planning, but the “in-the-moment” operations of each demonstration. Theatrical symbolism can also be found in the demonstrators’ actions. Schermer writes, “Bells ran, sirens wailed, cars hooted, demonstrators rattled their bunches of keys. The meaning is: for them the bells toll — in other words, they have had it (literally, ‘maji odzvonino’ = the bells have tolled their end)” (22).

Bundled into the use of theatre spaces as public forums and drama/theatre practice informing the structure and aesthetics of events is the last component of what drama/theatre contributed to the revolution: enhanced communication skills.

Janet Savin attributes the “remarkable freedom and richness of exchange between speakers and crowds” (145) to the actors’ capacity for meaningful dialogue with the public. She goes on to describe how:

actors everywhere articulated arguments (some of which were worked out by other theatre personnel, and by representatives of Civic Forum and Public Against Violence) which focused popular discontent on concrete issues and carried specific instructions for the organisation of the strike, which alleviated fears of disorder and damage to the economy. (151)

The effect of the tools that theatre artists use to hone communication skills was elevated in Janet Savin’s account of the Velvet Revolution, in which she consistently points to the power and efficacy of the artists’ speech. Beck remarks, “Without such dialogue and the sense of good will and tolerance it fostered, Savin concludes, ‘dismantling the economic and political structures of Czechoslovak socialism would have been a longer and more difficult process’” (“Setting the Stage” 205). It is important to note for this research that although the formalised study of ‘applied drama’ did not begin until the 1990s,²⁰ this use of the tools of drama/theatre within a social and political setting to foster community and dialogue by Czechoslovakian artists resonates with the practice of the burgeoning field.

The success of the Velvet Revolution and the democratisation of Czechoslovakia is notably linked to the theatres and the drama/theatre methodologies and practices that supported it. John K. Glenn details how the theatre-led movement’s success was not inevitable, as it had competing challengers (reform

²⁰ See Helen Nicholson, *Applied Drama: The Gift of Theatre* 1st Edition (Palgrave Macmillan 2005).

Communists, the Democratic Initiative, and Slovak nationalism) who were unable to organise and connect with the public as Civic Forum had (Glenn 195). Glenn notes:

While the removal of the Soviet threat was a necessary condition for the movements to occur, it is far from a sufficient condition for explaining the form of reconstruction of Leninist states. By analogy, to say that the French monarchy had been fatally weakened in 1789 is not to explain the outcome of the French Revolution. (192–193)

The ability of Civic Forum's leadership to incorporate dialogic drama/theatre processes into the structure of their organisation and the effectiveness of that choice in the creation of a democratic state has implications and potential solutions for solving the current crises in democracy.

Brazil: Augusto Boal (1945–2000)

In the twentieth century Brazil transitioned between democracy and dictatorship multiple times. In 1945, the dictatorship of Getúlio Vargas was overthrown, and a democratic republic was established. Brazil would go on to have six presidents (with only two completing their full terms) before the military coup in 1964, dragging the country back into a dictatorship (Marshall 193). Cláudia Tatinge Nascimento relays in her book, *After the Long Silence: The Theatre of Brazil's Post-Dictatorship Generation*, that “[b]etween 1964 and 1969, the military dictatorship would decree 17 Institutional Acts. They were nicknamed ‘unconstitutional acts’ by civilians; though in fact unconstitutional, these decrees were promulgated to grant ‘legitimacy’ to military rule” (24). During this time the military “arrested, interrogated, tortured, and ‘disappeared’ countless Brazilian students, activists, intellectuals, clergy, artists, journalists, and workers in its various headquarters until 1985” (Tatinge Nascimento 28). Tatinge Nascimento goes on to write that, “Though under threat, theaters became sites for resistance, places for public congregation and

conversation” (28). In 1985 the dictatorship came to an end, and democracy was restored in Brazil under the New Republic.

Augusto Boal began his revolutionary style of using drama/theatre to promote social change in the 1970s by translating Paulo Freire’s ideas in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* into a theatrical framework using (what is now known as) applied drama. Freire’s pedagogy is rooted in dialogue. He writes that “[h]uman beings are not built in silence, but in word, in work, in action-reflection” (Freire 69). In her contribution to *A Boal Companion*, “Critical Interventions,” Deborah Mutnik writes:

Freirean pedagogy and Boalian theatre are revolutionary in their commitment to struggles for social and economic justice; however, they do not aim to convert students to a particular organization or political philosophy. Their aims are broadly nonsectarian rather than narrowly political. (Cohen-Cruz and Schutzman 43)

The idea that applied drama is useful as a non-partisan approach to engaging participants in dialogue around social and political issues is an integral and critical aspect of this exploration. In advocating for the use of applied drama methods as a means of working, it is necessary to divorce the approach for meaningful dialogue from affiliating it with any conservative or liberal political ideology. On the contrary, the proposal made by Brecht, Boal, and reiterated by this research is to allow drama/theatre to facilitate thoughtful dialogue around critical issues facing society.

Upon returning to Brazil in 1955 after several years in New York, Boal became heavily involved with the Arena Theatre.²¹ Over the course of his fifteen years with the company, Boal aided in developing Brazilian theatre and experimenting with the

²¹ The Arena Theatre has been recognised as having an important role in the development of Brazilian theatre and was founded only two years before in 1953 by José Renato. For more see Frances Babbage, *Augusto Boal* (Routledge 2004), p. 9-10.

agitprop form that Piscator championed, as well as employing Brecht's *Verfremdungseffekt* techniques. The most successful of these pieces was *Arena Conta Zumbi* in 1965, following the military coup of 1964. Milleret writes, "*Zumbi* was an extremely popular play, not only because its music, movement, and color were very entertaining but also because it succeeded in meeting the political expectations of its audience that went to the theatre as an act of protest" (25).²² This play moved Arena Theatre's work from merely raising consciousness of the political turmoil in Brazil to "uniting the viewers in an orchestrated demonstration of protest and resistance" (Milleret 24). Frances Babbage asserts that "Arena was able to recount and celebrate a past struggle against despotism and through this, offer implicit condemnation of the new dictatorship" (13). It was during the development and experimentation of his production *Arena Conta Zumbi* that Boal created the Joker system, which was "conceived as a means of presenting story while simultaneously examining its implications and relevance" (Babbage 14). The Joker and the idea of "Jokering" become crucial elements of Boal's work, especially in his Forum Theatre. Initially, the Joker (a wild card) is given the power to pause action, comment on, and/or alter the story in an effort to explore the play's significance. The role of the Joker in Boal's work continued to evolve into a form of facilitator for the audience to engage with the pieces on a deeper level.

Shortly after *Arena Conta Zumbi*, the intensity of the political situation in Brazil was elevated, and "Arena's activities became increasingly threatened, first by

²² *Zumbi* was produced just after a military coup in 1964 which transformed the government into a repressive military dictatorship that would last for twenty-one years. For more see Micheal Reid, *Brazil – the Troubled Rise of a Global Power* (Yale University Press 2014.)

censorship, then by the physical aggression of the military and its ultra right-wing supporters” (Babbage 14–15). In 1971 Boal was arrested, held for three months, and tortured. Reflecting upon this experience in *Hamlet and the Bakers Son: My Life in Theatre and Politics*, Boal revealed the extent to which artists were targeted by the regime, writing, “[s]ince 1969, that cell had always housed a member of Arena: a captive bed” (293). Upon his release he and his family were exiled, first going to Argentina and then Peru. Boal continued his journey of adapting drama/theatre techniques to be increasingly dialogic in Peru in 1973, when he was invited to take part in a national literacy campaign. In their book, *Playing Boal: Theatre, Therapy, and Activism*, Cohen-Cruz and Schutzman note that it was during this campaign that Boal

developed image theatre, a technique that privileges physical expression over the spoken word. Through a series of workshop-based experiences, the human body is used as an expressive tool to represent, non-verbally, a wide repertoire of feelings, ideas, and attitudes. This versatile form reflects Boal’s belief in the body as one’s most essential tool in transforming physical sensations into a communicable language and altering everyday space into a theatrical arena, or aesthetic space. (3)

Throughout the course of the ALFIN literacy project in Peru, Boal continued to establish techniques such as Simultaneous Dramaturgy, Invisible Theatre, and Forum Theatre, which would become part of his arsenal of Theatre of the Oppressed (TO). Babbage notes that “other techniques, such as Newspaper Theatre, had originated at Arena, but were not re-presented as part of the Theatre of the Oppressed system” (21).²³

²³ The concept of using newspapers as source material for dramatization dates back to the Futurists in Italy in the early twentieth century and was used in various other contexts and countries, such as the Federal Theatre Project in the US, before Boal coined “Newspaper Theatre” in the 1970s. For more on “Living Newspaper” see John W. Casson, “Living Newspaper: Theatre and Therapy.” *TDR*, 44.2 (2000): 107–122.

Forum Theatre played (and continues to play) a pivotal role within TO work and functions as a critical and central polestar within Legislative Theatre. The practice entails working with a group of participants to create scenes or an entire play centred on a meaningful issue for that community. Once the performance has been created, the participants assign roles and rehearse for a public performance. Once the performance has taken place one time all the way through, the Joker steps in to invite the audience to intervene. The performance begins again, and audience members are encouraged to stop the action and try out an idea that they have for bringing about an outcome they find more desirable by stepping into the role of a character onstage. The remaining actors are trained to remain true to their characters and react/improvise around this change in the story. After each intervention the collective assembled is given an opportunity to evaluate the new idea, facilitated by the Joker. This is repeated as many times as an audience member has a suggestion, or there is time. Boal's intention through this technique was to allow participants to "rehearse forms of struggle and then return to reality with the images of their desires" (Boal, *Legislative* 10). Creating a Forum Theatre performance is often the end-goal for a great deal of TO work and is a pivotal step toward the creation of legislation within Legislative Theatre.

In the mid-1970s, when the political climate worsened for him throughout South America, Boal and his family went to Portugal, and later France. It was during his exile that he first published his manifesto, *Theatre of the Oppressed*, in which he identifies three key concepts that resonate throughout his work: theatre is always political, participation in the process is crucial, and empathy is a tool that can be wielded to oppress or liberate (Babbage 45). Boal expressed in a later publication that

“[t]he Theatre of the Oppressed, in all its various modalities, is a constant search for dialogical forms, forms of theatre through which it is possible to converse, both about and as part of social activity, pedagogy, psychotherapy, politics” (*Legislative* p. 4). Although his initial premise was rooted in physical, outward oppressions that he faced in South America, it was in Paris that he adapted his techniques to be able to contend with the internal (or psychological) oppressions he encountered while working in Europe. He referred to these as the Cop in the Head techniques and continued to expand on this system into the 1990s, eventually publishing *The Rainbow of Desire: The Boal Method of Theatre and Therapy* in 1995.

With democracy finally restored in 1985, Boal returned home to Brazil in 1986 upon invitation by the then-Governor of Rio de Janeiro, Darcy Ribeiro — though it would be another four years until the country held an election by popular vote for the presidency. Ribeiro provided six months’ funding to set up something similar to the Centre for Theatre of the Oppressed (CTO) in Paris as part of his Integrated Centres for Popular Education (CIEPS). This lasted until Ribeiro lost his re-election in 1987. In 1992, as more of a symbolic gesture than anything, Boal decided to run for election to the city council in Rio de Janeiro. He ran his campaign using TO practices to engage and converse with the citizens of the city, and to everyone’s surprise (including his own), he won. He writes of the event, “I would not have to give up my previous theatrical activity to start a new life as a parliamentarian. The one would be the extension of the other: anyone who voted for me would know what they were doing — theatre and politics!” (*Legislative* 15). This was the start of Boal’s experimentation with what he dubbed Legislative Theatre, a dialogic process that

became integral to the structure of the small part of government he oversaw and to the creation of legislation while he was in office. Babbage notes:

During the period Boal held office — from 1992-1996 — nineteen theatre groups were organised which operated in different parts of the city. Through the work of these groups, with Boal as legislative channel, thirteen laws were passed covering issues from sexual discrimination to the protections of crime witnesses. (28–29)

The remainder of this section will dedicate itself to the practices and structures that comprised Legislative Theatre to provide greater context for the advocacy of applied drama within deliberative democracy in Chapter Three.

Enabled by his election to the position in 1992, Boal attempted to completely remake the existing system used by the *vereadores* (city councillors) in Rio through his Legislative Theatre project. While it included his TO techniques, the new system included changes to the structure of the political office that Boal held. He divided his office into two segments: an internal cabinet and an external cabinet. The internal cabinet handled administrative tasks such as maintaining mailing lists, office support, press, legal business, and the Chamber in the Square. The only notable internal cabinet modification was the Chamber in the Square. In this practice, a question is put to various communities by Boal's office, accompanied by written material on the topic (the law as it stands, relevant studies, etc.) in advance. Following this, a session would be held to discuss the question at hand. Boal stressed the need for the presence of a legislative assessor to clarify legal points being debated, for the Jokers to report back to the communities the results or steps that were taken following the session, and for summaries of each session to be written up for later use in drafting and preparing actionable agenda items. The external cabinet is where the Jokers primarily resided, and TO techniques were employed within

communities to create Forum Theatre performances. Through his position Boal was able to hire five full-time and ten part-time artists to act as the Jokers. The communities engaged by the Jokers are referred to as nuclei and links, both of which are created by location and/or interest. Nuclei constituted official TO groups, while links interacted with Boal's group only periodically. Within this structure performances were created, and through the Forum Theatre process summaries were generated, detailing main points of each performance and feedback that was given. In what he referred to as the Metabolising Cell, Boal and his staff would go through all the summaries to find common issues/themes that are raised in order to draft legislation or for further consideration within the Chamber in the Square.

As innovative and participatory as Boal's Legislative Theatre was, it is important to evaluate the weaknesses of the approach in addition to its effectiveness. Within the nineteen nuclei groups formed through this experiment, TO practices were utilized for the purpose of creating Forum Theatre performances. To this effect, participants had to agree to a significant time commitment to participate. Because the goal involved a public performance of a piece of theatre for an audience (albeit an audience encouraged to participate), devising and rehearsing was pivotal to the process. Both of those processes are time-consuming and rely heavily on the participants for generation of material, as well as presentation of it. How sustainable is this process if it were to be implemented in local governments around the world? How many citizens would have the time to commit, even with genuine interest to do so? This could potentially alienate some citizens from being able to engage with it, which is something that will also be evidenced later in evaluating the attempts at employing Legislative Theatre that followed Boal's initial project in Brazil. In *Theatre*

of the Oppressed Boal maintains the concept of the “audience” within the work, which inherently creates a barrier between himself and his citizen-audience, as well as the performers and the observers of the Forum Theatre shows. While he does address that the audience’s role is open to change through the invitation by the Joker to make suggestions and step into role, the language still speaks to division and barriers within the work. This division is another aspect that needs to be carefully looked at for the implementation of drama/theatre practice within political spaces, if the goal is to engage all citizens who have chosen to be present.

While it is difficult to uncover how every other *vereador* organised their offices, what is irrefutable is Boal’s hiring of artists and emphasis on the use of the language of theatre as a means for creating dialogue within the community, leading to the creation of legislation. He was also noted as being the only *vereador* who brought legislation to the City Council that originated within the community, formed by the people of Rio de Janeiro. The system Boal created actualises an aspect of Habermas’s “public sphere” that he speaks about when he refers to the publicum in eighteenth century Europe as “the abstract counterpart of public authority” and the emergence of the “public sphere of civil society” (Habermas 23). Boal comments in *Legislative Theatre* how uncommon it was for other politicians to engage with the public, writing, “it is only in the period leading up to the elections that the people and the politicians get to meet on a daily basis; afterwards they don’t meet again till the next elections” (17). For the duration of his term in office, Boal was successful in his effort to engineer a method of democratic process that more fully engaged the population and led to concrete, actionable legislation. However, this practice proved to be unsustainable once Boal was removed from office. No other *vereador* took it

upon themselves to adopt this methodology for use within their offices. Can Legislative Theatre function without a theatre practitioner in office? What incentive is there for career politicians to completely alter the manner in which they work in order to implement this system? Is there another way to incorporate applied drama practices (a larger field that TO techniques fall into) into governmental process that could be adopted by career politicians?

Boal's achievements with the first Legislative Theatre project in Rio are evidenced by the thirteen laws that were created and voted in through the project, as well as two amendments to previous laws that were also borne out of the process. He also succeeded in activating and engaging large swaths of the citizenry of Rio in civil discourse that had previously only participated at the ballot box or not at all. Despite these accomplishments, Boal and his Jokers faced a great deal of opposition, specifically from the mayor. According to Boal the mayor twice (at minimum) vetoed legislation put forth by Boal using Legislative Theatre and was twice overturned by the City Chamber. He makes note of career politicians funded by special interest groups who opposed his methods. These forces prevailed when Boal was not re-elected to a second term. Despite working without pay for a brief time, the Jokers and Boal eventually had to cease their engagement and dialogue within the communities to seek paid employment.

In the wake of Boal's cardinal experiment with Legislative Theatre, there were two more attempts by Boal in the twentieth century to continue the practice that have been documented. Both took place in the mid-1990s, the first in Munich, Germany and the second in Paris, France. While Boal writes about the projects in Germany and France as extensions of Legislative Theatre, both were set up as

temporary projects with fixed timelines, and neither project operated in cooperation with any governmental office. He acknowledges the limitations of the Munich experience, writing that it would be a “pale version” of Legislative Theatre (Boal, *Legislative* 118). To that end, the four-day workshop in Germany resulted in a performance that was attended by the Deputy Mayor of Munich, as well as a representative from a local political party. The representative took the proposals created through the process back to the party for consideration. In Paris, Boal was given two months for the project, which involved working with children. The final performance was predominantly attended by activists who then took the proposals generated for use in their activities. Despite Boal writing about these projects as an extension of Legislative Theatre, they bear little resemblance to the system he created in Brazil.²⁴

Augusto Boal’s life work revolved around the idea of engaging and supporting people to create social change through drama/theatre. Doug Paterson writes:

While we can’t credit Boal with inventing a highly improvisational approach to theatre, we can credit him with formulating an extensive political aesthetic for theatre and with inventing forms of theatre practice, such as Forum and Image Theatre, designed especially to include people who had never been in or even to a play and who, by reason of their oppression, cried out for dialogue.
(Rohd xi)

Boal worked tirelessly to share the tools of drama/theatre with everyone in an effort to even the playing field. For hundreds of years politicians and the powers that controlled the state have controlled the narratives, elevating some and suppressing others. The power to control story cannot be understated within a civil society. Boal’s

²⁴ See Augusto Boal, *Legislative Theatre: Using Performance to Make Politics* (Routledge 1998), pp. 113-124.

work also champions the dialogic tools used within the drama/theatre process that aid in creative problem-solving used to create Forum Theatre plays and scenes. These are the tools and methodologies of applied drama. The potential for solely utilising the process-based practice within and in coordination with democratic procedures will be explored in the chapters to follow.

Practitioner's Perspective: A democratising force

On the surface, the findings of this chapter don't quite feel very revolutionary to me — as an artist I have witnessed first-hand how drama/theatre can create a sense of community and a space in which meaningful dialogue can take place, which is in itself a democratising force.²⁵ What *was* impactful to me is having four historical case studies presented side-by-side which tangibly illustrate that drama/theatre has served as a democratising force for nations in a meaningful way in the past. Equally compelling for me is the trend throughout the case studies that demonstrates the distinct influence that using the art form in monologic and dialogic ways has on the process of democratisation (or its opposite.) Once again, while it is what my intuition would expect, it is nonetheless validating as a practitioner to have evidence of drama/theatre's impact in democratic contexts.

The effect this research has had on my practice has been subtle — it has brought about a meaningful awareness of the choices I make within applied drama settings to facilitate in more democratic ways and caused reflection on past projects. The case studies presented in this chapter have revealed an element of my practice that was always lying under the surface, but had not yet ascended into my

²⁵ This notion will be expanded upon in Chapter Two.

consciousness concerning *how* democratic my practice was and *how* I could make intentional, pre-planned and spontaneous choices as a facilitator to deepen that democratic practice or move away from it.

Thinking about democracy as a process and how it moves across a spectrum toward deeper democratisation or more shallow forms of democracy has complicated the way in which I think about applied drama work. Earlier in my facilitation career I would have considered the practice “democratic” in embarrassingly simplistic terms and without the nuance which this continuum brings. For example, I would have described my practice working with young people in schools and working with adults in community settings both as democratic. However, that is now complicated by factoring in this spectrum of democracy and how a process can engage in expanding or restricting that notion — though I still hold the conviction that the process *does* continue to operate on the democratic spectrum.

For reasons having to do primarily with safety, the democratic ethos of the practice is a bit more restricted in my work with young people — even more so in school settings in which the rules in place in that environment might further restrict the amount of creative freedom and topics for exploration. As a facilitator in these environments I endeavour to create space for young people to explore ideas and topics that are important to them, though often the topics are chosen by the powerbrokers who invite me into the space. This restriction of the choice for topics to address is a de-democratising force. Further, participation in these settings is typically mandatory, as required by the school, with the only option for choosing not to participate resulting in some form of penalty, such as detention or the lowering of a grade. While I am not always in control of these factors, they nevertheless influence

my planning and how I facilitate the formation of a creative environment that is somewhat bounded by rules that do not allow for each participant to freely opt in or out. For example, I make sure that there is a range of acceptable levels of participation, so that within that range the students may choose the level at which they are most comfortable and move between those levels. Even so, I have found that my practice within this setting — in terms of a deep or shallow democratic process — is one of the shallower, alongside prison settings and juvenile detention centres.

Depending on the length of the project and the levels of trust and collaboration achieved, I have managed to deepen the democratic qualities within my practice in schools. I am thinking specifically about a project I did with a group of teenagers in a leadership class at Evans High School in Orlando, Florida in 2013. I was invited in by their teacher, who was interested in exploring a novel they had read entitled *The Twelve Tribes of Hattie* by Ayana Mathis. The novel describes the five qualities/traits present in relationships: responsibility, respect, understanding, labour, and caring. We began by exploring these concepts in the ways they appeared in the novel, but slowly the students began to independently relate that to their own



FIG. 1. AN IMAGE OF THE OPENING TABLEAU FOR SIMILAR DIFFERENCES, THE DEVISED PERFORMANCE CREATED BY THE LEADERSHIP CLASS AT EVANS HIGH SCHOOL IN MARCH 2013. TAKEN BY COURTNEY HELEN GRILE, 2013.

experiences. In the first three sessions the students explored this work through the exercises I brought in, and I noticed that they were particularly drawn to storytelling exercises and image exercises, so I leaned into those but began to bring in options to let them choose which they would like to do rather than simply guiding them to the activity I had chosen. By the end of our time together the students had begun to make changes and variations to activities and exercises I had previously introduced to suit their needs, taking on more and more of the leadership role, and I was able to step back and support. Ultimately the students expressed a desire to create and share a performance based on what they had learned through their exploration together. While the initial prompt was a novel chosen by their teacher, the learning ultimately ended up occurring through the process and was constructed by the students. What they eventually ended up performing was the embodied knowledge they had built together which expressed how they felt about their place and role within their school and the society at large — as a group and individually. This was bookended in the performance by the tableau shown above in figure 1, which they created to express their individuality and the community they had formed with each other.

Reflecting on that experience, I can see how further democratisation of the praxis within the school setting occurred within this single project. On the opposite end of the spectrum lies my work with neurotypical adults in voluntary community settings which allows for the broadest extent of freedom of choice, shared power, dialogic exchange, and collective knowledge creation in my practice. However, after researching the history of drama/theatre and democracy across this chapter's four case studies, I consider all the various contexts in a more nuanced way and challenge myself to find a way to facilitate a more deeply democratic practice no matter what

the setting — even as a form of resistance and subversion within the more restrictive settings of schools, prisons, and juvenile detention centres.

Chapter Two: Complementary Practices and Processes

“Theatre allows us to converse with our souls — to passionately pursue and discover ways of living with ourselves and others. We are all artists, and theatre is a language. We have no better way to work together, to learn about each other, to heal, and to grow.”

– Michael Rohd (xix)

Introduction

In the eighth chapter of his book *Theatre and Performance in Digital Culture: From Simulation to Embeddedness*, which looks at “aestheticizing” politics, Matthew Causey observed: “It is a common perception in twentieth-century critical theory that the mixing of art and politics is dangerous” (153). This perception was no doubt elevated after witnessing how the fascist regimes of Mussolini and Hitler harnessed the power of the arts to promote their movements during the twentieth century. The previous chapter outlined some of the ways in which Hitler used theatre and spectacle, in particular, to promote his agenda and gain power. Writing of Mussolini in his article “Learning from Fascism,” Ara H. Merjian noted:

the means through which single citizens could experience being part of a superior whole, however racist or hateful, proved dangerously compelling. Certainly, the average Italian could take heart in the heroic allegorical figurations which swelled all manner of murals and sculpture. The commercial cinema (which Mussolini at one point deemed Fascism’s “strongest weapon”) offered everything from melodrama to colonialist fantasies into which viewers could project their narrative of national self-awakening. Even in the collective euphoria of mass rallies, or the cartooned vignettes of a child’s school textbook, or group calisthenics under the exhortations of the Duce, Fascist subjects saw themselves reflected in a unified body politic— an everyday performance of high-flown ideology. (71–72)

These examples alone reveal why political scientists and theorists grew wary of the combination of art and politics — and to be sure, there are more throughout history.

However, as the previous chapter also revealed, the arts (and drama/theatre in particular) can also be used as a democratising force.

Applied drama praxis came into being as a codified subfield within drama/theatre at the end of the twentieth century, just as liberal democracy had gained a temporary victory over the rival ideologies of communism and fascism.¹

Helen Nicholson noted:

it is significant that the emergence of applied theatre as a field of study and praxis coincided with a period in the 1990s described by Baz Kershaw as ‘a new world order’ and by Zygmunt Bauman as ‘an age of uncertainty’. In this period of social change, political theorists and cultural critics have been renegotiating and re-envisaging Western democratic traditions following the collapse of the Cold War dualisms and the subsequent fragmentation of the political Left. (*2nd edition* 13)

The emergence of applied drama as a creative praxis was, in part, a response to the threat imposed to liberal democracy by communism and fascism. Artists created the form to bolster and be more responsive to liberal democratic practice.

This chapter sets out to expose why the mixing of politics and the art form of applied drama could hold promise for liberal democracies in the twenty-first century and beyond by exploring more deeply the underlying values of liberal democracy in conversation with applied drama, the subfield of drama/theatre defined in the introduction as supportive of dialogue and collaboration. This will be done by analysing what is meant by “liberal democracy” in this introductory section, and then exploring in greater depth the components that support it — the public sphere, education, and community — in the two sections to follow. Pushing forward, a thorough investigation of applied drama and the ideals and principles that underpin

¹ See Francis Fukuyama, *The End of History and the Last Man* (Penguin 2012).

it will reveal that the ideals and motivations of liberal democracy and applied drama run parallel to one another. Building upon the understandings of applied drama and key liberal democratic elements, the final section will bring together the praxis of applied drama and the ideals of liberal democratic education, community-building, and finally, the public sphere. It is within this section that the practitioner's perspective is placed, giving a more detailed picture of the minutiae of the praxis and the small but vital ways in which the praxis supports democratic learning and community-building. This chapter will flow in an hour-glass shape: starting off broadly considering liberal democracy and the public sphere, narrowing to examine how learning and social cohesion support this, honing in further to analyse applied drama praxis, expanding back out to look at how applied drama links to democratic learning and community-building, and widening out again to reflect on how applied drama might interact with the public sphere. The shape or flow of the chapter is constructed in this way to prepare to move into Chapter Three, which will consider a particular manifestation of the public sphere — deliberative democracy — and how it could be reimaged through applied drama praxis.

Liberal Democracy: A Brief Outline

Modern-day democracy, often referred to as simply “democracy,” is a combination of the tenets of liberalism and of democracy, dubbed “liberal democracy”. Although this label is often associated with the economic systems of democratic nations by theorists such as Joseph Schumpeter and Anthony Downs,³ this research is concerned with addressing modern liberal democratic ideals separated

³ See Joseph A. Schumpeter, *Capitalism, Socialism, and Democracy* 4th ed. (Allen and Unwin 1966), and Anthony Downs, *An Economic Theory of Democracy* (Harper and Row 1957).

from capitalism. Concepts within liberal democracy trace their roots to the Age of Enlightenment in the eighteenth century, when thinkers such as John Locke, Montesquieu, Thomas Jefferson, Thomas Paine, Olympe de Gouges, and Jean-Jacques Rousseau began to circulate and popularise ideas championing liberty, equality, popular sovereignty, and individual human rights. While the roots of liberal democratic ideals began to take hold in eighteenth century, the terms “liberalism” and “democracy” did not come into use until the nineteenth century, and “[i]t is only in the twentieth century that liberalism and democracy really reached an accommodation, such that ‘liberal democracy’ could fall easily from the lips, and indeed become by century’s end the world’s dominant political ideology” (Dryzek 9).

The doctrine of liberalism is underscored by the values of liberty and individual human rights,⁴ while democracy champions the values of equality of all and popular sovereignty. Marc F. Plattner frames the converging of the two concepts this way:

Democracy and liberalism may be understood as addressing two different questions: Democracy is an answer to the question of who rules. It requires that the people be sovereign. [...] Liberalism, by contrast, prescribes not how rulers are chosen but what the limits to their power are once they are in office. These limits, which are ultimately designed to protect the rights of the individual, demand the rule of law and are usually set forth in a written constitution (hence ‘constitutional democracy’ sometimes serves as an alternative term for liberal democracy). (“Illiberal Democracy” 7)

As a result of the limits that liberalism places on elected officials and governments (and hence popular sovereignty) in an effort to preserve and protect individual rights

⁴ These individual rights include economic rights, which is why liberal democracy is often tied to capitalism.

and freedoms, there is a struggle or tension between the tenets of liberalism and democracy that prevents either ideal from being fully realised within the framework of liberal democracy. John Dryzek wrote of liberalism and democracy, saying “[o]f course, these two principles are often in tension, because democratic majorities can easily decide not to respect particular rights, especially those of unpopular minorities” (10). Chantal Mouffe elaborated on this tension in her book, *The Democratic Paradox*, in which she writes:

To be sure, by preventing the full development of their respective logics, this articulation represents an obstacle to their complete realization; both perfect liberty and perfect equality become impossible. But this is the very condition of possibility for a pluralist form of human coexistence in which rights can exist *and* be exercised, in which freedom and equality can somehow manage to coexist. (10–11)

It is within this tension that Mouffe finds optimism within the form because liberal democracy “is best understood not as a predetermined end-state, but as a long-term and somewhat open-ended outcome, not just as a feasible equilibrium but as a socially desirable and imaginary future” (Whitehead 3). This framing of liberal democracy characterises it as an ongoing process in which all citizens can contribute to the precarious balancing act between the two guiding tenets.

While the core values of equality, popular sovereignty, individual rights, and liberty form the basis of liberal democracy, they inform and are joined by the valuing of and necessity for civic engagement/participation, free and open dialogue, collective learning, and the idea of *fraternité*/fellowship. John Dewey referred to these values in his essay, “Creative Democracy — The Task before Us,” when he wrote about democracy being a way of life:

For what is the faith of democracy in the role of consultation, of conference, of persuasion, of discussion, in formation of public opinion, which in the long run is self-corrective, except faith in the capacity of the intelligence of the common man to respond with commonsense to the free play of facts and ideas which are secured by effective guarantees of free inquiry, free assembly and free communication? (*Vol. 14* 227)

What the theory of liberal democracy offers, above all other forms of government, is the central place and role of citizens within a nation/state in which their fundamental human rights and freedoms are theoretically honoured.

While the practice of liberal democracy has not yet fully realised the ideal of the form, there has been a steady progress over time toward that goal, namely through advancements such as women's suffrage established around the globe in the twentieth century and marriage equality legislation passed in many (but not all) liberal democracies in the early twenty-first century. K. Sabeel Rahman asserts and supports the claim that liberal democracy has been "a distant, unrealized ideal for too many communities, for too long" (1555) by focusing on:

two deeper, chronic crises of democracy that extend beyond the immediate headline focus of the backsliding discussion today: (1) the problem of systemic inequalities in political power and influence, and (2) the problem of systemic political exclusion, particularly along lines of race and ethnicity. (1561)

In his article, Rahman articulates that the practice and processes of liberal democracy need a fresh, new approach if liberal democratic nations wish to continue the trajectory of coming closer to the ideal.

The backsliding of democracy noted earlier in this writing has political scientists seeking answers about how to re-strengthen liberal democracies with some, like Rahman, calling for fresh, innovative approaches that can cultivate and bolster liberal democratic governmental systems. Rahman asks, "What would it take, by

contrast, to affirmatively rebuild — or to build for the first time — robust democratic institutions and practices?” (1558). Tackling this concern on the broad scale is a large and complicated task that will involve many practices and institutions of liberal democracy to be reconceived and/or created. While this writing cannot and does not profess to contain all of the answers/solutions to the current predicament that liberal democracies find themselves in, it does offer a practice for consideration — a potential piece of the puzzle that is the liberal democratic experiment: applied drama.

The research presented in this chapter reveals that the central values of equality, participation, and free and open dialogue that are pivotal to liberal democracy are also key to applied drama praxis. Additionally, the interrelation of community and education that support the public sphere and are outcomes of liberal democratic practice also have a fundamental place in applied drama praxis. Liberal democracy’s embrace of *fraternité*, in the non-gendered sense of an ethical relationship between citizens, can be linked to applied drama’s emphasis on community-building. Additionally, applied drama’s attention to creative freedom, diversity, inclusiveness, and accessibility connect to the ideals of freedom and respect of the rights of individuals within liberal democratic thought. Applied drama’s alliance with liberal democratic ideals and principles reveal the praxis as having the potential to play a small but compelling and essential part within liberal democracies to aid in democratisation.

The Democratic Public Sphere

Keeping in mind the idea of liberal democracy as a process rather than an institutional structure and folding in the ideas of Charles Tilley, who described it as “a certain class of relations between states and citizens” (*Democracy* 12), the following section will seek to more deeply understand a major democratic mechanism that facilitates some of this process and many of these relations: the democratic public sphere. This will begin with an understanding of the expectations around the relationship between a liberal democratic government and its citizens. Next, two nineteenth-century views on social spaces in which citizens could address communal issues of importance will be explored, followed by a look at the theorising of the public sphere in the twentieth century by Jürgen Habermas and Hannah Arendt. From this exploration commonalities in each of the articulations will be highlighted for an understanding of the crucial elements of the public sphere. Finally, this section will address Habermas’s warning about the potential erosion of the public sphere and the current state of it.

Tilly simplified the relationship between a state and its citizens thusly:

[A] regime is democratic to the degree that political relations between the state and its citizens feature broad, equal, protected and mutually binding consultation. Democratization means net movement toward broader, more equal, more protected, and more binding consultation. De-democratization, obviously, means net movement toward narrower, more unequal, less protected, and less binding consultation. (*Democracy* 13–14)

The idea of consultation — communication and dialogue — between the state and citizens is a key component of democratic theory, with prominent writers such as John Dewey, Chantal Mouffe, John Rawls, Hannah Arendt, Jürgen Habermas, and K. Sabeel Rahman highlighting the need for public spaces in which to hold dialogue that

allow for greater participation by the citizens. While each argues for a slightly different understanding of what is meant by dialogue and how it should be conducted, the underlying kernel for open communication is present. Tilly's idea of consultation encompasses all the interplay of the free and open relations between citizens and the state, including (but not limited to) political rallies, deliberative civic engagement, protests, and the use of social media and online platforms as a tool for communication.

Open discourse is a fundamental component of liberal democracy in which “[d]emocratic systems seek to substitute open discussion of issues — a public space of dialogue — for authoritarian power” (Giddens 63). Citizen participation in the government is a core element of not only liberal democracy, but also the notion of the public sphere. Phil Parvin wrote:

Citizen participation in a democracy acts as a check on elite power. It prevents the rise of civil oligarchies and the capture of democratic institutions by privileged groups, and ensures that democratic structures are not reformed in ways which result in the systemic exclusion of non-elites over the longer term. (32)

It was John Dewey who posited that “the cure for the ailments of democracy is more democracy” (*Vol. 2* 327). By this he means that there needs to be greater involvement of the people of a nation for the government to resemble the ideals of liberal democracy more closely. Arendt also saw participation as a key component for democracy, writing:

the political realm rises directly out of acting together, the ‘sharing of words and deeds.’ Thus, action not only has the most intimate relationship to the public part of the world common to us all, but is the one activity which constitutes it. (*Human* 198)

To encourage the idea of greater participation, Dewey wrote about democracy as a way of life for individuals within society, reframing how many citizens relate to the government:

Instead of thinking of our own dispositions and habits as accommodated to certain institutions we have to learn to think of the latter as expressions, projections and extensions of habitually dominant personal attitudes. (*Vol. 14* 226)

Additionally, in the same essay quoted above, “Creative Democracy — the Task Before Us,” Dewey articulates the need for imagination and creativity within democratic participation for the “task of democracy” which is “forever that of creation of a freer and more humane experience in which all share and to which all contribute” (*Vol. 14* 230). With participation being so crucial, many theories exist around how best to actualise civic engagement and participation, and the concept of the “public sphere” lies at the heart of most of them.

Before the term “public sphere” was coined, Thomas Jefferson, writing in the early nineteenth century, advocated for establishing a permanent type of public sphere in the US, most likely influenced by the town hall meetings that had been so important throughout the American Revolution. After leaving office as the President of the United States he circulated a series of letters in which he advocated for the country to be broken up into “wards” that would be small enough so that all the citizens would be able to “meet in one place to decide all local issues” (No, et al. 18).

George Bateman elaborated on Jefferson’s ideas more fully, writing:

These direct democracies would become the foundation of our representative democracy. Jefferson did not propose changing the existing county, state, and federal governments. Jefferson believed that ward republics would reinvigorate both the individuals who participated in them, as well as the government. (No, et al. 18)

Within this ward system Jefferson advocated for public education for all, regardless of ability to pay, because “he knew that the key to making it [democracy] work would be a well-informed and well-educated citizenry” (No, et al. 20).

On the other side of the Atlantic Ocean, John Stuart Mill, writing in the mid-nineteenth century on freedom of thought, dialogue, and action, “demonstrates an acute understanding of the need for a robust public sphere of thought and discussion in modern societies” (Crossley and Roberts 73). In his book *On Liberty*, Mill stipulates four “grounds” which could establish broad liberty of ideas and conversation. These grounds are:

(i) the recognition that an opinion could be fallible; (ii) the necessity for the collision of opinions to establish truth; (iii) that prejudice should be eliminated; (iv) and that dogma should also be eliminated. (Crossley and Roberts 71)

John Michael Roberts posited that “the four grounds to establish an inclusive public sphere would seem, by their very nature, to encourage inclusive public debate and discussion” (Crossley and Roberts 73). Mill, a champion of liberty, recognised the value of establishing a type of public sphere in which individuals could exchange ideas and decide on actions in a conducive format.

While many theorists (such as Jefferson and Mills) addressed notions of a type of public sphere, it was Jürgen Habermas, writing in the 1960s, who coined the phrase. Modern theories of the democratic public sphere are still largely dominated by Habermas’s writings, especially his seminal book, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society*, in which he outlines the transformation of the public sphere in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. He describes the public sphere as not only a place for debate, but also a forum for collective learning that grew out of the literary salons of the eighteenth century.

Interestingly for this research, David Wiles noted that “The theatre for Habermas was one component of an eighteenth-century world of letters that facilitated free public discussion” (209). In his early writings Habermas depicts the public sphere as a forum in which citizens (predominantly male and bourgeoisie) gather to rationally debate issues of social and political importance for all and acts as a broker between citizens and the state.⁵ However, his ideas regarding the public sphere evolved in his later writings in which the concept “was ‘linguistified’, made fluid and mobile to the point where it was not a space in which a certain kind of communication could take place, but a space generated by a certain kind of communication” (Crossley and Roberts 51).

Ken Hirshkop highlights this evolution in Habermas’s thinking when he wrote:

It’s striking that in the 1980s Habermas’ paradigm case of the public sphere was the civil disobedience of the peace movement, a tactic more typical of new social movements than the trade unions, and one aimed at a symbolic intervention in public space rather than at a rational-critical debate on policy. (Crossley and Roberts 51)

This resonates with Hannah Arendt’s notion that “[w]herever people gather together, it [the public sphere] is potentially there, but only potentially, not necessarily and not forever” (*Human* 199).

Hannah Arendt’s theory provides a view of the public sphere as “a space where freedom can appear” (*Between* 154). She stressed the necessity of plurality within the public sphere, which she said is “the condition *sine qua non* for that space of appearance which is the public realm” (*Human* 220). Gert Biesta elaborated on Arendt’s notions of freedom, plurality and the public sphere, writing:

⁵ For more, see Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: an Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society* (Polity 1989), and Nick Crossley and John Michael Roberts, eds. *After Habermas: New Perspectives on the Public Sphere* (Blackwell 2004). This will be explored further in Chapter Three.

Arendt's explorations of the interrelationships between action, freedom and plurality contain a very important lesson for our understanding of the public sphere, as she shows that it is only under the condition of plurality that action is possible and freedom — that is democratic freedom-as-beginning, not liberal freedom-as-sovereignty — can appear. (689) ⁶

Additionally, Arendt proposed that the public sphere be set up as a series of “councils,” writing that since “the country is too big for all of us to come together and determine our fate, we need a number of public spaces within it” (Arendt *Crises* 190). Arendt and Dewey “believed that the ‘success’ of the American Revolution was due to the existence of history of effective publics in the colonies where citizens engaged in deliberative collective practices” (Bernstein “Creative Democracy” 221). Paula Cossart, Andrew Felicetti, and James Kloppenberg write about the town hall meetings of the US, notably in north-eastern New England:

Open assemblies were at the center of the decision-making process at the town level where townsmen met in a specific place to discuss and resolve the community's affairs. While decisions were taken by a vote, debate played an important role in resolving political issues. (3)

The town hall meeting is a manifestation of Arendt's “councils” at the local level of government within liberal democracies which can act as a kind of public sphere: a forum to which all residents have equal access, and in which those same residents gather to consider issues of social and political importance, contributing to the collective knowledge of the community.

Each of these articulations of the public sphere have at least two elements in common: community and education. In each of these visions of the public sphere

⁶ Ideas around plurality and understanding will be discussed further in Chapter Three through deliberative democratic approaches.

there is a convening of citizens to discuss important social and political issues. The communities that are formed within these public spheres might be envisioned as communities of geography or location (as in Arendt's councils), or they could be communities generated by interest, race, or ethnicity (as in Habermas's case of civil disobedience in the 1980s.) Whatever the impetus for citizens to gather to communicate about the societal and political landscape, communities are formed that allow for a bonding and sharing of experiences and expertise. The sharing leads, in turn, to larger collective learning and knowledge construction by the group. This is exemplified in the forums that were held for public debate under the heading of "Town Hall Inc." that were founded in the United States "in 1920 after the passage of the Nineteenth Amendment, to provide a place for public discussion and education of women who could now vote" (Bryan et al. 10). Crossley and Roberts wrote that "the early public sphere, as a domain of self-education and cultivation, tended to 'level up'" (6). Their noted improvement or advancement within the early public sphere points to growth in the shared knowledge of the community and a strengthening of the bonds within it. To that point, John Dryzek noted that "the public sphere in any democracy is where perspectives and ideas are generated, policy decisions are questioned, and citizen competences are developed" ("Democratization" 1383). The sense of community and education happening and existing within the public sphere is vital to sustaining and bolstering liberal democratic values, and it is these exchanges that are at risk when the public sphere is eroded.

In addition to describing the manifestation of public sphere in his seminal book on the topic (how it came about and the benefits of it), Habermas also made the case that:

conditions effectively served to undermine this public space almost the moment it had come into being, such that the public space of the twentieth century — now we might add the twenty-first — is riven with contradictions and conflicting tendencies and characteristics. (Crossley and Roberts 2)

Habermas contended that “the relationship of the individual to the state has increasingly become one of client or consumer of services, rather than citizen” (Crossley and Roberts 5). While civic participation and engagement waned in the late twentieth century and early twenty-first century, there is reason to believe that individuals are beginning to reclaim the more active role of citizen moving forward in the twenty-first century.⁷ Interestingly, the concept of the “public sphere” is frequently evoked, even though there is a great deal of questioning around what that means today.

Political scientists debate whether the mass media or social media constitute the public sphere. This blurring over what constitutes the public sphere is illustrated in the call for the European Commission’s Horizon 2020 funding project entitled “Developing deliberative and participatory democracies through experimentation,” which states that applicant projects should include a “reappraisal of the question whether there is, could, or should be a European public sphere.”⁸ They are asking researchers to question not only whether the European public sphere exists (and in what form), but also if it *should* exist, and what form it should take. Chantal Mouffe believes this questioning of the public sphere is because “[t]he notions of citizenship and community have been stripped of much of their content by liberal

⁷ This increase in civic engagement in the US, UK, and Ireland since the mid-2010s is outlined the Introduction.

⁸ See “Developing Deliberative and Participatory Democracies through Experimentation.” *Horizon 2020 Framework Program*, European Commission, 27 October 2017.

individualism,” adding that “we need to recover the dimension of active participation that they hold in the classical republican tradition” (Mouffe, ed. 3). Because “[d]emocracy does not function well if people act as islands unto themselves” (Tienken 36), there is a desire to recover and rediscover the public sphere which can be seen in deliberative democratic theory, which will be discussed further in the next chapter.

Education, Community, and Liberal Democracy

Education and community not only play a pivotal role in (and are outcomes of) interaction in the public sphere; they hold an equally central role for liberal democracy in general. In his later writings Dewey stated:

Democracy is the faith that the process of experience is more important than any special result attained, so that special results achieved are of ultimate value only as they are used to enrich and order the ongoing process. Since the process of experience is capable of being educative, faith in democracy is at one with faith in experience and education. (*Vol. 14* 229)

Just as the ideas of liberal democracy grew out of the Enlightenment, so too, did ideas around broad education for democracy. Fernando M. Reimers wrote:

Jean-Jacques Rousseau, one of the key philosophers of the Enlightenment, proposed the twin ideas that the legitimacy of a social contract depended on the extent to which it was accepted by those it governed, and the idea that education prepared people to accept the social contract or to build a new contract. (56)

Although in *Democracy and Education* Dewey made explicit the link between the two in the early twentieth century, stating that “a government resting upon popular suffrage cannot be successful unless those who elect and who obey their governors are educated” (87), prominent eighteenth and nineteenth century leaders in various

“movements for self-rule, such as Thomas Jefferson, understood that the education of all people was indispensable to prepare them for self-rule and to participate in the public sphere” (Reimers 56). Additionally, Horace Mann, a prominent educator and politician in the nineteenth century “held that no democracy can endure unless its citizens are educated and active” (Nussbaum 63). These prominent philosophers highlight the need for education in a democracy, but what should this education look like?

In her book, *Not for Profit: Why Democracy Needs the Humanities*, Martha Nussbaum makes the case for liberal arts education as pivotal to the health of liberal democracies. After an assessment of the twenty-first century educational landscape, primarily aimed at the United States but including some examples from other nations, Nussbaum asserted that to nurture liberal democracy all citizens need the ability to (1) “think well about political issues affecting the nation, to examine, reflect, argue, and debate, deferring to neither tradition nor authority;” (2) “recognize fellow citizens as people with equal rights;” (3) “have concern for the lives of others;” (4) “imagine well a variety of complex issues affecting the story of a human life as it unfolds;” (5) “judge political leaders critically;” (6) “think about the good of the nation as a whole;” and (7) “see one’s own nation, in turn, as a part of a complicated world order” (25–26). To manifest these abilities, Nussbaum asserted that “cultivated capacities for critical thinking and reflection are crucial in keeping democracies alive and wide awake” (10). Additionally, she highlighted the need and value of emotion and empathy within education and democracy. She made her case by examining and integrating Socratic pedagogy with the work and ideas of

democratic educators such as Rabindranath Tagore, John Dewey, Mahatma Gandhi, Bronson Alcott, Horace Mann, Johann Pestalozzi, and Friedrich Froebel.

As one way of honing critical thinking and reflection skills, she dedicates a chapter in her book to Socratic Pedagogy, a method which stimulates “students to think and argue for themselves, rather than defer to tradition and authority” (48). Through Socratic questioning/arguing, individuals develop the ability to self-examine their own ideas, as well as appreciate opposing arguments on the merits of the ideas rather than attack the person presenting them, which is an all-too-common occurrence in today’s political climate. Nussbaum elaborated on this idea:

When people think that political debate is something like an athletic contest, where the aim is to score points for their own side, they are likely to see the ‘other side’ as the enemy and to wish its defeat, or even humiliation. It would not occur to them to see compromise or to find common ground. (51)

In her presentation of Socratic questioning, Nussbaum also touched upon a key factor in relation to understanding ideas, problems, and solutions, which is their complexity and ambiguity. She notes that “Socratic questioning is unsettling” (xxiii) largely because it forces individuals to reveal the complicated and messy nature of the world when it is often preferable to have clear, definite answers. Training in the Socratic method would also allow for individuals to become more comfortable and more appreciative of the ambiguity and intricacy of issues within society. This method was also taken up by John Dewey, whose earlier work was primarily preoccupied with ideas around democratic societies and education.

Expounding upon the durable bond between liberal democracy and education, Dewey wrote:

The freedom which is the essence of democracy is above all the freedom to develop intelligence; intelligence consisting of judgement as to what facts are relevant to action and how they are relevant to things to be done, and a corresponding alertness in the quest for such facts. (*Vol. 14* 276)

In this quote Dewey describes the need for the development of critical thought and analysis in learning for democracy. This is reaffirmed by David Sullivan when he wrote that “[t]he values of critical thinking, or more fully, thinking analytically which should involve thinking creatively and, as Mill says, imaginatively, are what lies at the core of democracy and of a democratic education” (144). Further, Dewey believed that “[t]he engagement of imagination is the only thing that makes any activity more than mechanical” (*Democracy* 236). In order to hone these skills in his Laboratory School, in addition to Socratic pedagogy, Dewey cultivated “imagination through music and theatre” (Nussbaum 103). Dewey noted:

[T]he difference between play and what is regarded as serious employment should not be a difference between the presence and absence of imagination, but a difference in the materials with which imagination is occupied. (*Democracy* 236)

Imagination was key for the occupational method used at the Laboratory School “as an effective way of incorporating direct experience in his school and also integrating the individual and social dimensions of education” (Samuel 1163), because Dewey felt that:

Were it not for the accompanying play of imagination, there would be no road from a direct activity to representative knowledge; for it is by imagination that symbols are translated over into a direct meaning and integrated with a narrow activity so as to expand and enrich it. (*Democracy* 237)

Dewey’s emphasis on imagination, which incorporates past experiences with new ones, aligns with his more constructivist views toward education. Eric Thomas Weber

wrote, “Dewey’s constructivism is focused on the construction of meaning generally, then of persons, education, and justice” (2).

While Dewey endorsed democratic education through embodied learning and imaginative play, “figuring things out, thinking about them, raising questions” (Nussbaum 65), he never forgot about the communal element of education. Francis A. Samuel wrote, “For Dewey, education was growth; growth was self-realization through interaction with the environment. It involves both the individual and community” (1162). Dewey “sought to empower students and members of the community to take part in the development and support of inquiry, social and economic cooperation, as well as art and culture” (Weber 117). Anne Durst even described the Laboratory School as a “community of inquiry” in her book *Women Educators in the Progressive Era: The Women Behind Dewey’s Laboratory School*. This link between education and community in Dewey’s school folds back into his ideas concerning community and democracy; “It [democracy] is the idea of community life itself” (Dewey *Vol. 2* 328). Christopher H. Tienken wrote, “he [Dewey] put forth education as the vehicle for teaching the next generation of citizens how to study the problems of democracy and take responsible action in ways that improve life in a democratic society” (36). Dewey is joined in his association of education, community, and democracy by theorist and educator Rabindranath Tagore.⁹

While he never lived in a democracy, having died six years prior to India’s independence, Rabindranath Tagore “subscribed to the democratic principles in

⁹ Martha Nussbaum indicates in her book that there was a chance Dewey was influenced by Tagore despite the links being difficult to trace. Tagore’s school predates Dewey’s Laboratory School.

governance and education” (Samuel 1166). Tagore opened his own school in 1901 at Santiniketan that focused on education that “facilitated the growth of the individual, the development of the society, and the growth of the international community” (Samuel 1164). Tagore felt that curriculum “embodied the idea of harmony and fullness,” which “meant an open, wide, and full course of study, which took into consideration the individual, social, and universal needs” (Samuel 1165). In addition to applying Socratic pedagogy, Tagore also incorporated a wide variety of artistic disciplines within his school. One way he would “stimulate Socratic questioning was role-playing, as children were invited to step outside their own point of view and inhabit that of another” (Nussbaum 72). Nussbaum remarks that “this gave them the freedom to experiment with other intellectual positions and to understand them from within” (72). This is compatible with Dewey’s ideas around imagination and also incorporates emotions and empathy through the use of the arts.

Kathleen M. O’Connell wrote that Tagore “instinctively realized the way in which participation in the arts provides multidimensional learning in so many areas, mental, physical, and artistic, besides facilitating cooperation” (298). In addition to role-playing, Tagore incorporated poetry, dance, music, and “elaborate theatrical productions, mingling drama, music, and dance, to get children to explore different roles with the full participation of their bodies, taking up unfamiliar stances and gestures” (Nussbaum 104). Tagore’s use of play, or the “ability to imagine what the experience of another might be like” (Nussbaum 97) through the arts is also a concept emphasized by Donald Winnicott, a British paediatrician and psychoanalyst.

In clarifying Winnicott’s ideas around play, Nussbaum summarised it as:

a type of activity that takes place in the space between people — what Winnicott calls a ‘potential space.’ Here people (children first, adults later) experiment with the idea of otherness in ways that are less threatening than the direct encounter with another may often be. They thus get invaluable practice in empathy and reciprocity. (99)

This links with Dewey’s ideas around imagination, and the importance of it within not only play, but also “serious work.” Importantly, Winnicott understood that “[p]eople can close up, forgetting the inner world of others, or they can retain and further develop the capacity to endow the forms of others, in imagination, with inner life” (Nussbaum 100). The capacity for play and imagination needs continual cultivation so that individuals don’t “close up.” Play also “connects the experiences of vulnerability and surprise to curiosity and wonder, rather than to crippling anxiety” (Nussbaum 101), enabling people to cope with ambiguity and complexity more easily. The ability to play and imagine the experiences and inner life of others indicates a need for the process of empathy in education and democracy.

Ruth O’Brien wrote in her foreword for *Not for Profit* that a “democracy filled with citizens who lack empathy will inevitably breed more types of marginalization and stigmatization, thus exacerbating rather than solving its problems” (Nussbaum x). In his article, “Empathy and Democratic Education,” Michael E. Morrell stated:

Evidence indicates that higher predispositions to empathy will likely increase the healthy functioning of democratic society by encouraging citizens to show more concern for their fellow citizens, increasing citizens’ tolerance of outgroups, and decreasing biases in judgments that increase misunderstandings among citizens. (381)

While many see empathy as purely emotional or affective, researchers have recognised the need for cognition in the process, with many arguing that empathy is a multi-dimensional construct.¹⁰ Morrell explained it thus:

Instead of defining empathy solely as affective responses or cognitive understandings, the multi-dimensional approach recognizes the interrelationships among affect and cognition in empathy. (“Empathy” 382)

Further, political psychologists have begun drawing upon the work of neuroscientists and cognitive sciences that point to “the importance of emotion in human functioning” (Morrell *Empathy* 9) to “argue that affective intelligence is crucial to political judgement” (Morrell *Empathy* 9). Morrell’s research is pointing to what it appears that Dewey, Tagore, and Winnicott instinctively sensed based on their observations and pedagogical recommendations of the arts and play. Their recommendations align with Morrell’s assertion that “[t]he more advanced cognitive processes by which empathy can occur are language-mediated association and role taking (or perspective taking)” (“Empathy” 383). This learning occurs optimally in communal settings in which there are other individuals with whom to communicate, roleplay, and imagine.

Empathy combined with critical thinking, imagination, and reflection hold the key to successful democratic education that must happen within the context of the larger community/society. Nussbaum sums up this idea well when she wrote:

The ability to think well about a wide range of cultures, groups, and nations in context of a grasp of the global economy and of the history of many national and group interactions is crucial in order to enable democracies to deal responsibly with the problems of the world. And the ability to imagine the experience of another — a

¹⁰ See Michael E. Morrell, *Empathy and Democracy* (Pennsylvania State University Press 2010).

capacity almost all human beings possess in some form — needs to be greatly enhanced and refined if we are to have any hope of sustaining decent institutions across the many divisions that any modern society contains. (10)

While a great deal of the support for this approach to community, education, and democracy has thus far been given from the perspective of educators, the same information is being sent from political scientists and theorists working on the ground. In the “Collective Interview on the History of Town Hall Meetings” published in the *Journal of Public Deliberation*, William Keith remarked, “to imagine a form of democracy is also to imagine a form of community, and the options for community in our social imaginary” (Bryan et al. 6). In his book *The Ecology of Democracy*, David Mathews stated that “learning is critical to democracy and key to a community’s ability to solve problems” (22). Additionally, he lays out seven systemic problems with democracy. The sixth problem he points to is education, specifically stating “the absence of shared learning keeps democracy from working” (Mathews 5). In relation to civic engagement specifically, Mathews writes, “[t]he constancy, the persistence, in civic work comes from communities learning how to fail *successfully* [...] Learning together or ‘public learning’ is key” (20) because “[d]emocracy tries to accommodate the individual as well as social growth [...] It protects the rights of the minority as well as the majority. In education, it means equal opportunity for all to achieve their maximum growth” (Samuel 1163). Gus DiZerega, in his article for *The Review of Politics*, even goes so far as to say that “[l]iberal democracies are open-ended learning processes whereby a society determines common policies from an enormous variety of competing possibilities” (774). The mutual affiliation of democracy with education and community runs deep, and their subtle interaction is key to the liberal democratic process.

To summarise, education is pivotal in a political system that stresses equality and liberty, thus popular sovereignty. In order for citizens to participate effectively in self-governing, education must play a role. Democratic pedagogy should focus on developing critical thinking, imagination, empathy, and reflection to aid in creative problem solving for the community and the individuals within it. The honing of these skills also better prepares individuals for coping with ambiguity, enabling greater comfort for more nuanced discussion of the complex issues that face them. Richard J. Bernstein elaborated on Dewey's views regarding ambiguity:

Dewey wanted educators to teach children how to live with real contingency and uncertainty, and with a robust sense of human fallibility. Dewey knew all too well how there can be a craving for certainty, for absolutes — especially at times of perceived crisis. But he argued forcefully that this must be resisted. We have to learn how to think and act — to use Arendt's phrase — without banisters. (“Democracy” 28)

Dewey and Tagore both endorsed the arts and creative practice, specifically the theatre arts as optimal approaches for this type of learning — and all this learning takes place within the context of the community (whether designated by geography or special interest) and the larger society.

Dewey wrote, “Fraternity, liberty and equality isolated from communal life are hopeless abstractions” (*Vol. 2* 329). A sense of community, or what Robert Putnam refers to as “social capital,” combined with learning is key for democracy. Social capital “refers to connections among individuals — social networks and the norms of reciprocity and trustworthiness that arise from them” (Putnam 19). It allows individuals to more clearly understand where their fellow citizens are coming from. In his book, *Democracy and Education*, Dewey took care to note:

A democracy is more than a form of government; it is primarily a mode of associated living, of conjoint communicated experience. The extension in space of the number of individuals who participate in an interest so that each has to refer his own action to that of others, and to consider the action of others to give point and direction to his own, is equivalent to the breaking down of those barriers of class, race, and national territory which kept men from perceiving the full import of their activity. (87)

Mathews also noted that “public learning is renaming, reframing, and deciding again — after the fact” (114), and through this “collective or public learning, the citizenry or community itself learns, and the learning is reflected in changed behavior” (113).

Additionally, Nussbaum warned at the end of her book:

Today we still maintain that we like democracy and self-governance, and we also think that we like freedom of speech, respect for difference, and understanding of others. We give these values lip service, but we think far too little about what we need to do in order to transmit them to the next generation and ensure their survival. (114)

The bonds between education, community, and democracy are mutually reinforcing, with each serving as a key element to bolster the others, as well as a resulting product of each other. Discovering new ways in which to foster this unique self-reinforcing bond, rather than stagnate it, is vital to the democratisation process. Applied drama is one such approach that possesses the means to do this.

Applied Drama in Context

The idea of an “applied” drama is underscored by the notion that the art form has the ability to “address something beyond the form itself” (Ackroyd par. 2). Judith Ackroyd, writing in 2000, stated, “It [applied drama] brings together a broad range of dramatic activity carried out by a host of diverse bodies and groups” (par. 1). Practices included under the heading of applied drama are: Drama in Education (DiE), Theatre for Development (TfD), Process Drama, Drama Therapy, Community-engaged

Theatre, Theatre for Social Change, Theatre for Social Justice, Drama in Healthcare, Prison Theatre, Playback Theatre, and Theatre of the Oppressed. The following section will touch upon the historical influences of applied drama, address the preference of the term “applied drama” rather than “applied theatre/performance” for this research, and detail six guiding principles of the praxis which serve as a new framing of the methodological principles underpinning the field.

Although the field of applied drama studies did not emerge until the 1990s (Nicholson, *2nd edition* 13), many of the processes and ideals of applied drama were developed through the work of artists early in the twentieth century. In reflecting on the influences of applied drama praxis, Helen Nicholson wrote:

Throughout the changing political landscapes of the twentieth century, theatre held an enduring appeal to social and political activists, and particularly to those in civil rights moments. Theatre offered an immediate and visible platform for public debate, for the performance of protest, and was thought to be a powerful way to reach the hearts and minds of its intended audiences. (*2nd edition* 11)

The following examples will give an idea of these influences, but this is by no means exhaustive, as that effort would require a whole book dedicated to the subject.

Collaborative art-making of the European avant-garde theatre movements of the early 1900s “experimented with improvisational, ritual, and fully spontaneous actions using both players and audience” (Courtney, *Intelligence* 5), which can be seen in exercises such as “Exquisite Corpse,” offered by surrealists.¹¹ Trace elements of features that would come to define applied drama manifest in the Workers’ Theatre Movements of the 1920s and 30s, in their desire to move theatre outside of a

¹¹ See Richard Cándida Smith. “The Sense of the Past in Oral Histories with California Artists.” *Oral History Review*. 17.1 (1989): 1-38.

traditional theatre space, actively seeking out where the masses *were*. These movements also emphasised the workers as participants in the creative process as well as the intended audience for the work being created. As was outlined in Chapter One, Brecht developed his *Lehrstücke* in the 1920s and 30s, which contain aspects of group work and dialectical thinking that would find a home in applied drama work. Doug Paterson writes that Brecht “more than anyone in Europe was responsible for not only blazing the first major new trail in official twentieth century theatre, but also for paving the road with academically embraced language: *alienation, epic theatre, [G]estus, [L]ehrstuck*, and so forth” (Rohd x).

Pushing forward chronologically and moving to England, Winifred Ward established Creative Dramatics in the 1930s, using drama processes to cultivate creativity, self-expression, and personal development within young people rather than focus on developing presentational skills and had a major influence on applied drama praxis. This practice would come to be known as Drama in Education (DiE) in the 1940s and 50s, and precipitated the Theatre in Education (TiE) movement of the 1960s with the focus on developing methodologies of active learning. Both DiE and TiE would later come to be seen as approaches housed within applied drama/theatre (Prentki and Preston 13).

Also outlined in Chapter One, Augusto Boal’s late-twentieth-century participatory work and Theatre of the Oppressed techniques, heavily based on Paolo Freire’s writings, would also directly impact the field and become a subset within applied drama/theatre. This is also the case with Theatre for Development, which manifested around the same time and focused on drama/theatre techniques employed by non-governmental agencies. This is all to say that the field of applied

drama/theatre/performance became the umbrella term for, and grew out of, the changing political, social, and artistic scenes of the twentieth century as a form of drama/theatre that placed emphasis on process, negotiation of place and space, collaboration, multiple modes of communication, embodied learning and discovery, and reflexive practice. What follows next will contend with the choice of this research to focus on applied drama rather than applied theatre/performance and attempt to situate the principles in relation to these closely associated practices.

Applied drama is concerned with exploring histories, current situations, and possible futures within the group, for the group — a concern that is very much in line with liberal democracy. In choosing to situate the term “applied drama” as the practice of using drama techniques to engage with communities that do not have an outside audience intended, it is important to clarify how the guiding principles proposed relate to applied theatre/performance. Kate McCarthy wrote “that these terms may operate within ‘a family of meanings’ in that they share similarities” (57). Her observation indicates that the guiding principles outlined in this section could also pertain to applied theatre/performance. However, with the addition of a performance created for an outside audience (as with applied theatre/performance) there may be more that needs to be added into the theory to better clarify those offshoots within the applied drama/theatre/performance bailiwick.

Some scholars suggest that applied drama “defies any one definition and includes a multitude of intentions, aesthetic processes, and transactions with its participants” (Prentki and Preston 11). Nicholson wrote, “[r]ather than seeking a single canonical reference point or a single set of dramatic practices, it is an approach to theatre-making which embraces diverse forms of cultural learning and many

different theatre forms” (2nd edition 165). However, there are some defining characteristics that have the potential to map out a framing of the form. This framing is not proposed as a formula for applied drama praxis, but rather a way to identify and discuss patterns of practice. While applied drama has the flexibility to take various forms depending on the setting, facilitator, and participants involved, several guiding principles serve to establish a cohesive vision for the field: (1) insistence on an embodied practice, (2) emphasis on process, (3) thoughtful consideration of place and space, (4) focus on collaboration, (5) the use of polyphonic¹² communication, and (6) focus on a reflexive practice. Each of these guiding principles is underscored by shared values of applied drama (theatre/performance) practitioners and are fundamentally interconnected, building upon and supporting each other. In the following section each of these principles will be considered in the order listed.

Embodied Practice

The more obvious indicator of embodiment within applied drama is that workshops need participants whose bodies occupy the same space and interact through a variety of physical and verbal means.¹³ That is the surface-level observation of the focus on embodied practice, but there is much more. Embodiment “refers to understanding the role of an agent’s own body in its everyday, situated cognition” (Gibbs, Jr. 1). This highlights a holistic approach informed by phenomenology which dismisses Cartesian mind/body dualism. Additionally, it considers the presence of the

¹² Referring to the use of multiple modes of communication used within the praxis that allows for the engagement of many voices, ideas, and perspectives.

¹³ This is an area for further exploration as the increase in the use of online spaces, such as Zoom, to facilitate workshops during the COVID-19 pandemic raises questions about the praxis within this context. Is it still applied drama? Is it a new form? What key elements of embodiment transfer into this way of working?

body and co-presence of other bodies in the space, which are crucial to the meaning-making that occurs within it and link in with theories of kinaesthetic intersubjectivity and kinaesthetic empathy. What immediately follows will outline the significance of such an approach and touch upon what this looks like within applied drama praxis.

Referring to the long history and dominance of propositional/descriptive knowledge within research, Dwight Conquergood expresses:

What gets squeezed out by this epistemic violence is the whole realm of complex, finely nuanced meaning that is embodied, tacit, intoned, gestured, improvised, coexperienced, covert — and all the more deeply meaningful because of its refusal to be spelled out. (“Performance” 146)

While a more holistic, embodied approach is less-easily quantifiable, it has come to be embraced more fully in recent years by the fields of cognitive and social science, which have come to realise that “embodiment can capture the complexities between the intersubjective and incorporeal nature of our experiences and the social and cultural contexts within which we live” (Thorburn and Stolz 98). Psychologist Shogo Tanaka highlights how an embodied practice leads to what he calls “intercorporeality,” which “focuses on the relation between one’s own body and that of the other to illuminate intersubjectivity and social understanding in an alternative way” (461). Tanaka explains that this involves a “perception-action loop between the self and the other” (462) which manifests itself through mirroring behaviour (such as contagious yawning) and interactional synchrony in which “the self and the other are reciprocally seeking potential action through each other’s perception” (467). Tanaka’s perception-action loop links in with Mark Chou, Jean-Paul Gagnon, and Lesley Pruitt’s observation that “when theatre is premised on embodied participation it can [...] combat the sense of alienation that individuals often feel, not just in

cultural but political arenas as well” (611). Not only is the embodied approach generating meaning/understandings between individuals that is happening without words, but it is also creating opportunity for the formation of relationships between individuals — no matter how weak/strong the bond.

What Tanaka describes links into what Conquergood characterizes as “performance-sensitive ways of knowing” (*Cultural* 48). Both Conquergood and Mallika Henry link performance-sensitive ways of knowing with that of an ethnographer. In fact, the field of performance ethnography is rooted in this idea. In his book *Performance Ethnography: Critical Pedagogy and the Politics of Culture*, Norman K. Denzin writes that “[p]erformance approaches to knowing insist on immediacy and involvement. They consist of partial, plural, incomplete, and contingent understandings” (8). Performance-sensitive ways of knowing and being are also described by Anton Franks when he highlights how drama’s “emphasis on the social organisation and enculturation of the body is crucial in avoiding over-simplistic, individualising, essentialising or dualistic accounts that detach mind, meaning and learning from bodily presence and physicalised action” (313). James Thompson also emphasises that embodied approaches in drama aid in bypassing false binaries and stereotypical or narrow views in favour of more complex and interwoven narratives (*Digging* 51).

Linking into performance-sensitive ways of knowing are ideas around kinaesthetic intersubjectivity and empathy. De Jaegher, et al. explain that embodied processes “are the stuff of understanding each other and of understanding the world together — in short, of intersubjectivity” (492). The presence of bodies in a space moving dynamically — in action — in meaningful engagement allows for collective

sense-making and a “better understanding of and identification with the other, which is elicited by the joint task that is being pursued” (Reynolds and Reason 112).

Embodied practice opens up a wide range of potential for meaning-making that is both personal and collective, building relationships between those involved. By leaning into an embodied approach applied drama is able to tap into all of these benefits.

Prendergast and Saxton write that in applied drama “[o]ur bodies and our minds work together, in concert, to explore issues, themes, ideas and situations through improvised role play and other process-based activities” (5). Activities rooted in Image Theatre that require participants to create an image (sometimes spontaneously and often without the use of words) or sculpt an image using a partner or in small groups are also ways in which applied drama leans into getting participants to use their bodies in relation to other bodies to express or create meaning. Drawing from the skill set of artists in drama/theatre, facilitators actively call attention to factors such as proximity, eye contact, visual direction, haptics, levels, gestures (this list is not exhaustive) through questions/prompts, in an effort to bring active awareness of the meaning-making that is occurring through the embodied work. In effect, facilitators are priming participants of applied drama workshops to step into the role of a performance ethnographer; they are using their total being to participate, observe, and reflect on the activities taking place during the workshop. The active *doing* that is required of participants leads nicely into the next guiding principle of process.

Process

The guiding principle of process is supported by the valuing of dialogic exchange, reflection, responsiveness, and flexibility. While this principle is perhaps the simplest, it acts as a foundation for each of the others. Put simply, the focus in these settings is on the actions, development, growth, and discoveries that occur within the participating group and for the participants in the workshop setting. Prendergast and Saxton (2013, 1) write that applied drama “is a facilitated process in which the value of the work lies in what it does for participants,” emphasising that it is the doing of the work itself, the process, that holds particular significance for participants — and it is through the process that participants benefit from community-building, discovery, exploration, and collective meaning-making. The next two paragraphs will touch upon what the creative process looks like in applied drama and how leaning into that process, without the pressure to perform for an outside group, creates space for building relationships and constructing meaning.

The creative process allows for the exploration of many ideas to be thoroughly considered in a laboratory setting that allows for wild experimentation. Within this process, the structure of the dramatic activities used in a workshop is what the facilitator offers to the group, while the content (the topic/subject to be explored) typically comes from workshop participants or the entity commissioning the workshop, such as a school. Michael Rohd writes about the process this way: “The process is a journey. Like any journey, it has a beginning, a route, and a schedule, but it does not have a predetermined destination” (3). For participants within an applied drama project, the experience and the process are themselves the purpose, the means, and the ends. Sometimes a workshop is a standalone project, while others might consist of a series of workshops continuing on for weeks, months, or years.

Within each workshop there are smaller share-outs/mini-performances within the group that are used to open up an idea, think about a topic from a different angle, or dive deeper into a subject. What becomes clear through the process is the complexity and ambiguity of most issues/situations — and though ambiguity can be a distressing thing, through the process participants become more comfortable working through these complexities. Transferring this way of working into socially engaged settings through applied drama praxis opens possibilities for discovery, awareness, and learning within and through the community that leads to collective knowledge building. The collective meaning-making and strengthened community ties through the process could be seen as the more tangible “product” that is offered through applied drama. In the paragraphs to follow, it is important to keep in mind that the guiding principle of staying in process undergirds each of the other principles, which will be evidenced in the following investigation of place and space within applied drama.

Place/Space

The negotiation of place and space involved in planning applied drama sessions is informed by the values of inclusiveness, participation, and accessibility. Applied drama practitioners consider place/space not only as points that occupy a map, but also in terms of a type of imaginative space described by Doreen Massey, where stories are collected that act as “wider power-geometries of space” (130). Sally Mackey writes of place:

Place is an aura of a location together with the location itself and one with which a person builds a relationship and interaction, even if not necessarily a positive relationship and even if temporary.
(110)

The attention given to place/space is manifested in myriad ways by practitioners. It can most simply be broken down into three main threads: attention given to significance and history of a given geographical locale to participants (and how this might be different for each), a focus on creating a “space of potentiality” (Sloan), and consideration of accessibility.

In choosing a locale in which to work, facilitators must ask questions regarding the history of the geographical area, as well as the specific building and the room within which the workshop(s) will take place. Does the place/space hold any special significance to the community? Are there signifiers of power within the room? Sally Mackey and Nicolas Whybrow contend that there can be “manifestations of cultural restriction associated with particular local places and community customs” (7). The significance of a place or space may determine its use for a project, if there is a choice in the matter. Once a location has been chosen for the site of the project, Mackey and Whybrow (2011) assert that it is critical to be mindful of how those places are envisioned and challenged.

Understanding the places and spaces a facilitator enters impacts how they will prepare for any workshop, though often, despite the best planning, a real understanding of the significance of any place and the participants’ relation to it is only truly reached after the workshop is underway. To further complicate this, Mackey and Whybrow posit that leaning into Debra Massey’s idea of place as “interstitial and fluid” is meaningful for applied drama praxis, noting that “place loses its bounded locality and becomes something distinct, resonant, deeply known, specific and reassuring, — yet continuously moving and evolving” (10). This links in well with Cathy Sloan’s views, in which she acknowledges that the idea of place as a

fixed thing is complicated by the lived experience of a place and can be further complicated when linked with creative practice that inspires participants to imagine beyond the confines of a physical place (587). Understanding that the meanings of and feelings toward a place/space are constantly in flux leads to the next thread in this exploration of place/space: creating a “space of potentiality” (Sloan).

Accepting that the meaning and experience of a place/space is fluid, then “the role of the practitioner is to create spaces of potentiality that encourage new experiences, the making of new connections, experiences of active choice-making that allow things to ‘become’ whatever they will ‘become’” (Sloan 594). Mackey describes one such experience in her 2011–2014 project “Challenging Place,” which involved a group of socially vulnerable participants with difference relationships to locality and migration who had a connection to Oldham, UK (113–124). On the first day of the workshop the participants were each given a piece of lighting gel and asked to draw something on it “that represented pleasure,” and the gels were then placed in a front-facing window of the building (Mackey 118). Reflecting on an interview conducted a year after the project ended, Mackey described one participant’s response to this exercise:

Sofia talked of this moment with some pleasure, explaining that it had a Chinese picture on it and she liked to think a Chinese person passing by would recognise it. She felt she had become ‘part of the culture’ because her gel was there and that she and the place ‘seems to have melted in together’. (118)

In much the same vein, Jennifer S. Hartley describes a project designed to address gang violence in the United States that took place at a community centre with significant police security and metal detectors (58–61). She and her team had the participants create a mural with objects of significance that took over a wall in the

space they were working in over the course of their project. Hartley writes, “the mural the gangs created was a testimony to the journey they took and to the trust and honesty they brought to the telling of that story” (67). This mural transformed the space in which the participants were working, helping them to claim the space and leave their mark upon it.

Sometimes the transformation of a space happens physically through rearranging furniture or the creation of a physical object, such as the mural, and sometimes it is done through imaginative work. Simple yet powerful activities such as having participants imagine cans of spray paint in their hands and requesting that they physically go through the action of “painting” the walls, ceiling, and floor as they would like can be, speaking from experience, incredibly liberating. This intervention within the space can be one of the initial steps to creating a “safe space” (defined here as: an inviting space where participants can feel comfortable while perhaps dealing with issues that can be uncomfortable for them) for participation and collaboration. Awareness of the weight that certain places/spaces hold and how to create spaces of potentiality link in to the final thread of this exploration of place/space, because accessibility (or lack of) to a place/space directly impacts participants’ attitudes toward it.

The consideration of accessibility to place (and within space) is crucial to planning a workshop within any community. Cornerstone Theatre Company in Los Angeles, known for its community-engaged approach, emphasises the importance of place in training workshops, noting that it is important to “go to the places where the community is already likely to gather” (Rauch 38). How easy/difficult is it to get to the location without a car? What is the parking situation? If there are any variety of

obstacles to participants physically arriving at the location, that is likely to affect the number of participants. Once a locale has been selected that is accessible to the community, there is a further consideration of barriers, physical or socially constructed, to accessing the place/space. Is it accessible for people with mobility issues? Because facilitators seek active engagement of participants throughout the workshop rather than spectatorship, questions are also asked regarding the set-up of any space (room) that a workshop is held in. Is the seating arrangement conducive to participation and engagement? Are there columns blocking vision to parts of the room? I remember working on a Drama in Education project located in a school in which my partner and I were assigned to the school's auditorium (which appeared to have been built in the 1950s) for our work with the students. The stage was elevated, and in the first workshop the only access we had to using that open space was using the stairs at the front, but we had a student in a wheelchair. While it was not the plan, that day we ended up working in the aisles of the auditorium so that all of the students would be able to participate fully. After conversations with the school, we were able to get the pathway to the stage from the back cleared and unlocked so that all students could enter the space that way. Once issues of accessibility have been resolved the facilitator can focus more on the transformation of the space through the praxis and creating an environment that is conducive for collaboration.

Collaboration

The values of inclusiveness, equality, participation, and community-building inform the key principle of collaboration within applied drama praxis. Lynn M. Thomson writes that collaboration is at the epicentre of the art of drama/theatre, and this axiom holds true for applied drama praxis. However, it is important to investigate

what it meant by this term “collaboration,” particularly within creative spheres and how the praxis moves participants from mere “working together” into collaborative creation. The following section will address what is meant by collaboration and then, informed by work in the field of psychology, frame applied drama as falling within Keith R. Sawyer and Stacey DeZutter’s theory of *collaborative emergence*, and touch upon how applied drama works toward this key principle.

While drama/theatre is known for creating strong collaborations to achieve its goals, practitioners like Lynn M. Thomson and Robert Cohen rightfully point out that it is often taken for granted — and not often enough given attention to what is meant by “collaboration” or how that is achieved. In the context of applied drama settings, creating a collaborative environment amongst participants is paramount to the success of the process. This means that practitioners seek to generate collaboration defined as a “process of shared creation: two or more individuals with complementary skills interacting to create a shared understanding that none has previously possessed or could have come to on their own” (Sanker 4). Donna J. Qualley and Elizabeth Chiseri-Strater point out that collaboration is both dialectical and reflexive, writing that the “paradox of collaboration is that through the process of interacting with others, individuals (re)discover their selves” (111). The interconnectivity of the proposed principles is exhibited here because the dialectical encounters with people and ideas that Qualley and Chiseri-Strater refer to link in with the principles of polyphonic communication and embodied practice, and reflexivity is one of the proposed principles at hand.

Further, there is more to the type of collaboration that occurs within applied drama than shared creation and understanding, and it is best expressed through the

term “collaborative emergence.” Sawyer and DeZutter describe this type of collaboration as looser and more open, allowing for unpredictable outcomes — as opposed to collaboration in which the outcomes are foreseen or planned in advance. Sawyer and DeZutter outline four characteristics that bring about collaborative emergence:

The activity has an unpredictable outcome, rather than a scripted, known endpoint. There is moment-to-moment contingency: each person’s action depends on the one just before. The interactional effect of any given action can be changed by the subsequent actions of other participants. The process is collaborative, with each participant contributing equally. (82)

These ideas of moment-to-moment contingency and an interactional effect fit well within applied drama, as they are in conversation with the principles of reflexivity and the emphasis on process. This helps to give a clearer picture of the specific type of collaboration that is sought within applied drama settings: creative activity that is shared between persons, which is open, flexible, and responsive, and through which collective knowledge is generated.

To facilitate a high level of collaboration amongst participants, there is a great emphasis on fostering relationships within the group through community-building activities. Prendergast and Saxton dedicate an entire chapter to this in their book, *Applied Drama: A Facilitator’s Handbook to working in the Community*, to emphasise the importance of, and share techniques for, community-building within applied drama contexts. Linking in with the guiding principle of place/space, creating a safe space¹⁴ for participation is crucial to building a sense of community that will foster

¹⁴ Defined here as a space in which participants feel comfortable dealing with issues/topics that may be uncomfortable for them. Some practitioners prefer the term “brave space,” emphasising the need to be willing to take risks, rather than feeling safe, which “safe space”

active exploration and collective creativity. The first step of this is usually to create a social contract with the group for expectations and rules that everyone helps create and agrees to work within. In speaking about her practice in an interview, Jenny Macdonald asserted, “I do contracts with all ages and all groups, just because I think it never hurts any human being to put a focus on what it actually means to listen or make space for people”. Once a social contract has been established that everyone in the group has approved, the focus shifts to the process of building community through active endeavours.

In order to foster a sense of comradeship that leads to collaborative emergence, facilitators use warmups and theatre activities created for this very purpose. Irish practitioner Stephen (Jed) Murray explained:

I will always do introductory exercises at first and let people make a bit of a tit of themselves...get them working together with exercises that involve stuff that they want to achieve...challenging stuff that can be got. Even just a ball and you have to keep it up for a count of thirty...that's a really handy one just to get everyone working together.

These exercises (often referred to as “theatre games”) are linked to theatre performance techniques used in rehearsals to quickly and effectively build an ensemble from a group of artists who may have never met before, but must work together intensely and intimately to accomplish their task. The games often involve laughing together when the group might make a “mistake” and begin the game again working toward a common goal —an example of this would be the simple exercise of counting to twenty as a group, but if any two people call out a number at the same

can connote. This is much debated. For more on this see Flensner and Von der Lippe, “Being safe from what and safe for whom? A critical discussion of the conceptual metaphor of ‘safe space.’” *Intercultural Education*, 30.3 (2019): 275-288.

time, the group must begin again. This type of task motivates people to want to work together and requires them to become more attuned to one another and (perhaps unconsciously) begin to take greater note of the people in the space and their presence. All of this sets the tone for an environment which is inclusive of all present and their ideas, as well as opens the door for participants to work together to collaborate and co-create.

Once participants are working together and laughing together within a workshop, they are ready to move toward collaborative emergence and delving into concerns or topics that the group would like to consider. Whether through storytelling, image theatre, sculpting, or improvisation — applied drama fosters collaborative emergence through combining avenues for artistic expression with prompts that are designed to evoke both specificity and openness. An example of this type of prompt would be: “where are you and where are you going?” This is open to a lot of interpretation by the participants, and they are free to respond in whatever way they are most compelled through the exercise/activity the facilitator outlines. Some might stay rooted to specific geographic places; some might think to a situation they are currently involved in and how they would like that to be resolved; some might speak to their goals and where they are in terms of achieving them, and so on. Providing prompts that are able to bring focus to specific moments and ideas, but are also open enough to allow for each individual’s interpretation, allows for that spontaneity and unpredictability, which is then bolstered by the translation of those thoughts/ideas through the artistic form. When this is combined with partner, small group, and whole group work in which the material offered by each individual based on the prompt passes through many hands and many iterations, the concept of

moment-to-moment contingency and interactivity is realised. The moments of collaborative emergence offered through applied drama allow for deep exploration and curiosity to take place, leading to the generation of shared knowledge within the group, which is bolstered by the guiding principles of reflexivity and polyphonic communication.

Polyphonic Communication

Valuing dialectic and dialogic exchange,¹⁵ equality, inclusivity, accessibility, and diversity inform the guiding principle of championing multiple perspectives within the work through polyphonic communication. An emphasis on multiple perspectives in applied drama indicates considering the points of view of every individual participating, while also signifying the embrace of the aesthetic capacity of polyphony: “performance’s multiple communicative modes, including the visual, kinetic, sonic, spatial, affective, and symbolic” (Beausoleil 260). Incorporating multiple modes of language and communication is of the utmost importance in applied drama praxis to allow for sharing of diverse perspectives. The following section will touch upon how applied drama tunes into these various communicative modes, touching upon verbal, nonverbal (including body language, gesture, image theatre, and movement), metaphor, symbol, and translation. The dialectical exchange that takes place within applied drama is not the kind to lead necessarily to consensus within a group, but rather to enlarged understanding. This is because using a variety

¹⁵ Dialogue in this context is framed around Bakhtin’s view of dialogism in which the goal is “responsive understanding.” It is multi-vocal and does not seek a solution or answer. For more see Patricia Romney. “The Art of Dialogue.” *Animating Democracy*, Americans for the Arts (2003). Also drawn from the field of education, the dialectical here is framed as discourse intended to resolve a problem/disagreement. For more see Baruch B. Schwartz and Michael J. Baker. *Dialogue, Argumentation and Education* (Cambridge University Press 2017), pp. 99-104.

of communicative modes leads to multi-modal meaning-making. It is this capacity to convey meaning in a multitude of ways which supports collaborative emergence and a reflexive practice.

Within an applied drama setting, facilitators are acutely aware of the importance of having every participant contribute to the group's work. This is often phrased as making sure that everyone's "voice" comes through and their perspective is shared. This is easily seen in the use of storytelling and personal narrative. However, applied drama practitioners are mindful that not every participant is comfortable with "voicing" their thoughts and feelings in a verbal way, or that participants may be better able to represent their ideas through other modalities of communication. Richard Courtney pushes this idea further when he writes that "[spoken] language is not capable of capturing the whole of feeling because human feelings are less tangible than linguistic expressions" (*Feeling* 19). Nicholson writes that "[i]t is particularly in the context of dramatic improvisation that the political metaphor of the 'voice' becomes a literal and physical presence" (*Applied Drama* 54). Applied drama employs the languages of gesture, body language, facial expression, image, and (like all arts practices) metaphor and symbolism through exercises that involve movement, proxemics, and touch.

While human beings unconsciously interpret body language, facial expression, and gesture in every interaction, the field of drama consciously and purposefully examines these modes of communication for optimal expression. Nicholson writes:

In drama, communication is embodied and meanings are created and read through the body, aurally, visually, and kinaesthetically. As such, drama is a form of literacy — you can think, feel, represent ideas and experiences with your body as with your mind. (*Applied Drama* 53)

Through applied drama work, facilitators guide participants toward an intentional and deliberate awareness of gesture, body language, and facial expression (including eye contact) which “help to fill out the words we are saying” (Prendergast and Saxton 77). Prendergast and Saxton go on to say that gesture, body language, and facial expressions “often express thoughts and feelings of which we may not even be aware” (77). Through the conscious awareness of these factors in applied drama, cultural differences in how people express and interpret these modes of communication are revealed and are then able to provide greater context and nuance to the exchange of information occurring within the workshop.

Theatre relies not only on the written text of a play, but also on the stage picture that is created and presented to the audience. From this awareness of how to stage images and their importance, applied drama employs the method of tableaux (frozen images, much like a snapshot but with live bodies in real time) and sculpting (which involves participants moving each other to create an image), as well as other image-based approaches to working, a set of practices labelled as “Image Theatre” by Augusto Boal. All of these exercises engage with haptic and proxemic communication. Ross C. Anderson elaborates on the use of tableaux, writing that these compositions “include creative and aesthetic choices for proximity of actors, facial expression, implied motion, shape/flow, contrasting levels, focal points, bodily gesture, and orientation to audience, among other possible textures” and pointing out that image-based drama work “directly challenges the pervasive idea inherited from analytic philosophy of linguistics and knowledge that meaning must be tied to words” (73). At any point, these “fixed” images can also become animated, tapping

into a kinetic form of communication. Hartley beautifully illustrates the need and purpose for image work when she writes:

There is a Buddhist saying that the mind is like a cup of dirty water; if you do not stir the water, the dirt will settle and the water will become clear. Image theatre works in a similar way. By removing words, clarity is achieved in the concepts vying for a position in our minds. (22)

Image work allows participants space to tap into knowledge gained through lived and emotionally-felt experience, generally taken for granted, that so often leaves people speechless.

Applied drama incorporates the language of metaphor and symbol through verbal and nonverbal exercises and games. Mallika Henry writes:

Drama, through its use of symbols, has been a powerful tool for communicating public and political meaning in those cultures in which a living theatre speaks to broad audiences. (58)

Through symbolism and metaphor, arts-based practices are able to draw connections in human experiences and tap into individuals' tacit knowledge. Courtney explains that "[i]n dramatic acts symbols become felt realities — fictional entities of significance in the players' doing and Being [...] Symbols then become cognitive elements available to our intellectual potential" (*Intelligence* 125). The "exploratory creation of metaphoric worlds provides different perspectives" (Henry 56) and aesthetic distancing from a subject or situation, which leads to abstract thinking. Jamie L. Napier and John F. Dovidio reflect on their findings of the use of abstract thinking, specifically in contrast to concrete thinking in political settings:

We found that the effect of abstract thinking on prejudice was mediated by an increase in concerns about fairness. This research suggests that abstract thinking can reduce partisan differences insofar as everyone — conservatives and liberals alike — cares about fairness on some level. (41)

Abstract thinking also leads to greater comfort with ambiguity by asking questions, being okay in getting something “wrong,” and with acknowledging that there may be more than one solution to a problem.

Through the use of such a wide range of communicative forms, applied drama praxis provides multiple opportunities for the translation of ideas. Stewart Clegg and his associates write that “[t]he process of translation produces not so much a right or wrong translation — although some may work better than others in specific contexts — because every single attempt can be a point of departure for a new understanding” (347). An activity that may begin with storytelling might then translate into image work using the body, revealing something new about the subject matter. The narrative is not only translated from a verbal to a nonverbal medium; it is also translated through the perspectives of the individuals in the group. These simple acts of translation reveal something new about the subject matter each time.

Reflexivity

The guiding principle of a reflexive practice is informed by the values of reflection, dialogic and dialectic exchange, and responsiveness. A “reflexive practice” is defined here as the continuous reflection on one’s practice combined with introspection, which leads to not only a change in one’s beliefs/assumptions, but also to active changes/modifications within the practice itself as a result. The following paragraphs will address the concept of reflexivity and its ties to reflection, how this informs this dissertation’s preferential use of the term “praxis,” and how reflexivity is manifested within applied drama settings.

The lexical source of the term “reflexive” means “to bend backwards upon oneself” (Lumsden 2). Lumsden notes an “array of versions of reflexivity” (2) within

philosophy and social theory that date back to early writings of Immanuel Kant — this research will look to Kathryn Dawson and Daniel A. Kelin, II, authors of *The Reflexive Teaching Artist*, to define reflexivity as reflecting on an experience and then engaging in action based on that reflection. They write that:

The reflexive individual understands how to thoroughly investigate choices and alternatives and when to challenge her choices to improve both her practice and the experience of colleagues and collaborators. (Dawson and Kelin II 31)

Jonathan Neelands reinforces this idea, writing that a reflexive practice presumes “that there are systematic opportunities for dialogue about the processes and interpretations” taking place among all participants and “that these dialogues will shape the reflection on, and the interpretation and modification of, the on-going practice” (“Re-imagining” 19). The notion of shifting an approach or actively changing course as a result of thoughtful reflection about what has been experienced is at the heart of the notion of reflexivity in applied drama.

Qualley explains the interconnection of reflection and reflexivity by noting that they are “not entirely separate processes, but rather different aspects of the same process that can work separately or together” (223). Dawson and Kelin II use a model of looped learning to describe how reflection and reflexivity are connected and can work together. In this model: single-loop learning (reflection) asks “are we doing things right?;” double-loop learning (reflexivity) asks “are we doing the right things?;” and triple-loop learning (learning how we learn) asks “how do we decide what is right?” (Dawson and Kelin II 32). The idea is that the loops build upon the knowledge of the others. Though no claims are being made about always completing the third loop with applied drama praxis, there is definitively a focus on working through the first two. Additionally, and importantly for applied drama praxis, Wanda

Pillow notes a further distinction between reflection and reflexivity, writing, “to be reflective does not demand an ‘other,’ while to be reflexive demands both an other and some self-conscious awareness of the process of self-scrutiny” (176). This shines a light on the need for reflexivity within the praxis due to the need for participants (at minimum one other, though usually more) in shared space for applied drama praxis to even take place.

The primary focus of this principle is of the reflexive practice of the facilitator. A reflexive approach allows facilitators to be aware of the “social, ethical, and political impact;” “the central, fluid, and changing nature/s of power relations (with participants, gatekeepers, research funders, etc.); and the facilitator’s own relationship with the participants” (Lumsden 4). Reflexivity is what allows facilitators to be responsive to “the momentary and evolving needs of” (Dawson and Kelin II 31) participants in the room and adjust course as needed. This could translate into changing course with the use of various modes of communication styles, the size of group interactions (putting people in pairs, small groups, etc.), where in the space the work is taking place, etc. These adjustments happen in the moment, as well as between workshops when planning for the next.

While this reflexive process is a must for facilitators, it is not uncommon for participants to move from a reflective into a reflexive mode as well. The reflexive approach taken by facilitators offers both individual (within each participant) and collective opportunities for reflection and “invites each participant to make their own meaning as they accrue better understanding of how others make meaning in the world” (Dawson and Kelin, II 219). Richard Courtney refers to this creation of meaning as a dual process, writing:

the essence of dramatic action is doubling: identifying and empathizing with others, impersonating them, thinking from their point of view, and transforming our metaphoric imaginings into external symbols that create multiple meanings. (*Intelligence* 161)

As Courtney stated, this new meaning-making often leads to participants' greater ability to empathise with others with whom they may hold differing opinions or beliefs. This dual process taking place is closely tied to Boal's understanding of "metaxis" as it relates to drama: a state of being in both the real and imagined worlds simultaneously.

Moments of reflection, both reflection-in-action and reflection-on-action, are embedded throughout applied drama praxis. This is emphasised by practitioners and scholars across the discipline. Prendergast and Saxton note that "[r]eflection-in-action can be done through a number of drama activities: writing-in-role, hot-seating, pair-share and reportage," while "[r]eflection-on-action usually occurs at the conclusion of an activity or a session as well as at the end of a workshop series" (8). Reflection "allows individuals to process the content that is being explored" in addition to "the process itself" (Grile 43–44). Through these many opportunities offered for reflection, which then lead into new exercises or activities, it is possible and probable that some of the participants move from that single-loop learning into the double or even possibly triple-loop learning during applied drama workshops.

A focus on constant reflection throughout the process and then acting upon that reflection through embodied practice is what informs the preferential use of the word "praxis" to describe applied drama over "practice." While "praxis" is generally accepted as the fusion of theory and practice, for that to work it requires an iterative process which puts theory into action, reflects upon that action/practice, updates the theory based upon the practice, and then puts the new theory back into action. This

lends applied drama the characteristics of fluidity and mutability. Nicholson writes that praxis “is built on a circularity of thought, feeling, and action” (*Applied Drama* 39). It is the honed skill of reflexivity combined with the form and structure of drama/theatre and an emphasis on process that allows for the iterative practices which support the praxis — all of which make applied drama uniquely suitable for use in contexts of learning, conflict resolution, dialogic exchange, and investigating social and political concerns.

Through this examination of applied drama praxis, what becomes glaringly evident is how interwoven the six guiding principles are. An emphasis on awareness of place/space allows for greater collaboration, while an embodied practice allows for the inclusion of multiple modalities of communication. All of this is made possible through the focus on process and allows for a reflexive practice. The values supporting these principles (including community-building, inclusivity, participation, accessibility, dialogic and dialectic exchange, diversity, creative freedom of the individual in concert with the community, responsiveness, and reflection), in concert with the manifestation of these values through the guiding principles, form this proposed framing of applied drama. It is also critical to point out that a notable outcome as a result of applied drama praxis among participants is increased ability to empathise with others.¹⁶ This comes as a result of a focus on collaboration, reflexive and reflective design, as well as exercises that require role taking and the consideration of how others perceive and feel about a situation. Applied drama praxis is where drama/theatre practice converges with community-

¹⁶ The link between applied drama praxis and the process of empathy will be further explored in Chapter Three.

building and social efficacy, and it has the potential to radically reshape liberal democratic approaches.

Liberal Democracy and Applied Drama

Liberal democracy and applied drama are both embodied processes that rely on the engagement, collaboration, and communication of groups of people — albeit on different scales. The inclusion of applied drama within liberal democratic practices would fulfil John Dewey’s vision and articulated need for a more creative approach to liberal democracy:

If I emphasize that the task can be accomplished only by inventive effort and creative activity, it is in part because the depth of the present crisis is due in considerable part to the fact that for a long period we acted as if our democracy were something that perpetuated itself automatically; as if our ancestors had succeeded in setting up a machine that solved the problem of perpetual motion in politics. We acted as if democracy were something that took place mainly in Washington and Albany — or some other state capital — under the impetus of what happened when men and women went to the polls once a year or so — which is a somewhat extreme way of saying that we have had the habit of thinking of democracy as a kind of political mechanism that will work as long as citizens were reasonably faithful in performing political duties.
(Dewey, *Vol. 14* 225)

The need for liberal democracies to be responsive to all the varying needs and desires of citizens within the state requires constant innovation. In his discourse on creative democracy Dewey emphasised “problems of perpetual motion in politics” (*Vol. 14* 225) and the need to *act* and *respond* rather than rely on the “machine” of democracy to sort it out. Applied drama’s emphasis on process complements the needs required of liberal democracy in this regard. Applied drama praxis also responds to the democratic paradox outlined by Mouffe by allowing for ambiguity, plurality, and

nuanced understanding to guide dialogue, leading to the potential for greater success in this balancing act.

The following section will draw a firmer connection between the elements of liberal democracy examined in the previous sections and the elements of applied drama, starting from the broad ideals and working inward to the more definitive elements of education, community, and the public sphere. In moving toward the specific, the section will first look at democratic learning followed by community-building in relation to applied drama. Following a broad look at applied drama and democratic learning and community-building, the practitioner's perspective will home in on examples of activities within applied drama, analysing them and exploring their potential for achieving these ends. Finally, the chapter will close on setting up implications for applied drama within the public sphere that will be more thoroughly explored in Chapter Three, which takes a closer look at the liberal democratic practice of deliberative democracy.

The explorations in the earlier sections reveal that both liberal democracy and applied drama share the ideals of equality, freedom, and fellowship. It is even arguable that applied drama praxis does a much better job of actualising these ideals,¹⁷ which indicates how the praxis could be useful within larger liberal democratic systems. In applied drama the value of equality is primarily revealed through the focus on collaboration and the use of multiple forms of communication within the praxis, to allow for everyone to contribute as fully as possible in the way in which they are best suited. This is supported by Mackey and Whybrow's assertion that

¹⁷ Notably applied drama accomplishes this on a very small scale, though it still holds potential for use within larger liberal democratic structures/governments.

“the work aspires to a kind of creative democracy in action, which may well have, as its project, the establishment or cementing of a given collective identity or community-belonging” (2). Fellowship is present in applied drama’s emphasis on building collaboration and a reflexive praxis, while the valuing of freedom and individuality is woven throughout the praxis and evidenced in the fluid and adaptable nature of it. However, the connection between applied drama and liberal democracy runs deeper than ideals. Approaches toward education, community, and the public sphere further unite liberal democracy and applied drama. The underlying forces that support liberal democracy are inherent in, and can be strengthened by, applied drama praxis.

Democratic Learning and Applied Drama

Learning that bolsters liberal democracy must hone critical thinking and encourage the process of empathy; incorporate imagination, Socratic pedagogy and reflection; and make room for collective/group learning and ambiguity. Winnicott’s assertion that “play has an important role in shaping democratic citizenship” (Nussbaum 100) also points to the pivotal role that applied drama could hold for democratic education, given that Stuart Brown wrote that “the ability to play is critical not only to being happy, but also to sustaining social relationships and being a creative, innovative person” (6). It is striking that two prominent figures in the area of democracy and education, Dewey and Tagore, placed such high significance on the arts to assist in the task, with special attention given to drama/theatre. Weber wrote that “[a]t the base of Dewey’s educational theory is an attention to process and growth, not to any particular material or subject matter” (118). This resonates

strongly with applied drama's prioritisation of process and collective meaning-making.

Some of the most well-known labels of applied drama praxis, such as Drama in Education and Creative Dramatics, already effectively operate within the field of education. There is broad evidence and support for the learning that happens through applied drama praxis.¹⁸ Richard Courtney explained that through dramatic activity “we experience thought (imagination and feeling) and action as one entity. Thought + action = dramatic acts. Together they create meaning” (*Feeling* 11). Aligning applied drama praxis even further with Dewey's approach to education, Nicholson pointed out that “[p]edagogical connections between action and reflection are habitually associated with constructivism, a theoretical position that, though differently nuanced, is built on the premise that knowledge is constructed through human activity” (2nd edition 97). Though traditional theatre is sometimes thought of as a “mirror” for society, applied drama processes act more as “a complex reworking and interpretation of social practices, histories and memories” (Thompson, *Applied* 145). Thompson goes on to say, “It is a form of knowledge and a way of constructing and presenting that knowledge” (*Applied* 145–146). While most of the specialisations within applied drama that are already situated within education are designed to engage with young people (under the age of eighteen), the way in which collective learning happens and meaning is made through applied drama is accessible to all participants — no matter the age. To further explore the ways in which applied drama

¹⁸ For more see Mallika Henry. “Drama's Ways of Learning.” *Research in Drama Education: The Journal of Applied Theatre and Performance*, 5.1 (2000): 45–62 and Richard Courtney, *Drama and Intelligence* (McGill-Queens University Press 1990).

meets the standards set out for democratic education, a brief overview of Dorothy Heathcote's "layers of meaning" and Richard Courtney's assessment of the type of learning produced through drama will be presented.

Dorothy Heathcote asserted that there are five layers of meaning embedded in dramatic activity: action, motivation, investment, model, and life-view.¹⁹ David Davis elaborated on this idea, explaining that these five layers of meaning can be uncovered through a series of questions regarding the dramatic activity/storytelling that took place: (1) What did you do?, (2) Why did you do it?, (3) Why was/is it so important?, (4) Where did you learn it?, and (5) "How does this capture how you think life should or should not be?" (74). This line of questioning is a form of Socratic questioning that requires critical thinking, imagination, emotional response, and reflection. Though these five questions may not always be explicitly asked by applied drama facilitators, the layers of meaning in the work remain available for participants to excavate.

Courtney described the learning produced through drama processes as "intrinsic, extrinsic, aesthetic, and artistic" (*Intelligence* 139). Dramatic processes require a holistic immersion of the self (physically, mentally, and emotionally), and therefore "the intellectual, cognitive, social, and affective elements are seen as a unity" (Courtney, *Intelligence* ix). Intrinsic learning refers to that which increases inner, personal qualities, with Courtney citing the following as qualities influenced through drama:

Perception, awareness, concentration, variety of thought-style, expression, inventiveness, problem identification and solving, confidence and self-worth, social learning and negotiation with others, and motivation and transfer of learning. The literature

¹⁹ For more see David Davis, *Imagining the Real: Towards a new Theory of Drama in Education* (Institute of Education Press 2014), pp. 67-72.

identifies these factors as being important for psychological health and for personality development, coping with existence, 'thinking on the feet,' and life/interpersonal/social/cognitive /generic skills. (*Intelligence* 139)

Extrinsic learning created through participation in drama increases "potential and ability in activities other than drama" (Courtney, *Intelligence* 140), aesthetic learning relates to feelings and judgement, and artistic learning refers to increased ability in the craft. Extrinsic learning indicates how applied drama can be used to increase knowledge on a wide range of topics and issues that may affect a community. Additionally, aesthetic learning allows participants to learn how "to refine raw emotion into feelings" (Courtney, *Intelligence* 140) that can then be productively expressed. Courtney elaborated on this idea in his book, *Drama and Feelings*:

Significant learning is aesthetic, a change in the *quality* of thought. There is an alteration in *how* we think more than in *what* we think; by changing the *how*, we can deal more efficiently with the *what*. This is commonly called 'learning to learn,' which rests on feeling, imagining, self-consciousness, complex conceptual frameworks, and the use of both information and meta-perspectives. (28)

The learning that happens through applied drama is focused on changing how we see, feel, think, and interact with the world in a way that allows for growth, not only within the art form, but also in many other aspects of our lives.

Community-Building and Applied Drama

Whether phrased as "fellowship," "social capital," or "community," the idea of social cohesion plays a huge part in liberal democratic thought, in education and in the public sphere. Indeed, collective learning is encouraged within both spaces. In his article "What We Can Learn from Town Meetings," Matt Leighninger posits that "[m]eaningful democracy requires conscious, proactive efforts at inclusion, not just in political processes but in community settings" (1), and goes on to say that "[m]eeting

this challenge will require rethinking community, not just adopting new political processes” (3). Applied Drama praxis and the way in which it builds community and social cohesion among its participants is a creative way to rethink the civic communities within liberal democratic states.

The early stages of any applied drama work (within each session as well as in relation to the overall length of the project) is focused on building a sense of community, trust, and collaborative spirit among all present. The writing in the previous section that looked specifically at place/space and collaboration outlined how much community-building in applied drama takes place, including an emphasis on creating a safe/brave space and the creation of a social contract. This social contract is negotiated with the group at the beginning of the work, but participants are made aware that it is always open to changes as needs may arise through the work. Moving forward, activities and exercises are chosen by the facilitator that will allow participants the opportunity to interact with each other in pairs, small groups, and as a whole group. Mixing up these groupings is key to allowing opportunities for bonds to form amongst all participants, and it also keeps everyone from becoming stagnant by sitting in one place and only talking to the same people. Further, many of these activities are designed to get participants relaxed, laughing, and working together toward a common goal.²⁰ This allows them to be more open to sharing their ideas, as well as receiving input from others in the group.

²⁰ “Radical” deliberative theorists point to the need for this type of environment, see Chapter Three.

Practitioner's Perspective: Aligning with Liberal Democratic Values

While it is somewhat easier to paint with a large brush and write sweepingly of applied drama praxis using the writings of prominent theorists and practitioners, I feel it imperative to take a moment here to zoom in on the praxis. My hope is that by describing activities that I use in my own practice and breaking down how those activities function on both the surface and deeper levels, a clearer picture of what I am proposing will form for the reader. First, I will detail three examples of typical exercises with a focus on how those exercises support democratic learning. Following on from there, I will describe two additional activities that would be typical for the warm-up/community-building stage of an applied drama workshop. With so many exercises to choose from — and with new combinations of various exercises being created by facilitators and participants all the time to meet the changing needs of the group — the exercises chosen will be fairly basic and will be described and analysed in their elemental form with suggestions for possible variations. It is important to stress that these exercises are constantly being added to, adjusted, and moulded to meet the needs of each group, but the underlying approach to communication and learning remains the same. The exercises that follow are fairly basic, but even so, there are contexts in which they may not be appropriate or useful. Thompson indicated this when he wrote that the “practice is constantly tested by the flexibility required by context” (*Applied* 147). It is important to be mindful that exercises are chosen to work within certain contexts by the facilitator — not all exercises are suitable for every situation or group.

The first exercise to be considered is an exercise I refer to as “Same and Different.” This exercise, typical of many applied drama exercises, incorporates input

from the entire group, requiring collective, collaborative work. In this exercise participants are given a prompt and provided with one to two minutes to think of an experience or story that relates to it. After the participants have had a moment to think, the facilitator asks for a volunteer to share the story that they thought of with the group and will be allotted one to three minutes (depending on the topic and the discretion of the facilitator) to do so. Meanwhile, all other participants are asked to listen and note three differences and three similarities between their own story and the one being told. In trying to understand what was the same and what was different between their stories, participants must be able to use their imaginations and empathise with the storyteller. Further, critical thinking and Socratic questioning must also take place within the listeners, in order to make decisions about these similarities and differences. When the first volunteer has finished, another will be called upon to share their story, making sure to highlight the three differences and similarities in relation to the previous story. This cycle then continues for as long as participants would like to share their stories or there is time. With each iteration and variation upon the story, the original prompt is further complicated, usually leaving no clear-cut answers/solutions to the topic at hand. Upon conclusion of the storytelling there will be time given for reflection on the activity and the information gained during/through it. The lack of a definitive solution leaves space for greater nuance and a plurality of meanings in the reflection. Within the span of this one activity, each of the major desired components for democratic learning is touched upon multiple times. With each storyteller the task of imagining, empathising, and questioning begins anew, further complicating the narrative within the collective group assembled. If time allows, facilitators can then continue to extend from this

exercise in a variety of ways such as asking participants to create scenes based on what they heard in small groups or asking participants to create images to respond to the stories.

Next is a simple image exercise, of which there are many variations and adaptations, that I refer to as “Present and Possibility.” In this exercise participants are divided up into groups and asked to create an image of how something currently exists. This is usually related to their community or whatever issue/subject brought the group together. Each group is given time to create the image, and when the time is up, the small groups share their images out with the larger group. Reflection happens at this stage either within the viewing of each image, or sometimes collectively after all images have been viewed with attention brought to clarifying between what is seen visually (“a person sitting cross-legged”) and what the image conjures to mind (“I see the Buddha.”) After this, the groups are asked to go back and create a second image that depicts how the same issue/topic presented in the first image might look in an ideal world. Once the “ideal” images have been created the groups are tasked with figuring out *how* to move from the first image to the second. What does that transition look like? Is it fast or slow? Is it joyful or painful? What are the qualities that accompany this transition? Once these tasks are completed there is another round of sharing and reflection revolving around the small groups now sharing both images with the transition in between to move from the “present” to the “possibility.” This reflection usually feeds back into the conversations generated around the initial “present” images that were shared first.

“Present and Possibility” touches upon every mode of communication that operates within applied drama, allowing participants multiple access points into the

dialogue. It requires creative imagining and collaboration within the small groups to create the images/transition, as well as imagination, empathy, and critical thinking to “unpack” the images that are presented to draw out meaning. There are multiple layers to the meaning made in this activity, ranging from the personal to the social and all the space in between. Once again, participants are asked to empathise with other participants within the images presented, to try to understand what they are expressing. However, in this activity, participants are presented with the opportunity to empathise in-role as well, as they might be asked to take on an unfamiliar role within the image their group has created. Variations on this activity can have groups combining images, participants swapping roles, creating an “inner monologue” for each participant in the image, and more.

The last exercise to be described with a view toward democratic learning is a staple of dramatic theatre games and exercises commonly known as “Machine.” In the simplest version of this game, a participant is asked to come up and begin a movement that they are able to repeat for a substantial amount of time. Sometimes sound is included at this stage as well. The sound can be any noise made (stomping feet, whistling, barking), including words/phrases that can be repeated. Based on the first participant’s movement (and sound), another participant comes up to add to what they created, and then another and another. As many participants as want to contribute are able to, though usually the facilitator will keep it to four to seven (depending on the size of the group). Once the machine has been created, the facilitator will ask the participants who are not a part of the machine to describe what they are seeing and hearing, and then to link that to what it makes them think of. The machine will be given a name, and dialogue and reflection take place around why that

name was best suited. Finally, participants inside the machine will be given an opportunity to talk about their experience and viewpoints. Variations on this game include starting with the name of the machine (such as a “peace machine”) and then having participants work collectively to build it, allowing a participant to act as the “operator” of the machine with the ability to speed it up or slow it down and turn it off and on, and having some participants only contribute movement/action while others only contribute to the sound.

“Machine” relies heavily on non-verbal communication, metaphor, and symbols. All participants (whether contributing actively to the machine or not) must use their imaginations to “see” what is being created; they must think critically and ask questions about what they are seeing/hearing and what that could mean or translate into. Additionally, because actual text is scarce (though words/phrases that can be repeated are used), there can be many different interpretations as to what the machine is doing/saying amongst those inside and outside the machine. This ambiguity of interpretation provides an opportunity to take in the machine from the perspective of someone who saw it differently. This activity can be used as a warmup in its most basic form, as well as a way to deepen conversation around the topic being explored later in the workshop. Once again, the crucial elements for democratic learning are interwoven throughout this simple exercise, which is ideal for beginning to explore a topic as well as gauging the variety of thoughts, attitudes, and feelings toward a topic within the room.

The activities chosen for a closer look in this research for the purposes of linking the work to democratic learning are representative of the type of activities used within applied drama once it has moved beyond the “warm-up” or “community-

building” phase. Realistically, not every activity or exercise within applied drama will touch upon every single aspect of democratic learning. Specifically, the activities and exercises used at the beginning of workshops to warm participants up and build a sense of community may not accomplish this. However, it is worth exploring *how* applied drama uses warm-up exercises to aid in building a sense of connectedness among participants being that “civic connections”, as David Matthews refers to them, are so crucial to sustaining liberal democracy. Next, I will describe and analyse two warm-up activities that I commonly use in my personal practice.

The first warm-up activity that will be detailed is commonly referred to as “Minefield.” This activity begins with the group in a circle. The facilitator asks the group to place one to two items inside the circle, making sure to space them apart so that they are not all in one big pile. Sometimes these items are participants’ shoes, but they can also be chairs, notebooks, bags, paper, pens, etc. — whatever is on hand that participants are comfortable with. They are then told that what they have created is a minefield, with each of the items in the circle being a “bomb”. A volunteer is selected to be blindfolded and is placed at a new point in the circle by the facilitator. The rest of the participants are then given time to rearrange their minefield, if they would like. Once the minefield is set, the group and the blindfolded participant must work together to get the volunteer through the minefield to the other side of the circle using only verbal instructions. This can be done in a variety of ways. First, the facilitator could allow the group to begin with no further instructions. This usually causes an immediate eruption of instructions coming from multiple participants. However, it forces the group to negotiate how best to move forward to accomplish the task. Alternatively, the facilitator could begin by allowing each

participant in the circle to give one piece of instruction at a time, moving around the circle so that everyone gets a turn. Another variation would be to add the number of blindfolded participants who are trying to get through the minefield at any one time.

In addition to this activity working toward a common goal for all participants to succeed together or to learn from their failures together, this activity provides further depth in community-building. Quite often the activity will result in much laughter, as the group begins to work on the task at hand. This can result from a surprising/funny interpretation of a set of instructions by the volunteer, as well as the volunteer's confusion at bits of instruction given. Group investment grows even more and can be felt in moments where there is a "close call" and a "save" in which the volunteer *almost* steps on/touches a "bomb" and "blows everyone up" — which also usually results in relieved laughter and excitement shared among the group.

Deepening the community ties being built is the learning and information exchange that is happening through the instruction-giving and receiving. Subconsciously, negotiations are being held and an understanding is being created around how each individual understands and processes information. The group learns how each volunteer responds to certain types of instruction and will ultimately end up feeding them the type of instruction they respond best to, because it is more helpful for the game — even if that means it might be a way of communicating that is new or less familiar to them. At the same time, the volunteer is working to understand and interpret the instructions being given and the feedback that comes in the form of encouragement or shouts of "No!" if they begin to make a step that puts them in "danger." Through this, an awareness of the different styles and approaches toward communication within the group and among individual participants is gained.

Participants are able to empathise with both the instruction-giver(s) and the volunteers trying to make their way through the circle. This activity can be played several times, with the minefield changing and the volunteers in the middle cycling through to allow everyone an opportunity to move through the centre if they would like. Participants emerge from the activity having worked through “failures” to get a volunteer across, as well as the victories they achieve together.

The final warm-up activity that will be explored is an activity I refer to as “When the Big Wind Blows.” This activity also begins with the group in a circle. The facilitator goes around the circle assigning each participant as either a raindrop, a leaf, or a branch. The facilitator then tells the group that there will always be someone in the middle of the circle — the facilitator will begin there. The person in the centre of the circle says, “When the big wind blows, it blows...” and they will end the sentence by calling out one of the labels the participants were given at the start: raindrops, leaves, or branches. Whichever group is called out must run into the circle and find a new place to stand while the person in the middle seeks to take one of their places, leaving a new person in the middle. In addition to having the ability to call on one of those groups, the person in the centre can also say, “When the big wind blows there is a tornado,” causing everyone playing to have to run through the circle to find a new place to stand. Moving one spot over is not allowed. This activity gets people up on their feet, moving, and interacting with more people. It allows for the opportunity to stand next to new people and get comfortable with everyone in the group. In the rush to find a new place in the circle laughter inevitably ensues as traffic jams happen and participants sometimes go to great lengths to secure a new spot.

Once the group is comfortable with this level of the game, the facilitator will then announce that there is a change in the rules. (I typically do this the next time I am caught in the middle.) Now, whoever is in the centre of the circle must say, “When the big wind blows it blows for...” and finish the sentence with something that is true about themselves. For example, I might say, “When the big wind blows it blows for people who have a cat.” At that point, everyone in the circle who has a cat must run through to find a new spot, while the person in the centre looks to take one of their places. This can continue for as long as there is time in the session or people are having fun with it. This added layer to the game allows for people to start sharing about themselves with the group at the level with which they are comfortable and allows for recognition of similarities and differences. Importantly, the power of how much to share rests within each participant — a participant can choose to run or stay in place (even if something is true, but they don’t feel comfortable sharing yet) and the participant in the centre is in control of whatever true thing they reveal, which can range from the colour of their shoes to how they personally feel about something. Additionally, this enables participants to identify people within the group that share something in common with them — whether it is love for a pet, support of a sports team, or life as a middle child. There are also opportunities for touch within the game that sometimes happens organically due to the nature of rushing through a space together, but also tends to increase the more comfortable a group gets with one another. This is something facilitators look out for. As participants exhibit signs of greater comfort through their willingness to move closer to others, as well as touch them, then the activities can evolve and continue to deepen those connections.

A sense of comradeship within a community in which people are able to express themselves more fully, as well as empathise and receive information given by others, is crucial for liberal democracies to actualise the ideals that underpin them. The two exercises outlined above exemplify how applied drama can get people laughing together and working to achieve a common goal, all while indirectly learning about each other and how to better work with one another. Strengthened bonds of trust among citizens within the public sphere would allow for more nuanced and considered dialogue between citizens and their representatives. Through applied drama's ability to facilitate democratic learning and community-building, there is potential to reshape and enhance the notion of the public sphere.

The Public Sphere and Applied Drama

For the purposes of this research the idealised public sphere will draw from Habermas's later writings, Dewey, and Mouffe. It will be conceived of as a creative space "generated by a certain kind of communication" (Crossley and Roberts 51) in which communities "recover the dimension of active participation" (Mouffe, ed. 3) through collective learning and problem-solving. Based broadly on the ideals of liberal democracy, the kind of communication that induces the public sphere should be open and accessible to every citizen wishing to participate and focused on issues of public concern.²¹ Applied drama is exceptionally positioned to aid in creating the space outlined above. In fact, two examples of the public sphere actualised through applied drama praxis (albeit, before the term was coined) can be seen in the Chapter One examples of Augusto Boal's Legislative Theatre experiment in Brazil in the early

²¹ The next chapter, which focuses on deliberative democratic practices, will go into greater detail regarding the communication within the public sphere.

1990s and the Civic Forum's use of drama/theatre in the 1989 Velvet Revolution in former Czechoslovakia. In both countries the new public sphere created through the use of drama techniques increased capacity for everyday citizens to become active civic participants in their government, increasing democratisation.

Applied drama workshop settings are adaptable and sensitive to the spaces and places in which they are held, to create a more inclusive and conducive environment in which participants can deliberate and question sensitive topics. Workshops initially focus on creating and/or fostering stronger community bonds through games and exercises that involve humour and require collaboration, allowing individuals to act freely and express themselves independently while working in conjunction with the group assembled. Despite the main goal of these exercises being to nurture social bonds, meaning-making is also occurring within these activities. These understandings can range from being "mainly personal, the personal in the social, or mainly social" (Davis 66). Applied drama's ability to interweave the personal and the social, making space for each, allows an atmosphere in which individuals and communities find expression and easily receive contributions from within the group of participants, which is pivotal to the public sphere regarding inclusion, collective learning, and problem solving.

There is a need to revitalise the public sphere and shift it from a place in which "the relationship of the individual to the state has increasingly become one of client or consumer of services, rather than citizen" (Crossley and Roberts 5) to a relationship of active participation by citizens within the democracies in which they reside. The use of multiple communication techniques, embodied practice, and reflection activates participants physically, mentally, and emotionally in the work of

exploring the topic at hand within applied drama. Mouffe's desire to recover the capacity for *active* participation can also be realised through this praxis, which offers and supports options for more active participation within communication that appeals to the entirety of each participant's being, rather than attempting to isolate cognition from emotions and physicality. Reinforcing this idea and harkening to Dewey's call for a more "creative democracy," Nicholson posited that applied drama "has a particular part to play in the collective exploration of ideas, values and feelings — as a space and place in which society might be reshaped through the imagination" (2nd edition 23).

The idealised conception of the public sphere established above has the potential to be realised through applied drama praxis. The twentieth-century case studies of the Velvet Revolution and Legislative Theatre provide encouraging documentation of the efficacy of the praxis for democratisation and as a type of public sphere. Today, there are a plethora of applied drama projects operating within community settings that manifest this type of public sphere.²² What is lacking, however, is the formalised incorporation of the praxis within the structures of government. The only instance uncovered in this research of this happening was when Boal was an elected official in Brazil, and through his office he was able to bring the praxis into the institution of the government itself through his Legislative Theatre. Boal, who believed firmly in the power and importance of drama/theatre and

²² See Kelly Freebody and Michael Finneran, *Critical Themes in Drama: Social, Cultural, and Political Analysis* (Routledge 2021), pp. 48-61; Jennifer Kitchen, "Theatre and drama education and populism: the ensemble 'family' as a space for dialogic empathy and civic care." *British Educational Research Journal*. 47.2 (2021): 372-388; and the 2007 *Research in Drama Education* journal issue on "Drama for Citizenship and Human Rights" (Volume 12, Issue 3).

of democracy, advocated for the fusion of the two for greater communication and collaboration between states and citizens, insisting that:

Theatre is a language through which human beings can engage in active dialogue on what is important to them. It allows for individuals to create a safe space that they may inhabit in groups and use to explore the interactions which make up their lives. It is a lab for problem solving, for seeking options, and for practicing solutions. (Rohd xix)

A brief look at the experiments in Legislative Theatre in the twenty-first century in the following chapter will show how this lack of institutional/structural existence within the government itself leads to overwhelming dismissal of the form and the knowledge generated through it by elected officials. A formalised approach of joining applied drama praxis and liberal democratic practices and structures can answer the call of Dewey, Rahman, and others seeking innovative and creative ways to approach engagement with democracy. Claudia Chwalisz wrote in 2015, “New institutions that empower the individual to contribute and collaborate with others are badly needed” (*Populist* xii), emphasising the urgency of new state institutions and practices for deepening democracy. A twenty-first century approach using the now well-established field of applied drama in conversation with the deliberative democratic experiments within the field of political science could provide the blueprint for this idealised conception of the public sphere, and will be the topic for exploration and consideration in Chapter Three.

Chapter Three: Proposing Creative Democracy

“Democracy is forever confronted with the task of creating and recreating *itself*. For democracy can never anticipate the contingencies and the new situations that we confront. A creative democracy is one that always faces new unexpected challenges.”

— Richard Bernstein (“Creative Democracy” 226)

Introduction

John Dewey wrote his essay “Creative Democracy: the task before us,” in 1939, the same year that Hitler would invade Poland, effectively starting World War II. In the essay Dewey champions the need for creativity, inventiveness, and cooperation as necessary tools for maintaining and strengthening liberal democracies. Sixty-one years later, in 2000, Richard Bernstein would reiterate Dewey’s call in his article “Creative Democracy: the task still before us.” Bernstein wrote:

Dewey recognized the importance of a commitment to ideals — to imaginative projections of a better future. But he never thought of ideals as divorced from reality, just as he challenged the very idea that means could be separated from ends-in-view. An ideal to which we are committed is not just a goal to be attained; it is a significance to be felt, appreciated. An ideal, like the democratic ideal, arises ‘when the imagination idealizes existence by laying hold of the possibilities offered to thought and action.... The idealizing imagination seizes upon the most precious things found in the climacteric moments of experience and projects them’ (“Creative Democracy” 219)

This idea of combining imagination with creativity to change reality is a well-known concept among artists, and especially applied drama practitioners. The lack of genuine, sustained efforts to include more creative and imaginative forms within¹

¹ The preposition “within” is important here as it calls to attention that creative and imaginative practice has been used by outside organisations and activist groups operating on the periphery of government for some time and highlights the focus of this proposal to operate within structures of government.

formal democratic practice through the end of the twentieth century is evidenced by Bernstein's need to echo Dewey's call, emphasising that it is still the task at hand. The time has come to attend to Dewey's call with the seriousness it deserves.

This chapter will submit for consideration a vision of a creative democracy realised through applied drama praxis, as a component and articulation of the public sphere within deliberative democratic practice. The public sphere is envisioned, as outlined in the previous chapter, as a creative space accessible to all citizens in which communities can harness the magnitude of active participation through collective learning and problem-solving. Building on the understanding that liberal democratic ideals are mutually reinforced by the ideals and principles guiding applied drama praxis, this chapter will push a step further in analysing how applied drama can provide the basis for reconceiving deliberative democratic practices and processes. The proposal of Creative Democracy owes much to Augusto Boal's Legislative Theatre (LT), though it will be shown to differ in a few important ways. To reveal the progression of this research from Boal's approach, it is important to review how LT has been attempted in the twenty-first century, beyond the original experiments in the 1990s. This research will focus on three documented attempts to continue the practice: Headlines Theatre Company's 2004 project entitled *Practicing Democracy* in Vancouver, Canada; a LT workshop facilitated by Boal with his son Julian as a part of the Pedagogy and Theatre of the Oppressed Conference in Omaha, Nebraska in 2008; and a 2009 project in Austin, Texas entitled *The Eye and the Tooth Project: Forum Theatre on the Death Penalty*. The projects will be addressed below in chronological order.

In February 2003, Headlines Theatre Company established a partnership with the local government in Vancouver to realise *Practicing Democracy*, which would take place the next year. Geographers Geraldine Pratt and Caleb Johnston consider this the first adaptation of LT in North America, choosing to overlook a limited and flawed last-minute attempt by the same company in 1999 (93).² *Practicing Democracy* focused on the issue of cuts to welfare and social services in British Columbia and recruited a diverse range of participants who had been affected, including “the homeless, advocates, welfare workers, people doing studies, youth, [and] the elderly” (Pratt and Johnston 95). The target subject was chosen by collaborating with the City Council to narrow the field to four subjects: “the results of the cuts to welfare, the interface between youth and police, issues of seniors, and how a ward system would work” (Diamond and Gallant 1).

Out of their efforts to recruit interested parties for the project, thirty citizens were chosen and paid a C\$500 stipend for participating. During the weeklong workshop, a twenty-minute performance consisting of ten scenes was created. Carrie Gallant, the lawyer hired to attend all sessions and draft a legislative report for the project, wrote in her report, “The central issue that emerged from these experiences was the danger created by years of cuts to welfare and social services. This became the core theme in the play” (i). Prior to the workshop week, Headlines Theatre auditioned and cast six of the participants who would go on to perform the piece “in three different venues over a three-week period in March 2004 to a total audience of

² Headlines had attempted to add a Legislative Theatre component to an earlier production entitled *Squeegie* in 1999 which addressed the criminalization of street youth by inviting the city council to take part after the piece was already in development. No one from the city council attended the performance or read the documented outcomes generated (K. Howe 67).

1296 people” (Pratt and Johnston 95). The six actors were paid C\$550 per week throughout the rehearsal process and performance weeks. Community halls across the city were chosen as venues for the performances in an effort to engage with as much of the diverse citizen population as possible. Additionally, there was a televised performance (a common practice of Headlines Theatre Company), and viewers were encouraged to call in with their input, extending the audience reach to another 5,000 viewers (Pratt and Johnston 96). Performances of *Practicing Democracy* were attended by six city counsellors, including those who were supportive of the project, as well as those who were less enthusiastic about the endeavour. Following the performances, Carrie Gallant translated all the recommendations generated in the sessions into a report that was given to the Vancouver City Council in April 2004.

By Headlines Theatre Company’s own account, the project failed in its goal to produce concrete legislative change, as Boal’s first experiment with LT had managed to do. However, many researchers who have investigated the project, specifically Kelly Howe, Geraldine Pratt, and Caleb Johnston, revealed positive outcomes resulting from the project that warrant mention. In her dissertation focusing on adaptations of Boal’s LT, Howe makes the argument that the process (primarily centred on Forum Theatre) “constructs performance as a ‘think tank’ epistemology — an embodied way of building and transferring knowledge about legislation” (x). In her elucidation of the contemporary implementation of think tanks, she connects their use in policy analysis and change. While Howe describes think tanks as composed of experts in a given field that have “agendas fuelled by corporations and big-budget conservatism” (6), she makes the case for the use of Forum Theatre within LT practice as a think tank with citizens at the nerve centre of operation. This broadens the

traditional concept of what it means to bring in “expert” knowledge by including the expertise of subject-specialists *and* the lived-experience expertise which lies with citizens of the impact of policy on their lives, harkening back to Freire’s notions of education in the belief that every individual has expertise and knowledge to share.³ Within Howe’s LT think tanks, citizens are given the opportunity to share their expertise within legislative and social frameworks of government. The structure of *Practicing Democracy*, with its formal partnership with the local city council, offered a unique opportunity for the large swath of citizens in Vancouver who chose to participate. Their ideas were given legitimacy of space and consideration within the Forum Theatre model. Unfortunately, as will be discussed later, many city councillors dismissed any authority the citizens had on the subject as inferior to their own understanding — a dismissal of the citizens’ lived experience and knowledge of how these policies impacted their lives.

Pratt and Johnston note in their article for *Cultural Geographies*, “Turning theatre into law and other spaces of politics,” that while no new legislation was created out of the project, the report created through *Practicing Democracy* may have supported auxiliary initiatives. The research duo spent time evaluating why no new legislation was passed as a result of the recommendations made through the project, concluding that, in addition to some of the recommendations not being within the realm of the local government’s responsibility, “a bureaucratic process of classification and abstraction also inhibited the recommendations from being turned

³ This is important to keep in mind. While advocating for and creating space for the expertise of the *lived* experiences of citizens to be included in the conversation, in no way is this research advocating for the removal of subject expertise from the conversation.

into law, and reinstated the expertise of politicians and bureaucrats” (92). The “bureaucratic process” they refer to relates in great part to the attitudes of many of the city councillors toward the project. One city councillor is quoted as saying, “if the project thinks it’s going to tell us something that we haven’t already thought of, it’s pretty unlikely” (Pratt and Johnston 98). That outlook toward the project appeared to be shared by many of the councillors, even those who attended performances and were moved by the interventions they witnessed. For the recommendations that arose out of *Practicing Democracy*, “this type of reaction thus reinforced rather than dissolved a dichotomy between technical, rational, multidimensional, objective expertise and emotional, partial, and somewhat superficial community input” (Pratt and Johnston 98). Reimagining deliberative democratic practice through applied drama could be a means of overcoming this, because it places the praxis of applied drama firmly into the governmental structure, rather than operating as an appendage outside of it. Further, as a type of deliberative democracy it would put the citizens into dialogue *with* the elected officials and each other on an ongoing basis, allowing for the possibility of more meaningful engagement and input.

The second attempt at LT to be addressed is Boal’s personal final facilitation of the practice in Omaha, Nebraska in 2008, which mirrors his projects in Germany and France in the mid-1990s. As a part of the Pedagogy and Theatre of the Oppressed conference, he facilitated a three-day workshop on the campus of the University of Nebraska at Omaha with his son Julian. The performance of the Forum Theatre scenes created in the workshop was held on the 22 May in the Omaha City Council Chambers, while “elected officials from Omaha comprised the ‘dais’ group that watched the Forum scenes and, in a wonderful image, gathered and sorted the laws

that came from the spect-actor/audience” (Paterson). This final workshop was more of an opportunity to demonstrate for interested practitioners attending the workshop the actual Theatre of the Oppressed practices employed in Boal’s original experiment with LT. What remained constant throughout these final workshops was Boal’s use of Theatre of the Oppressed techniques to create Forum Theatre with the intent of passing along the ideas generated to political groups interested in working to enact the recommendations.

The final project to be addressed under the heading of LT is the *Eye and the Tooth* project that took place in Austin, Texas in 2009. While the project leaders tagged this venture as a practice of LT, the project fails to represent a form of LT in one key aspect. The *Eye and the Tooth* is a project that campaigned and advocated for a specific outcome to the issue at hand: getting rid of the death penalty in the state of Texas. The partisan handling of the issue, with the explicit goal of lobbying for the abolition of the death sentence, nullifies any true attempt at embodying LT and leans more toward propaganda.⁴ Boal writes, “we want the electors to give their opinions, to discuss the issues, to put counterarguments, we want them to share the responsibility for what their parliamentarian does” (*Legislative* 20). In this passage Boal highlights the importance of allowing citizens to approach an issue from all sides with LT as the vehicle for doing so. Below is a description of the project, illuminating its use of Boal’s TO techniques (and specifically Forum Theatre) with the intent of influencing legislation of the death penalty in Texas. This case study reveals

⁴ A note that propaganda, as clarified in the Introduction, does not connote positive or negative meaning, but refers to a type of influence which attempts to manipulate agreement by targeting peoples’ emotions.

why the model argued for in this dissertation remains focused on the praxis and process of applied drama, not on creating finished, rehearsed piece of theatre performance as is done with Forum Theatre.

The 2009 *Eye and the Tooth* project was a follow-up to previous iterations in Texas that began in 2003. Howe, one of the project facilitators, wrote:

[w]hen Sullivan contacted Juhl and me, he had recently secured more funding from Amnesty International, and he longed to stage a version of *Eye and Tooth* in Austin, home of the Texas State Legislature. He thought producing the project in Austin would allow us to ground the work as Legislative Theatre. (198)

Howe goes on to detail that the three main facilitators, including herself, John Sullivan, and Kathleen Juhl released themselves of any attempt or responsibility to behave as neutral facilitators of the subject. Additionally, when it came time to recruit participants for the project, they limited access to citizens who also advocated for the abolition of the death penalty, eliminating any possibility for counterargument or another perspective to be present within the process. Howe details in her dissertation the stance of the facilitators, writing:

we had no interest in welcoming everyone and did not want to imply that all positions were equally welcome. We only wanted to engage those who were for abolition — or at least open to discussing the possible merits of abolition and other bills that could limit the scope of the death penalty's applicability. (205)

While no one was excluded from the public performance that was held to showcase the two Forum Theatre scenes created during the workshop, it is hard to imagine that anyone with an opposing view would have felt welcome or how those views would have been treated during the intervention portion of the forum presentation.

The two Forum Theatre scenes were situated within a larger programme that included music and spoken word, and a post-performance panel consisting of

“individuals who connected with the cause of abolition from various locations” (K. Howe 200). The event appears more like a rally for a cause rather than an attempt to bring opposing views together to find resolution. The *Eye and the Tooth* project was not successful in its effort to pass House Bill 682, which had been introduced by House Representatives Jessica Ferrar, Terri Hodge, and Marissa Marquez earlier in 2009. However, since the project, the state has taken up other reform measures addressing the representation of accused murderers and establishing an advisory board to study methods for preventing wrongful convictions. Furthermore, Howe advocates for the process as being important for developing citizen lobbyists to be prepared for “potential strategies for future persuasion and pressure on elected officials” (201).

The *Eye and the Tooth* project illuminates how incorporating a final, rehearsed performance or piece of theatre can be used as a tool for propaganda, linked to monologic forms of the practice shown in Chapter One to coincide with de-democratisation more often. This highlights Boal’s insistence on the difference between “political theatre” (a piece of theatre making specific commentary on politics) and “theatre as politics” (using techniques of drama/theatre in the process of politics).⁵ Through his LT practice Boal showcased how applied drama can be used as a tool for engaging in dialogue around social and political issues, incorporating views from all sides. It is this dialogic capacity of applied drama that this research aims to raise up as vital within the deliberative democratic process. The *Eye and the Tooth* failed to live up to this element of Boal’s practice by eliminating opposing viewpoints

⁵ Boal writes about this distinction in *Legislative Theatre*, p. 16.

early in their process, thus not allowing people who might be in favour of the death penalty to participate in the early workshops. This is a stark example of how the practise can become politicised and provides a cautionary example for why emphasis must be placed on inclusivity of all citizens.

The influence of LT on this research lies primarily in the realm of incorporating applied drama praxis within the structure of government to effect legislative change through increased civic engagement and open dialogue around subject matter. However, the practice of Creative Democracy proposed in this body of writing will take a slightly different form than that of Legislative Theatre. First, Creative Democracy will promote a methodology that does not rely upon the elected official being a drama/theatre facilitator, and in fact, recommends that the facilitator be its own job position as a civil servant, meant to be hired on professional merit and mandated to be politically impartial. Secondly, while acknowledging the benefits of Forum Theatre in other areas, the Creative Democracy proposed in this chapter will stay firmly within the praxis of applied drama (as detailed in Chapter Two) without advocating for the creation of a final piece of performance/theatre for an outside audience. While LT is, in many ways, the predecessor to Creative Democracy, the following chapter will reveal the influence of deliberative democratic theory and practice on Creative Democracy.

This chapter will begin with an analysis of the benefits of a live, face-to-face process to clarify why there must be continued innovation for face-to-face democratic encounters, despite ever-increasing technological advancements. The strength of applied drama praxis rests in its ability to create space for meaningful dialogue among participants, which supports democratic learning and community-

building. Primarily, this process happens in real space, face-to-face with others — and this will be the practice advocated within this body of research. However, it is important to note that in light of the COVID-19 pandemic beginning in 2020, artists and facilitators have begun to experiment with how this praxis might move to online platforms such as Zoom. The case for a live, in-person approach will reveal that, while there are some gains to be had through an online platform, there is also much that is lost regarding the transmission of ideas, a shared sense of community, and the empathic process.

Next, to reimagine deliberative democracy in the form of Creative Democracy, it is crucial to understand how deliberative democratic theories have been thought of and practiced in recent history. Theories and approaches to deliberative democracy over the past fifty years will be outlined, as well as criticisms of the field by political scientists such as Chantal Mouffe, Michael E. Morrell, Sammy Basu, and Iris Marion Young. This analysis will reveal the areas in which deliberative democracy needs innovation and reimagining.

Following the critique of deliberative democracy, in the spirit of creativity and imagining a new way of approaching deliberative democratic practice, a story will be offered of a vision of Creative Democracy through the practitioner's perspective. The reasons for including this story are two-fold: (1) to provide a deeper understanding of applied drama for those who may not have had the opportunity to experience an applied drama workshop; and (2) to provide greater context for the following section, which teases out a theory of Creative Democracy. This theory will take up the points of critique of deliberative democratic practices and address how applied drama is able to meet the challenges posed by them. Just as it was stated in Chapter Two, this

writing does not hope to offer a total solution for solving all the problems within a liberal democracy. What this chapter offers is a new deliberative democratic method that holds the potential to strengthen democracy through the facilitation of workshops/meetings that encourage collaboration, communication, community-building, creative problem-solving, empathy, and community learning around issues/topics that are important to that community — be it a town, city, city district, or county.

What makes applied drama praxis even more suitable for working within a deliberative democratic framework, in addition to aligning with liberal democratic ideals, is that it is a potent process that has no politically ideological leanings in terms of the left-right political spectrum, neither regarding views on the size of government nor preferencing either individual or civil rights.⁶ Tom Barone emphasises this point in his introduction to *Applied Theatre: Creating Transformative Encounters in the Community* when he describes applied drama as “an art-making process that embodies the very democratic values that are themselves the ends of that intervention” (Philip Taylor xiii). As a praxis that is deeply intertwined with liberal democracy, it offers a creative opportunity for achieving deeper democratisation by recognising “that when political dialogue aims at solving collective problems, it justly requires a plurality of perspectives, speaking styles, and ways of expressing the particularity of a social situation as well as the general applicability” (Young “Communication” 132).

⁶ While it is important to note that artists on the “left” side of the political spectrum are better known for employing these techniques, the exercises and activities themselves have *no* political leaning, and can be employed by those identifying across the political spectrum. They are tools for dialogue.

Argument for a Live, In-Person Approach

Throughout this chapter, I simultaneously champion the idea of applied drama praxis⁷ as a potential means for operating within, and facilitation of, the public sphere and the idea that this needs to happen in the physical presence of others. In order to do so, I will first explore the unique benefits of face-to-face (FtF) interactions within the public sphere and touch lightly upon how applied drama maximises those benefits. Then I will turn to an exploration of computer-mediated communication (CMC) to understand how it might aid or impair constructive dialogue. Next, I will survey research around the impact of the internet on democracy and news reporting on the subject. Finally, the perspective of political scientists working in the field of deliberative democracy will be taken into consideration. What becomes clear through this accounting is an urgent need to create, bolster, and innovate democratic practices that take place in shared physical space. This can, of course, be done in conjunction with research on the potentialities of harnessing online space for democracy. In fact, in our present culture, it *must* be done in conjunction with the development of online spaces. What I propose is not to completely abandon efforts to democratise online spaces for public deliberation, but a recognition through funding and other efforts that focus also be given to FtF democratic encounters.

While the concept of “liveness” has been much debated in the field of drama and performance,⁸ this research is better served by turning to a phenomenological

⁷ A more detailed description of applied drama praxis is presented in Chapter Two.

⁸ See Phillip Auslander, *Liveness: Performance in a Mediatized Culture* 2nd ed. (Routledge 2008); Peggy Phelan, *Unmarked: the politics of performance* (Routledge 1993); and Jill Dolan, *Utopia in Performance: Finding Hope at the Theater* (University of Michigan Press 2008).

approach and the idea of kinaesthetic intersubjectivity between human beings in a shared space for dialogue and collective action. Kinaesthetic intersubjectivity is described as “participatory sense-making: the embodied, interactive coordination of sense-making” (De Jaegher, et al. 492). This sense-making requires that people are gathered in shared time and space with the ability to express fully (via verbal and nonverbal means) their thoughts and ideas.

The wealth of information that we can process through live encounters and the speed with which we are able to do so is often taken for granted, despite Emily Beausoleil’s observation that:

scholarship across disciplines as diverse as affect theory, neuroscience, and psychology, as well as political theory, have explored and confirmed the highly embodied and affective nature of reception and cognition, and the inevitable role that factors beyond the verbal — physical, acoustic, rhythmic, spatial, affective, aesthetic — play in structuring the ‘sounding chambers’ that inform both what is available to perceive as well as one’s capacity to do so. (“Listening to” 123)

Given that our bodies aid us in activity, environmental navigation, and processing our cognitive and affective experiences, this unique situation cannot be replicated online (Rova 168). Putnam noted that in-person interactions allow for feedback that is immediate and complex, which CMC is currently unable to replicate (175). Further, it is crucial to note that “[a]lthough intersubjectivity consists of a sharing of subjective experience and a collective alignment of intentions and emotions, the subjective boundaries of the participating individuals remain intact” (Reynolds and Reason 116). The notion that kinaesthetic intersubjectivity allows for collective meaning-making while also maintaining the integrity of individual subjectivity makes this phenomenon ideal for liberal democracy.

Closely related to (and sometimes used as an interchangeable term for)

kinaesthetic intersubjectivity is kinaesthetic empathy, which is outlined as:

re-living and an epistemological placing of us 'inside' the other's kinaesthetic experience. It makes it possible to understand the non-verbal kinetic experiences through which we may acquire knowledge of the other's bodily movements on the basis of our own body topography. (Parviainen 161)

The ability to empathise and co-create meaning is elemental for exchanges within the democratic public sphere.⁹ Putnam would describe this in terms of building social capital, and goes on to warn that "Politics without social capital is politics at a distance" (Putnam 341). The harnessing of the effects of kinaesthetic intersubjectivity (participatory sensemaking and increased empathy) is conditioned on the need for people to be present in a shared space. To that point, Michael Slote makes the case that there is a correlation between greater geographical distance and a reduction in empathy in a range of studies (21–22). Additionally, how our bodies are arranged and move within a space is equally vital. De Jaegher and colleagues note, "the lived body functions as a 'resonance board' of intercorporeality and interaffectivity" (514). All of this indicates a need for movement within the space and expansion of the communicative forms being relied upon, which applied drama praxis can provide, as Reynolds and Reason identify kinaesthetic intersubjectivity to be a core element of the praxis (38).

Bound up in research around kinaesthetic intersubjectivity and kinaesthetic empathy is the idea that our emotions/feelings are inherently tied to our thought processes. This concept is echoed by Jürg Steiner in his book, *The Foundations of*

⁹ This will be discussed in greater detail below in following section.

Deliberative Democracy, in which he emphasises that functional logic is holistic, requiring a mix of cognition and affect (60). Furthermore, Dylan Trigg points out:

contemporary phenomenological research tends to begin from the point of departure that intentionality is not simply a mental act of being directed toward phenomena in the world, but is both embodied insofar as cognitive processes are shaped by bodily structures and affective insofar as intentionality is as much about how we think as it is how we feel. (2)

In his article “The role of atmosphere in shared emotion,” Trigg pushes further in his exploration of phenomenological and embodied connectedness and meaning-making when he posits that “atmosphere” also plays a key role in the sharing of feelings and ideas — pointing toward a need for shared physical space within the democratic public sphere. Trigg describes atmosphere as something that is felt/understood corporeally by people in a straightforward and immediate way. He continues, explaining “that an atmosphere is held together through an affective tone that permeates bodies — human and non-human — within its field of influence” (Trigg 3), allowing for a feeling of fellowship and closeness. The strength of the atmospheric effect that Trigg writes about is tied to proximity, meaning that a shared physical space is linked to the sense of togetherness it can create. Applied drama praxis incorporates and benefits from this atmospheric effect, as well as kinaesthetic intersubjectivity and kinaesthetic empathy.

The process of applied drama is rooted in embodiment and collaboration of participants. Sharing a sense of the conditions of the environment adds to the atmosphere that Trigg refers to: whether the temperature is too warm or too cool; whether there is the scent of coffee or body odour in the air; or whether you can hear birds chirping or a copy machine running. The collective knowledge generated through this process relies on participants’ absorption and interpretation of

information, in real time, through their entire being: all of their senses, bodymind, and feelings/emotions. This collective knowledge includes learning more about those in the room and empathising with their point of view. Sensing the heartbeat of another human being in close proximity is not something that can be replicated.

Digital alternatives to FtF communication offer something else, a different experience which doesn't entail the immersion of oneself in a room with others. These alternatives may satisfy specific needs for people, companies, and institutions — Putnam notes that CMC is effective at disseminating information and capturing a range of viewpoints (176). However, CMC is not able to replicate the wealth of shared information an individual is able to process in the physical presence of others. Sound transmits, but it is altered and takes on a slightly different quality. It might also be cut off, interrupted, choppy, or filled with static. A picture transmits, though again altered due to coloration or pixilation. The information one is able to take in visually is stagnated by a fixed frame and the loss of peripheral views. Shared atmospheric elements like scent or temperature are lost, in addition to any shared sense of taste through food/beverages available to and shared by the group. The chance for any physical contact or touch is forfeit in CMC, as well as meaningful connections made through eye contact. In addition to the diminishing of our ability to perceive through our senses and generate a shared embodied experience, CMC also affects how we choose to behave toward others.

John Parkinson asserted that lack of physical presence enables people to cast “the other as a one-dimensional opinion-carrier rather than a flesh-and-blood person with feelings, goals, and interests” (27). This might be explained by one of the key characteristics of CMC, which is the “online disinhibition effect, defined as a lowering

of behavioral inhibitions in the online environment” (Lapidot-Lefler and Barok 434). This effect can be designated as either benign, which can aid in expanding one’s potential, or toxic, which can aid in harmful or destructive behaviour (Casale, et al. 171). Online disinhibition creates greater potential for aggression. Due to online disinhibition, “an individual might feel more comfortable engaging in aggression because of the visual, emotional, and physical distance from his/her victims” (Wachs, et al. 180). Sebastian Wachs and his colleagues go on to write that these conditions can also result in a reduced capacity for empathy and inability to perceive common social signals. This aligns with Putnam’s observation that “[t]he poverty of social cues in computer-mediated communication inhibits interpersonal collaboration and trust, especially when the interaction is anonymous and not nested in a wider social context” (176). Sarah H. Konrath writes in her article for *Personality and Social Psychology Review* that “These physically distant online environments could functionally create a buffer between individuals, which makes it easier to ignore others’ pain or even at times inflict pain on others” (183). Konrath hypothesises that the decline in empathy that her data reveals (which shows a steep drop in the early twenty-first century) is linked to the ever-increasing use of technology for social interactions.

Reduced ability to empathise and observe social cues, along with online disinhibition, is linked to the greater anonymity afforded online, as well as the elimination of eye contact.¹⁰ Varying levels of anonymity online have been noted as causing internet users to feel unaccountable for their actions and/or behaviours, and

¹⁰ See Noam Lapidot-Lefler and Azy Barok, “Effects of anonymity, invisibility, and lack of eye-contact on toxic online disinhibition.” *Computers in Human Behaviour*. 28.2 (2012): 434-443.

“[t]his loss of accountability may result in an increased level of toxic disinhibition, consequently promoting impulsive, aggressive, and abusive behaviors” (Lapidot-Lefler and Barok 435). Putnam notes:

Anonymity and fluidity in the virtual world encourage ‘easy in, easy out,’ drive-by relationships. That very casualness is the appeal of computer-mediated communication for some denizens of cyberspace, but it discourages the creation of social capital. If entry and exit are too easy, commitment, trustworthiness, and reciprocity will not develop. (177)

Additionally, the results of Lapidot-Lefler and Barok’s study revealed:

lack of eye-contact was associated with increased levels of self-reported flaming incidents and threats, and with overall negative online disinhibition behavior scores. Lack of eye-contact was also found to have a significant effect on toxic online disinhibition in interactions with the other factors studied here, namely anonymity and visibility. (441)

In addition to aggressive behaviour, the loss of accountability, visibility, and nonverbal cues (such as eye contact) greatly strains communication. We can all relate to misinterpreting the intention of a friend’s email or comment online due to lack of additional information (including tone and pitch of their voice, facial expression, and body language), which could be avoided in FtF interactions that provide greater context, understanding, and immediate feedback. However, while understanding and interpreting may be strained in online communications, it is important to keep in mind the effects of benign online disinhibition, which allows individuals who struggle with in-person social interactions to feel more comfortable expressing themselves. It is due to this that I reiterate the need for the development of mixed modes of deliberation for democracy that include both online and FtF opportunities.

Despite a large amount of optimism in the early twenty-first century regarding the internet and democracy, with Facebook “hailed as a platform that

would bring democracy to the world” (Schiffrin 117) in 2011, there is good reason to be wary of the internet’s effect on democracy. In fact, Ronald J. Deibert posits that “social media are driving the spread of authoritarian practices,” which “aim to control people and to sow confusion, ignorance, prejudice, and chaos to undermine public accountability” (31). These authoritarian tendencies undermine democratic ideals. In his series of books that deals with the topic, Cass Sunstein details potential risks that the internet poses to democracy: (1) less exposure to unplanned information due to increased ability to filter information online, (2) fewer shared experiences within a geographical population, (3) the spread of false information through cybercascades,¹¹ and (4) a penchant for confusing consumer sovereignty with political sovereignty due to new online purchasing opportunities “accelerating the ‘consumption treadmill’” (Sunstein, *republic.com 2.0* 12). These factors all contribute to deepening the polarisation of society, working against democracy, which needs the bonds of community.

The first three risks that Sunstein posits all feed into the potential for aggravated polarisation, as well as an impediment to genuine dialogue. In his article “The Public Sphere and the New Media,” Christopher Neal writes:

Although the personal advantages are clear, the consequences over the public sphere might not be so positive due to the possible creation of compartments in society. If you only get the information you want, from the people you chose, the exposition to other mentalities and new ideas might be greatly reduced.

¹¹ Cybercascades are created as a result of a supposed fact or point of view that “trends” online, leading to widespread dissemination because a great number of people seem to believe it. This is also referred to as “going viral.”

An expanded ability to self-filter online, in addition to the collaborative filtering that takes place when companies like YouTube begin to suggest/recommend material based on previous viewing, increases the potential that people will fall into echo chambers of their own making. In her 2017 article for *Washington Monthly*, Chayenne Polimedio wrote that “[e]cho chambers have, in turn, sharpened ideological and partisan differences, increasing intolerance and making people prone to believing falsehoods.” The increased ability to filter what one is exposed to, creating personalised echo chambers, decreases the opportunity for shared experiences and open-mindedness toward those who are different.

The algorithms used by social media companies for collaborative filtering are designed to keep people on the sites longer, because it is financially beneficial to the companies to do so. To achieve this, they show users more of what they are already predisposed to like/want. The *Social Media Today* article, “How the 2016 US Presidential Election Will Change Social Media,” points out why this is detrimental to deliberative democracy:

[W]hen you're eliminating all dissenting views from your sphere of consciousness, you're not making informed decisions. More than that, you're not able to make an informed choice as you're simply not being presented with the required data. This, of course, is not to say either side is right or wrong, but if you're only seeing one side of the debate, you're really not being given much choice. (Hutchinson)

The increase in online echo chambers and the lessening of shared experiences (due to increased ability to filter online and fewer chance encounters through socialising in the concrete world) creates a barrier to meaningful dialogue. Sunstein asserts:

If diverse groups are seeing and hearing quite different points of view, or focusing on quite different topics, mutual understanding might be difficult, and it might be increasingly hard for people to solve problems that society faces together. (*#Republic* 67)

There is evidence that this is happening on social media platforms like Facebook and Twitter, with hashtags working as catalysts for further polarisation (Sunstein *#Republic* 82). This is because “the business model of some platforms is such that sorting citizens into distinct groups and then riling them up guarantees big bucks” (Müller 212). In May 2020, *National Public Radio* reported that “A study from last year found people’s usage of Facebook correlated with how polarized they are and how open they are to understanding the views or ideas of the opposition party” (Parks). Decreased exposure to unanticipated material and the creation of echo chambers puts people at greater risk of falling prey to the effects of enclave deliberation and cybercascades.

Enclave deliberation occurs when like-minded people speak mostly to one another and tends to “lead people to more strongly held versions of the same view with which they began” (Sunstein, *#Republic* 88), leading to a more polarised society. Cybercascades augment the polarisation because they tend to appear within some factions, while being absent from others.¹² Deibert explains:

The cacophony of opinions and the flood of information on social media are degrading public discourse. Faced with information overload, consumers resort to cognitive shortcuts that tend to steer them toward opinions that fit what they already believe. At the same time, social media’s own algorithms guide users into online ‘filter bubbles’ in which they feel comfortable and ideologically aligned. (32)

For malicious online actors, the effects of enclave deliberation and cybercascades provide ample opportunity for manipulation. In its 2019 report “The Crisis of Social Media,” Freedom House referenced mechanisms for content manipulation:

¹² See Cass Sunstein, *#Republic* (Princeton University Press 2017), p. 57.

“propagandistic news, outright fake news, paid commentators, bots (automated accounts), and the hijacking of real social media accounts” (Shahbaz and Funk 6).

These methods of content manipulation have fanned the flames for hyper-polarisation within democratic countries. Additionally, Freedom House asserts that:

In many countries, the rise of populism and far-right extremism has coincided with the growth of hyperpartisan online mobs that include both authentic users and fraudulent or automated accounts. They build large audiences around similar interests, lace their political messaging with false or inflammatory content, and coordinate its dissemination across multiple platforms. (Shahbaz and Funk 1)

As a further threat to democracy, there is evidence that these malicious manipulations of the internet are not limited to a given country’s domestic political actors but are also being perpetrated by outside actors. This is evidenced by the crucial finding in the 2019 Special Investigator’s report by Robert Mueller, which stated unequivocally that Russia had used social media platforms to interfere in the 2016 US presidential election. The Freedom House report goes on to warn:

Cross-border influence operations, which first drew wide-spread attention as a result of Russian interference in the 2016 US presidential contest, are also an increasingly common problem. Authorities in China, Iran, Saudi Arabia, and a growing list of other countries have expanded their efforts to manipulate the online environment and influence foreign political outcomes over the past year. (Shahbaz and Funk 1)

Russia has continued its efforts to undermine liberal democracy through online manipulation in the May 2019 European Parliament elections (Shahbaz and Funk 6). This indicates not only a detriment to democracy through increased polarisation and a decline in deliberation across the political spectrum in democratic countries, but also leads to outside attacks on the sovereignty of democratic nations.

Within democratic countries, another issue the internet has intensified, according to Sunstein, is an obscuring of the concepts of “consumer sovereignty” and “political sovereignty.” This is tied into speculations and criticisms of the internet acting as a new public sphere by Zizi A. Papacharissi, Jürgen Habermas, and others. Sunstein describes consumer sovereignty as the idea that customers have the right to choose what they want for themselves and is linked to capitalism (Sunstein, *#Republic* 52). On the other hand, Sunstein asserts that political sovereignty embodies “democratic self-government, understood as a requirement of ‘government by discussion,’ accompanied by reason-giving in the public domain.” (*republic.com* 45). Sunstein maintains that these two ideas are at cross purposes, especially when it comes to political matters.

A blurred understanding of consumer and political sovereignty has been exacerbated by the rise of the internet and the increase in the consumer market that accompanied it. Sunstein refers to this as the “consumption treadmill” (*#republic* 170–174). It is critical to remember, however, that the role of consumers is very different from the role of citizen. Sunstein explains that consumers make choices that impact only themselves (and maybe close family and friends), whereas citizens are called upon to make choices that will impact the entire society. But the ideas of consumer sovereignty have been sneaking into democratic politics. Sunstein elaborates:

When we talk as if politicians are ‘selling’ a message and even themselves, we are treating the political domain as a kind of market, subject to the forces of supply and demand. And when we act as if the purpose of a system of communications is to ensure that people can see exactly what they ‘want,’ the notion of consumer sovereignty is very much at work. (*#Republic* 54)

Sunstein continues, writing:

If laws and policies are ‘bought,’ in the same way that soap and cereal are bought, the idea of political sovereignty is badly compromised. The commitment to consumer sovereignty will also undermine political sovereignty if free consumer choices result in insufficient understanding of public problems, or if they make it difficult to have anything like a shared or deliberative culture. We will disserve our own aspirations if we confound consumer sovereignty with political sovereignty. (*#Republic* 54–55)

Freedom must not be solely understood as the ability to make one’s own choices, but also as the ability to have one’s opinions and beliefs informed by a variety of different and opposing ideas. Sunstein describes it as “the ability to have preferences formed after exposure to a sufficient amount of information as well as an appropriately wide and diverse range of options” (*#Republic* 58). An emphasis on political sovereignty means that the echo chambers created through online platforms must be interrupted for the sake of deeper deliberation within democracies.

Papacharissi posits that “[t]he commercialization of public spaces not only dislocates public activity, but also creates a paradox for the modern individual who is offered public spaces that possess *visibility*, but do not enable *collectivity*” (41). This thought runs parallel to the idea that the internet does not act as a public sphere so much as a new public space, or as Papacharissi argues, a private sphere:

The emerging political conscience is not collective, but privatized — both by virtue of its connection to consumer culture and in terms of the private spaces it occupies. The contemporary citizen adopts a personally devised definition of the political, and become politically emancipated in private, rather than public, spaces, thus developing a new civic vernacular. (19)

The idea that “emerging civic expressions originate in private and digitally equipped environments” (Papacharissi 19) counters the idea of an online “public sphere.”

However, whether one considers the internet a public or private space, at present, it

falls short of qualifying as a public sphere, which should facilitate meaningful dialogue around societal issues from diverse viewpoints.¹³

In addition to the challenges wrought by CMC and the creation of echo chambers and cybercascades that promote polarisation of society, it is also important to consider how online communications may be exclusionary. It has been noted that “[t]he participatory dilemma is compounded online, as people who already have a great deal of influence gain even more powerful tools” (Ekenberg et al. 33). Additionally, in a culture that has consistently prioritised rhetoric and written text over alternative forms of communication, online solutions (including Twitter, Facebook, and Zoom) seem to be accepted alternatives to collective, physical presence. This way of thinking and this approach is exclusionary. In addition to individuals’ varying capacities to express themselves in these limited ways, not everyone has consistent access to computers and online capabilities strong enough to securely log in to their email, social media, or a Zoom meeting.

All of the factors related to FtF communications, CMC, and the effects of the internet on democracy feed back into Claudia Chwalisz’s assertion¹⁴ that despite innovations in technology, FtF deliberations cannot be abandoned. Among deliberative democratic theorists there is a mix of attitudes regarding online deliberation. With respect to the potential for online deliberation, there are theorists like Jürg Steiner who see “greater prospects for online than for face-to-face mini-publics because the former are easier and cheaper to organize” (255), even while acknowledging that they can be more open to abuse. Additionally, it cannot be denied

¹³ The idea of the public sphere was investigated in greater depth in Chapter Two.

¹⁴ She is quoted in the Introduction.

that “[t]he Internet has certainly reactivated the grassroots of an egalitarian public of writers and readers” (Habermas, “Political Communication...” 423). These assessments lean more toward participatory¹⁵ forms of democracy rather than deliberative. On the other hand, many deliberative theorists caution against abandoning FtF deliberation. Beausoleil elaborates on the use of mass media/internet in relation to genuine deliberative exchange, stating:

National media campaigns might be vital for demonstrating mass support for change to which politicians respond or to keeping hard-won public awareness of ‘child poverty’ or ‘inequality’ in might over the long term, and e-mails or videos might quickly relay information or solicit response from already convinced communities, but one-to-one and ideally face-to-face interactions were deemed necessary for any persuasive, transformative changes to occur. (“Listening to” 129)

Further, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development’s 2020 report, entitled *Innovative Citizen Participation and New Democratic Institutions: Catching the Deliberative Wave*, states:

Group deliberation, which entails weighing evidence and long discussions with an aim of finding common ground, is underpinned by trust between people. Most research suggests that trust can only be built in person and with time. (164–165)

Chwalisz advocates further for a continuation of the advancement of FtF innovations for deliberative democracy, writing:

Involving citizens in public decision-making which requires them to consider trade-offs and try to understand a problem from all angles is better done when people can meet face to face, fostering social bonds which are difficult to form online. Trust and empathy require a human touch. (“Citizen Engagement” 5)

¹⁵ While democratic participation is a very important aspect of democracy that should be bolstered, it does not have the same emphasis on engaging in genuine dialogue that deliberative democracy does.

The arguments given for both online and FtF deliberative exercises point toward a need for continued innovation in both avenues, which could optimally work together to reap the benefits of the strengths that both can provide. While the internet may have the potential one day to create to a vibrant and democratic public sphere, FtF communication remains imperative, as it “activates the ethical dimension of democratic, public interaction” (Parkinson 27). This necessity for FtF communications informs the following survey and analysis of deliberative democratic practices in the next section and the further consideration of Creative Democracy in the sections that follow.

Deliberative Democracy, Communicative Democracy, and Agonistic Pluralism

Deliberative democracy has come into focus by political scientists in the twenty-first century as a promising way to reengage citizens in meaningful dialogue. Much like the ideals of liberal democracy, deliberative democracy has radical and optimistic aims for reviving a vision of democracy grounded in theories of the public sphere. In the words of Phil Parvin:

Deliberative democracy embodies a positive vision of politics which has attracted many political theorists from different philosophical traditions. It invokes a rich, inclusive public sphere in which citizens are capable of participating in substantive discussions about the laws that will bind them and the decisions made in the institutions that govern them. It suggests that citizens should be at the heart of the democratic system, and that the legitimacy of democratic institutions — and the decisions they make — is dependent on their acceptability to the people who live under them.
(39)

The theories of Jürgen Habermas and John Rawls heavily influenced the increased interest in deliberative democratic practices in the late twentieth century. According to Mouffe, both theorists share a “common insistence on the possibility of grounding

authority and legitimacy on some forms of public reasoning and their shared belief in a form of rationality which is not merely instrumental but that has a normative dimension, the ‘reasonable’ for Rawls, ‘communicative rationality’ for Habermas” (“Deliberative Democracy” 4). The early practices of deliberative democracy, shaped by the writings of Rawls and Habermas, are typically grouped together and referred to as “Type 1” by André Bächtiger, et al. and “classical” by Lorenzo Cini and Andrea Felicetti.

Classical deliberation promotes argument as the valid and accepted form of communication with the idea of rational discourse at the core (Cini and Felicetti 155). Further, classical approaches to deliberation focus “on deliberative intent and the related distinction between communicative and strategic action” and have “a strong procedural component” (Bächtiger, et al. 33). All of this is foregrounded by the notion that the “ideal” public discourse, in which there is equality and mutual respect amongst participants, is present. This somewhat ignores the realistic conditions of the pluralistic reality of democratic nations today. Classical deliberation also tends to congregate around the idea of the common good: “Either theorists assume such commonness as a prior condition of deliberation, or they see it as a goal” (Young, *Inclusion* 40). While this type of deliberative practice has come under scrutiny by political theorists such as Lynn M. Sanders, Sharon R. Krause, Iris Marion Young, and Chantal Mouffe (and will be detailed below), it is worth noting the benefits of deliberation as a grounding for what deliberative democracy hopes to achieve.

Before touching upon the more instrumental benefits of deliberation, it should be pointed out that “many [theorists] point to the *intrinsic* value of democracy and assert that deliberation and civic participation are ends in themselves and should

be judged as such regardless of their other potential benefits” (Nabatchi et al. 9).

However, aside from the claimed intrinsic value, deliberative theorists point to

benefits such as self-education and improvement for individuals taking part that:

enhance the individual’s facility for practical reasoning, make people more tolerant of difference and more sensitive about the need for reciprocity, and enhance people’s ability to think and act with autonomy on the basis of their own preferences and to engage in moral discourse and make moral judgments. (Rao and Sanyal 151)

In addition to the educative benefits of deliberation for individuals, theorists also

point to deliberative civic engagement as a means of community capacity-building:

Public Agenda’s case study about a tradition of deliberative civic engagement in Bridgeport, Connecticut, reports that such participation can develop an ‘ethos of collective responsibility’ within a community, and that participants in deliberative processes increase their ‘willingness to take responsibility themselves.’ (Nabatchi et al. 169)

Another claimed benefit by deliberative theorists is that this approach will provide greater legitimacy to policy/legislation that results from these types of processes.

While there is not an abundance of case studies that can point to policy that resulted from deliberative civic engagement, there are a few notable exceptions. One distinguished exception is the Irish example of citizen assemblies, which resulted in recommendations for changes to the constitution regarding gay marriage and abortion, leading to referendums that succeeded in amending the Irish constitution to allow for gay marriage and repeal the eighth amendment that had banned abortions.¹⁶ These benefits are advocated by all deliberative theorists; however, the

¹⁶ The 2012-2014 Irish Constitutional Convention led to the Marriage Equality Act of 2015 and the 2016-2018 Irish Citizens’ Assembly led to the repeal of the Eighth Amendment to the Irish Constitution that had effectively banned all abortions in the country. For more, see David M.

classical approach to deliberative theory has come under scrutiny in recent years by theorists who seek to more fully realise these positive outcomes. Their assessments reveal areas for improvement that applied drama is able to speak to.

One such critique comes from Chantal Mouffe, who writes that the classical deliberative approach “is unable to acknowledge the dimension of antagonism that the pluralism of values entails” (*Democratic Paradox* 99). Mouffe suggests that “antagonism” refers to conflict between “enemies” where one side must be “destroyed,” a condition Martha Nussbaum touched upon in her advocacy for the use of Socratic pedagogy for democratic education mentioned in Chapter Two. Further, Mouffe contends that “taking pluralism seriously requires that we give up the dream of a rational consensus” (“Deliberative Democracy” 12). Mouffe rebuffs the notion of rational debate and consensus proffered by Rawls and Habermas, writing:

By privileging rationality, both the deliberative and the aggregative perspectives leave aside a central element which is the crucial role played by passions and affects in securing allegiance to democratic values. (*Democratic Paradox* 95)

Due to Mouffe’s criticisms of classical deliberative democracy, she proposes the use of the term “agonistic pluralism” instead. Agonistic pluralism is rethinking the “us/them” opposition in democratic political discourse that demonises the other side and allows instead for an adversarial approach in which “we have a shared adhesion to the ethico-political principles of liberal democracy: liberty and equality” (Mouffe, *Democratic Paradox* 102). She writes that this requires making accessible a means by which diverse citizens can express themselves and their identities while framing their

Farrell, et al. “The Effects of Mixed Membership in a Deliberative Forum: The Irish Constitutional Convention of 2012–2014.” *Political Studies*, 68.1 (2020): 54-73.

perceived opponents as adversaries, but not enemies (Mouffe “Deliberative Democracy” 16). Mouffe also takes up the important issue of power and power relations within classical deliberative approaches:

According to the deliberative approach, the more democratic a society is, the less power would be constitutive of social relations. But if we accept that relations of power are constitutive of the social, then the main question for democratic politics is not how to eliminate power but how to constitute forms of power more compatible with democratic values. (“Deliberative Democracy” 14)

In her view, any consensus reached is only temporary and the “result of a provisional hegemony” that inevitably excludes one group or another (Mouffe, “Deliberative Democracy” 17). Mouffe seeks to create a space in which power dynamics are constantly challenged, conflict is respectfully undertaken, and the process is ongoing.

Also critiquing a focus on rational debate, Cheryl Hall maintains that “the ‘democratic’ requirement for rational deliberation (and rational deliberation alone) has decidedly undemocratic consequences” (“Recognizing the Passion...” 81–82). Francesca Polletta and John Lee highlight at least one of those consequences when they write, “Those with different experiences are easily dismissed as deviant [...] In short, privileging reasoned discourse comes at the expense of another deliberative standard, that of equality” (702). Lynn M. Sanders also takes issue with the idea of rational debate, as well as the idea of mutual respect, writing that some people “are apparently less likely than others to be listened to; even when their arguments are stated according to conventions of reason, they are more likely to be disregarded” (349). This links into Iris Marion Young’s critiques of the classical appeal to the common good:

[D]efinitions of the common good are likely to express the interests and perspectives of the dominant groups in generalized terms. The

less privileged are asked to put aside the expression of their experience, which may require a different way of speaking, or their grievances and demands must be suspended for the sake of a common good whose definition is biased against them. (*Inclusion* 43)

Young contends that attempts to appeal to the common good require that minority and marginalised groups set aside any differences arising from culture, identity, social position, or interest. Setting aside differences to defer to a “common good” that reflects the interests of the dominant group defeats the purpose of trying to solve problems within a pluralistic and diverse community.

In her article “Communication and the Other: Beyond Deliberative Democracy,” Young proposes what she calls “communicative democracy” in which social, cultural, and political differences are treated as vital and helpful resources with which to generate greater understanding, instead of blockades to be overcome. André Bächtiger and John Parkinson underscore these critiques when they set forth that “many scholars focused so much on deliberation under ‘ideal’, partisan-free conditions that they forgot the democracy, let alone wider relations of power and domination” (4). In her theory of communicative democracy, Young also contends with issues of power, writing:

The deliberative ideal tends to assume that when we eliminate the influence of economic and political power, people’s ways of speaking and understanding will be the same; but this will be true only if we also eliminate their cultural differences and different social positions. The model of deliberative democracy, that is, tends to assume that deliberation is both culturally neutral and universal. (“Communication” 122–123)

She lists the norms of speech in deliberative democracy as conforming to contest rules, as well as being assertive, combative, formal, general, dispassionate, and disembodied, while explaining how each of these “norms” renders marginalised

groups powerless (Young “Communication” 124–125). Young suggests opening ways of communicating within these settings that recognises the power of different ways of speaking and expression that are culturally specific as a way to empower all in the room and not just those who belong to the dominant class.

Mouffe, Young, Hall, and Sanders, along with other theorists such as Basu, Sabeel Rahman, and Jane Mansbridge, inform the deliberative practice referred to as “Type 2” by Bächtiger, et al. and “radical” by Cini and Felicetti. Radical, or Type 2, deliberative practices move away from a focus on rational discourse. Additionally, radical deliberation “emphasises values such as inclusion, bottom-up information-building processes, and ideas of politics based on civil society and its unconventional repertoires of action” (Cini and Felicetti 156). The idea of consensus as the main goal of deliberative democracy also comes into question by radical theorists like Mouffe, Morrell, and Mansbridge, who acknowledge that “taking pluralism seriously requires that we give up the dream of a rational consensus” (Mouffe, “Deliberative Democracy” 12). Mansbridge asserts that:

When interests or values conflict irreconcilably, deliberation ideally ends not in consensus but in a clarification of conflict and a structuring of disagreement, which set the stage for a decision by nondeliberative methods, such as aggregation through the vote.
(38)

Radical deliberation seeks to contend more fully with the ever-growing diversity that makes up pluralistic democracies.

A move away from the goal of consensus requires rethinking how communication takes place within deliberative settings. Deborah Tannen suggests:

The argument culture, with its tendency to approach issues as a polarized debate, and the culture of critique, with its inclination to foreground criticism and attack as the best if not the only type of

rigorous thinking, are deeply rooted in Western tradition, going back to the ancient Greeks. (257)

The accepted communication within deliberative forums has traditionally been rooted in “rational” logic and has taken the form of debate or argument, stressing “for and against” positioning. However, a more recent trend has been to frame the dialogue that occurs within these forums around theorists such as Mikhail Bakhtin and Paulo Freire. Bakhtin’s dialogism is described as the “open-ended possibilities generated by all the discursive practices of a culture” (Stam 132), while Freire looked upon entering dialogue as an opportunity for all taking part to both “teach” and “be taught”.¹⁷ This has led to a framing of dialogue as “focused conversation, engaged in intentionally with the goal of increasing understanding, addressing problems, and questioning thoughts or actions,” which “engages the heart as well as the mind” (Romney 2). This is in line with a move away from consensus as a goal of deliberative democracy. In framing dialogue this way, Patricia Romney asserts:

True civic dialogue is inclusive of people with different communication styles and allows for the expression of emotion. Because art operates at both visceral and cognitive levels, it provides rich opportunities to engage people in the examination of issues of societal concern. (3)

With the aim of deliberation shifting toward meaningful understanding, it naturally invites the prospect and need for a wider range of communication styles within the process.

A crucial difference between classical and radical deliberation is the type of communication that is advocated for use within the process. However, even within

¹⁷ See Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. Translated by Myra Bergman Ramos, 20th Anniversary ed. (Continuum 1993).

radical practices, theorists vary regarding what forms of communicative exchange should be included, as well as how and when they should be used. Young writes, “While argument is an important contributor to political discussion, there are reasons to be suspicious of privileging argument, and especially certain interpretations of what a good argument means, over other forms of communication” (*Inclusion* 37). In favour of expanding communicative forms, and with an eye toward the inclusion of humour, Sammy Basu writes, “To take seriously the cognitive, dispositional and political qualities of potential discussants qua disputants, under conditions of suspect linguistically generated intersubjectivity, is to accommodate a wider range of communicative forms” (383). The idea of complicating the narrative around issues is at the core of this idea of expanded political communication and there have been several studies that look at how narrative/storytelling influence the deliberative process.

The use of narrative or storytelling is championed by radical deliberative theorists as a form of communication that is more easily accessible to people. In their study looking at public deliberation after 9/11, Francesca Polletta and John Lee found that “participants who saw themselves as having opinions or experiences that were not shared by others were more than five times as likely to make a narrative claim as were those who did not” (711). Further, Polletta and Lee found that narrative helped define new issues worthy of discussion, advanced mutual understanding, and invited commentary and collaboration within the group. Storytelling can do all of this because its “allusive and iterative qualities allow deliberators to advance even competing opinions in a way that is not perceived as combative” (Polletta and Lee

704), thus encouraging give-and-take within the deliberation. Regarding collaboration, Polletta and Lee note that collaboration was

evident in the many stories that rehearsed the narrator's change of opinion. Such stories asked readers to identify with the narrator's own metamorphosis. They communicated, 'I understand your position because I held it myself. What changed my mind was...' Their often tentative, open-ended quality encouraged readers to see possibilities that were only dimly recognized by the narrator. (713)

David M. Ryfe, in his study looking at National Issue Forums (NIF) associated with the Ketterling Foundation, found that people would build upon, and borrow from, each other's stories, creating "moral communities" around points of concern with relative harmony (74). Ryfe also found that participants in the NIF often used stories as a way to establish sincerity or trustworthiness to the group, which were largely made up of people who had no prior relationship.

Furthermore, in the Netherlands in 2008, the use of storytelling succeeded in changing the political atmosphere around the debates over the intensely divisive issue of embryo selection for use by patients with hereditary breast cancer. In her article analysing the debates that took place, Marli Huijer writes:

after listening to the ambiguous stories of women and men who had directly experienced the anguish of living with hereditary breast cancer, the unambiguous and principled way the Labour Party and Reformed Christian Party started the public discussion on PGD for hereditary breast cancer came across as disrespectful. The stories helped to transform the public sphere, where politicians and the public generally act and speak, into a realm where people were prepared to listen to each other and reach mutual understanding. (236)

Additionally, Huijer notes:

more than any reasoned argument, the stories of the carriers demonstrate the moral complexity of their situation. In a democracy where most political leaders and private citizens prefer

clear-cut positions to ambiguity, that is a huge accomplishment.
(237)

The result of this debate, due largely to the stories told by individuals with hereditary breast cancer, was a compromise in which each request for PGD would be considered on its own merits.

In addition to proving useful in bridging divides on divisive topics, the use of narrative has also been shown to be effective in deeply divided societies. Nevin T. Aiken undertook a study in Northern Ireland around peace and reconciliation projects, noting that “storytelling can lead not only to a greater willingness to reconcile in the present but also to a more nuanced and empathetic understanding of the past” (185–186). Michael E. Morrell posits:

At least one goal in narrative or storytelling is to open people up to other perspectives and experiences; this does not always require that the experiences themselves are generalizable or universal. For example, many white people tend to have few experiences analogous to living as a black person in a racist society; and in this respect, the experience of blacks is not generalizable. The way white people may come to understand this experience is through a combination of hearing the personal narratives of blacks and reflecting on their own emotional experiences. They may have never felt humiliation because of the color of their skin, but they have certainly felt the pain of humiliation in other contexts. The generalizable aspect that is important is not the experience itself but the underlying emotions that allow empathy to occur. (*Empathy* 142)

While storytelling offers the storyteller a chance to make their voice heard, it also provides listeners a chance to “learn about how their own position, actions, and values appear to others from the stories they tell” (Young *Inclusion* 76). Young posits:

By means of narratives expressed in public with others differently situated who also tell their stories, speakers and listeners can develop the ‘enlarged thought’ that transforms their thinking about issues from being narrowly self-interested or self-regarding about an issue, to thinking about an issue in a way that takes account of the perspective of others. (*Inclusion* 76)

Multiple benefits for inclusion are revealed through these studies; the available research supports incorporating storytelling as an acknowledged and accepted communication style within deliberation.

The review of the literature on storytelling as a valid and necessary form of communication exchange also highlights the importance of the act of listening within the communicative process. In fact, allowing for greater reception of and listening to a plurality of voices is an important factor behind the push for the inclusion of more forms of communication within the process. Beausoleil points out that in classical deliberative theories:

Listening was often taken to signify a disembodied counterpart to deliberative theory's equally disembodied and highly verbal notion of 'voice' — the reception and interpretation of discursive meanings and rational arguments — and this depiction persists as a rule in deliberative accounts of listening. ("Listening to" 123)

Young also points to the need for greater emphasis and understanding of listening within deliberative environments in her article "Asymmetrical Reciprocity: On Moral Respect, Wonder, and Enlarged Thought." Young's emphasis aligns with Beausoleil's assertion that democracy "hinges on the capacity to listen to the challenges and potential changes these voices present" ("Listening to" 120) and underscores the need for communication that fosters exchange that allows for both "voicing" and "listening."¹⁸

In many ways the calls for expanding the types of communication deemed as legitimate in the public sphere go hand in hand with the push by theorists like Cheryl Hall, Michael E. Morrell, George E. Marcus, and Sharon R. Krause for the

¹⁸ When it comes to applied drama, this concept of "voicing" and "listening" will be further expanded to include all forms of expression and reception of ideas through nonverbal means.

legitimisation and integration of affect and emotions holistically with cognition and reason within deliberative democratic practice. Other forms of communication advocated for by radical deliberative theorists include rhetoric, body language, narrative/storytelling, humour, and greeting. Under the heading of rhetoric, Young includes emotional tone, figures of speech, and “[f]orms of making a point that do not only involve speech, such as visual media, signs and banners, street demonstrations, guerrilla theatre, and the use of symbols in all these contexts” (*Inclusion* 65). All these modes of communication exchange demonstrate the importance of emotion and empathy in deliberation, rather than attempting narrow, objective rationalism. Specifically, there is a need for empathy not just for those already in a person’s social circle (which can have harmful effects as demonstrated by only empathising with like-minded people, as with what happens in online echo chambers), but with those beyond an individual’s private sphere — with people who think differently about key issues.

Classical deliberative theorists sought to rid the deliberative process of emotion in search of objective reason, reinforcing a perceived binary between emotion and reason. Referring to this binary, Young writes:

some interpretations of norms of deliberation privilege speech which is dispassionate and disembodied. Defenses of these norms tend to presuppose an opposition between reason and emotion. They tend to falsely identify objectivity with calm and the absence of emotional expression. (*Inclusion* 39)

However, affect and emotions are a reality of the situation within democratic politics.¹⁹ Marcus comments on the predicament of classical theorists attempting to rid deliberation of emotion despite evidence that it is laden with it, writing, “if rationality is to be the sole arbiter between conflict-laden claims and contending views of justice, then it is hard to see how democracy can be sustained if citizens willingly continue to rely on emotion” (6). Basu expresses his view of this predicament writing, “The problem is not so much, then, that Habermas fails to see that the rational is not real, it is rather his somewhat cavalier, optimistic and artificial assumption that the real should be made rational” (382). This predicament points to a need for considering emotions within deliberative democratic practice and getting rid of the binary thinking around affect and reason.

David P. Redlawsk outlines the research into politics and affect in the introduction to *Feeling Politics: Emotion in Political Information Processing*. He points to Antonio R. Damasio’s work with patients who are unable to process emotional responses, writing that “information may be processed cognitively, but human beings are generally unable to turn that information into a course of action (or decision) if they are unable to incorporate emotions into their information processing” (Redlawsk 3). Damasio refers to the brain as a “thinking machine for feeling” (Redlawsk 3), highlighting how interwoven affect and cognition are. However, Redlawsk also points out that there is evidence that while affect assists in learning, it can also impede the

¹⁹ For more information on the research in this area see Michael E. Morrell, *Empathy and Democracy* (Pennsylvania State University Press 2010), pp. 101-128 and David P. Redlawsk, Editor, *Feeling Politics: Emotion in Political Information Processing* (Palgrave MacMillan 2006).

ability to combine that learning with deep-seated beliefs (5). Some of this evidence comes from the work of Milton Lodge and Charles Taber, which suggests:

processing may be biased by affect, in which case emotionally driven responses might leave something to be desired. They question whether people really are rational Bayesian updaters who accurately perceive the direction of new information and revise their beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors accordingly. Instead, they find people are more likely to stick to their guns, to support their prior beliefs, and thus to allow affect to interfere with updating.
(Redlawsk 4)

The dual role that emotions can play in the learning process, which then bleeds into dialogic and deliberative processes, makes it clear that there is a need to address feelings and passions within the process, so that there is also a means for reflecting on, processing, and better understanding those feelings. This would support emotions as being more likely to aid in the learning process rather than hinder it. This idea also ties into calls for a greater role for empathy within deliberation, which will be dealt with in greater detail below.

While some theorists such as Gutmann and Thompson, Dryzek, Nussbaum, Mansbridge, and Young advocate for the use of affect within deliberation, there is criticism that they don't call for the integration of cognition and affect as fully as needed. Morrell asserts that the reason these theorists don't go far enough in advocating for affect's role is because:

the very foundations of their theories — whether reflective decision-making, justice discovered through public reason, or legitimacy grounded in communicative rationality — prevent them from giving affect its proper place in deliberative democracy.
(*Empathy* 13)

In her article "Recognizing the Passion in Deliberation: Toward a More Democratic Theory of Deliberative Democracy," Hall calls for a reconceiving of deliberative

democracy around reason and passion. In asserting the idea of “passion” (emotion),

Hall writes:

passion depends on a perception of its object as deeply valuable. Such a perception in turn depends on both an *interpretation* of the object’s nature and qualities and a *judgment* that these qualities are worthy of one’s emotional commitment, particularly in view of competing alternatives. These interpretations and judgments are cognitive components built right in to passion. (87)

This is in line with Krause’s assertions in her book, *Civil Passions*, that explanation and rationale stem from the things we desire, enjoy, and cherish (155).

In line with Krause and Hall, Marcus and Morrell additionally incorporate findings in neuroscience and cognitive science within their discussions of the issue.

Both Marcus and Morrell utilise affective intelligence theory for their arguments, which Morrell summarised as:

Affective intelligence theory posits that two brain systems constantly monitor stimuli: the disposition and surveillance systems. The disposition system evaluates behavior to determine its success and is central to the formation of habits [...] The surveillance system, in contrast, monitors our current plan of action with an eye toward the expected outcome in the environment, and compares those expectations with the input from the sensory streams entering the brain. (*Empathy* 130–131)

Drawing from affective intelligence theory, Marcus asserts that reason needs emotion in order to be called and acted upon (31). This is based upon the affective intelligence view that “emotion modules use far more of the sensory information than can be presented in consciousness. Thus, emotions have more information about the state of the world, as well as about our own resources, than is available to consciousness” (Marcus 62). Marcus therefore concludes that logic depends upon feeling to reveal what is important to us. (76). If, in fact, decision-making requires both affect and

cognition (as affective intelligence theory asserts), then deliberative democracy must be reconceived to equally accommodate both.

Morrell advocates accommodating affect, cognition, and reason within deliberative democracy “by placing the process of empathy at the heart of democratic politics” (*Empathy* 157). Affective intelligence theory supports the idea that prior to having “automatic, affective reactions” to an object, people must first experience and evaluate the object (or similar object), which is “informed by a mixture of their feelings and thoughts” (Morrell, *Empathy* 135). Morrell’s process model of empathy²⁰ reveals:

those who empathize will be more open to others as they develop their habits and create their evaluative tallies than those who do not empathize. Thus, the process of empathy can lead to automatic affective reactions that will already have built in more deliberation, reflection, and openness to others. (*Empathy* 135)

This is in line with Morrell’s advocacy for empathy within democratic education that was outlined in Chapter Two. However, he also asserts that:

Deliberation itself can become the place where the empathic process occurs, but this requires deliberative theory to accept more than just ‘reasonable’ or ‘rational’ utterances in deliberation, without at the same time excluding such utterances. Deliberation must give space to forms of communication that will increase the chances that participants will engage in the process of empathy. (*Empathy* 136)

It is important to note that the presence of empathy does not inevitably support the reaching of a consensus, but it does promote insight around, and recognition of, the effect(s) decisions have on others. This idea becomes important to Morrell, who stresses that “[t]he process of empathy is necessary for democratic legitimacy because

²⁰ This model is outlined in the Introduction.

it ensures that majorities will make decisions with a better knowledge of what those decisions mean” (*Empathy* 173). Morrell suggests several ways in which to incorporate empathy into the process: incorporating empathy into democratic education, increased exposure to the arts, and careful training of facilitators (*Empathy* 188). While these are all admirable suggestions, what is lacking is a more practical understanding of how to implement this idea at scale, which applied drama can speak to.

Morrell is joined by Mark Fagiano, who also advocates for the incorporation of empathy within democratic deliberation in his 2019 article, entitled “Relational Empathy as an Instrument of Democratic Hope in Action.” Further, researchers on the EUROPOLIS project²¹ state that presence or lack of empathy is a marker for evaluating the quality of deliberation. Additionally, Robert E. Goodin supports the use of empathy within deliberative democracy by advocating for an “internal-reflective” mode of deliberation, focused on “empathic imaginings.” While he advocates for this internal-reflective work to coincide with engaging with others in the public sphere, most of the heavy work of empathising in his model occurs without the presence of those with whom individuals are seeking to empathise. This is problematic from the view of advocating this as a key solution for incorporating empathy into the public sphere and within the practice of deliberative democracy. Without besmirching the aesthetic experience of solitary artistic endeavours and reflections, social cohesion and community rely upon interacting with others. This

²¹ A deliberative policymaking project funded by the European Union from 2008-2010.

suggests that the process of empathising must play a fundamental role within the public sphere.

To achieve the benefits of deliberative democracy as outlined above, the practice must be reconceived in a way that reflects the reality of the diverse and pluralistic democracies of the twenty-first century. This includes proposing a means of working that does not hinge on idealised (and perhaps unrealistic) conditions for deliberation, but rather takes into consideration the presence of agonism and emotions within the public sphere. Additionally, the practice needs to be flexible through expanding notions of inclusive and full communication exchange (the ability to both express and take in information) that makes space for both affect and cognition. This new approach should aim to “give citizens a place to confront others and contest their differences” (Morrell, *Empathy* 16). While this can result in momentary consensus on a given matter, the emphasis must be on creating a continuous collaborative enterprise that is able to contend with conflict while maintaining dialogue. To more fully realise liberal democracy’s ideals of equality and inclusion, the practice must actively strive to share and balance power within the space and among participants. Finally, the practice must include opportunities for the process of empathy to take place to support social cohesion/community, for “democracy ‘is the idea of community life itself’” (Bernstein, *Philosophical* 264). The following sections will outline a proposal for Creative Democracy, informed by applied drama praxis, that seeks to answer the challenges put forth above.

Practitioner’s Perspective: A Vision of Creative Democracy

In this section, I am going to share a vision of what Creative Democracy could be, based on my experience as a facilitator. I’m going to take the reader on a thought

experiment using a second-person point of view, to encourage the reader to step more fully into this vision and imagine along with me. While there is the possibility and reality that in every process there are moments of mishap — as James Thompson affirmed when he wrote, “There are always glitches, changes and less-than-satisfactory moments” (*Applied* 67) — these snags are more typically less frequent when considering the whole of a workshop or project. Therefore, this narrative will focus on the more typical overall feel and flow of a workshop. My hope is that this will allow the reader more insight into applied drama praxis and how it can respond to the critiques in the section above. Additionally, the hypothetical vision will provide context for the section to follow, which will further theorise Creative Democracy.

Imagine you have decided to participate in a two-hour meeting to be held between your local elected official and her constituents. This meeting is being held at the community recreation centre (which is accessible to the entire community by various means of transportation), instead of the actual townhall building.²² The meeting is open to any citizen living in that jurisdiction, and it is posted that there will be a weekly meeting of this kind going forward. Upon entering the meeting space, instead of seeing rows of chairs facing a stage with a podium and microphone, you see a large open space with chairs placed in a large circle. All chairs have equal position and are balanced with the others.²³ You are invited to sit wherever you would like and encouraged to socialise while waiting for the meeting to begin. Maybe you sit down next to someone you know and begin a conversation. You see your elected

²² This harks back to applied drama’s principle of place/space, considering accessibility to the geographical location to encourage participation of the entire community.

²³ Conscious awareness of *how* a space is set up/arranged is key to applied drama work, as explained in Chapter Two.

official enter, and they take a seat in the circle — just like everyone else. Once everyone has arrived and the time has come for the meeting to start, a person sitting in the circle identifies herself as the facilitator for the evening's meeting.

After a short introduction of herself, she invites the person sitting to her left to introduce themselves and briefly share in one to two sentences why they decided to attend the meeting. This continues all the way around the circle, with everyone having an opportunity to introduce themselves and share their reasons for coming. You notice that your elected official is held to the same standard as everyone else. After introductions have been completed, the facilitator expresses that the reason for this meeting and the many to follow is to begin a continuous collaborative relationship between the community and the government to engage in dialogue around issues of concern. The process might result in an agreement among the community as to how to proceed on a given topic for concern. However, it is stressed that the main goal is to come to a deeper understanding around the plurality of views and experiences within the community, even if there is still disagreement regarding an issue/concern.

To embark on this enterprise, there is a need to generate an agreement together about how the group would like to work together — what the group needs to work productively.²⁴ To start things off the facilitator suggests writing down “respect,” to indicate that everyone in attendance would agree to remain respectful of each other and the space. Everyone is invited to add to the collective “social contract” being created, with all suggestions being included for consideration by the group.

²⁴ The creation of a social contract is an important exercise used in applied drama to aid in generating an environment that encourages both community-building and collaboration.

Your voice is heard equally with your fellow citizens and elected official. Once the recommendations from the group have been written down, the facilitator posts the list in the room so that everyone can see/reference it. She reveals that this is a living document, and the group can make changes and additions as they continue to meet and work together.

With the social contract in place, the facilitator invites everyone to stand and move around the room with the goal of finding a partner who is someone that you either haven't met in the community or don't know very well. You are given several minutes to find a partner and a place to sit together. You are told that it is fine to move the chairs so that you can face your partner and have a bit of space just for the two of you. Once you have settled with your partner the facilitator asks you to quickly decide who will be "A" and who will be "B." She then asks you to think about a time when you felt extreme pride in the community in which you are living and gives everyone a minute or two to think of and decide on a time. She then gives instructions for B's to share the story they thought of with their partner and allots three minutes to do so. If B's finish their story before the time is up, A's are tasked with asking questions and getting more details about the story from B's. Once the three minutes is up, it is the A's turn to share their stories with B's listening and asking questions. You're surprised to learn that there is a group of young people committed to cleaning up the litter in your partner's neighbourhood.²⁵

²⁵ This exercise encourages movement through the space — getting participants comfortable with moving around the space in a small and safe way. Additionally, the exercise leans into narrative/storytelling in a one-to-one setting (for many participants this is lower risk than being asked to tell a story in front of the whole group). It also encourages active listening by setting aside a certain amount of time for each person to tell their story and instructing the listener to be curious and ask questions if there is remaining time, instead of moving on.

After A and B have each shared their story, the pairs are asked to join with another pair to form a group of four. Now the facilitator relays that each person in the newly formed group will be given a minute and a half to share their partner's story with the others. As each person listens, they are asked to keep in mind any words, phrases, ideas, or images that stand out to them.²⁶ Once this round of storytelling has ended, the facilitator asks everyone to please move the chairs back into the original circle and for everyone to take a seat. You say goodbye to your new acquaintances and move back to sit in the large circle. The facilitator then asks for the group to share, one at a time going around the circle the words, phrases, ideas, and images that stood out to each person from the stories that were shared. As participants share, the facilitator writes each one down. It takes seven turns around the circle for everyone to finish sharing what stood out to them.²⁷ You only had four ideas to share, but it was interesting to listen as the circle continued, with fewer people throwing out ideas each time until there was a quick sweep of the circle to confirm that all the ideas had been put forth.

Looking at the newly formed list, the facilitator asks the group to reflect upon similarities, differences, and things that were surprising. You smile when you see that “hope” was mentioned six times and that someone had mentioned the elderly veteran

²⁶ This pivot in the exercise is beneficial to the work as it doubles the group sizes, slowly getting participants comfortable speaking in front of more people. It allows for the translation of ideas, as each partner will be telling the other's story. This translation allows for the possibility of personal reflection by the participants as they discover what stood out from the story they told (and possibly ponder why). This is also the first step in allowing participants to show care for their partner's story and to see how their story is handled by their partner.

²⁷ This form of sharing out allows participants to get a sense for what other groups had shared, as well as make connections and reflect on possible differences in experience. It also allows for another type of communication which isn't narrative or rhetoric, but more like a free association with no need for an explanation or defense of an idea.

who posts up on the same corner every Friday to protest. Within the group people start sharing what this made them think of and how it made them feel. After the reflection the facilitator remarks that it was interesting to see what brought pride to the community, and that to bring more pride to the community the conversation will have to turn to issues, problems, and concerns within the community that need to be addressed to perhaps bring about that feeling of pride more often.

Next, the facilitator invites you move about the space inside the circle with the task of finding people who share a specific thing in common with you that the facilitator will task the group with. She calls out to form groups in the room based on shoe colour. While this wasn't what you were imagining, you're a bit relieved that it's a fairly easy task and embark to find others wearing blue shoes. Perhaps you realise that a distinction arises with a group forming of those with dark blue, as well as those with lighter blue shoes and quickly make a judgment call as to which group you'd fall into. You're grateful you didn't wear your multi-coloured shoes today. After a few moments of commotion, the room calms as everyone finds their group, with one person forming their own group of hot pink shoes. After checking in with all the groups, the facilitator asks you to form groups based on the number of siblings you have. This requires a bit of talking and takes a bit longer than before. You may recognise people you know and be surprised that you didn't know they had five brothers and sisters. Once again, the facilitator checks in with the groups to make sure everyone has found the right place, and then gives another criterion for finding a new group. Each task is an opportunity to have small chats with people in the community that you rarely get to speak to and offers little insights into their lives. This happens several more times, and each time your surprised to learn a little more

about your neighbours, your partner from the previous exercise, and your elected official (who shared a group with you twice). There may have also been a few mishaps with people accidentally joining the wrong group, or two smaller groups of the same type forming, not realising that they were really one large group. This mostly incited a bit of laughter and fun, as it was usually due to the variety of interpretations that people had, but it was all in good fun. Interesting to note the range of responses even to this one exercise. After the last grouping, the facilitator tells you that you're going to stay in that last formed group for the next exercise.²⁸

The facilitator gives each group ten minutes to speak together and decide on an issue that they feel is important and needs to be addressed within the community. At this point, she encourages groups not to worry about solutions, but to decide on an issue to put forth to the larger group. After ten minutes have passed the facilitator checks in to see if any group needs more time. Once every group has chosen their topic the facilitator announces that there will be a short five-minute break to rest, and use the restroom. During the break you reflect upon the past hour, feeling a bit closer to your community than you have in years. Some of these people are much funnier than you recalled. After the break, the facilitator asks everyone to go back to their group, and the groups are given another five minutes to work together to create an image that presents their chosen topic.²⁹ When the time is up the facilitator asks if

²⁸ This exercise gets people moving around the room even more and invites opportunities for community-building through the small tasks put forth by the facilitator which require observing and then talking to the other participants to learn more about them. The exercise leaves the participants in a group with people that have at least one thing which is shared by everyone in the group, providing a small basis for commonality.

²⁹ This task is a step up in the level of risk for many participants, as well as comfort, as many are not familiar with using their bodies to express themselves. However, the layering of the exercises leading up to this point generally support this next step. The groups are given a shorter time so that they jump into action and use their bodies, rather than overthinking to

there is a group that would like to share first. Another group indicates that they would like to go first, which is a relief to you because you're a bit nervous. The facilitator asks the group to form their image and freeze there to give everyone time to take it in, even encouraging people to move around the image if they would like.

While keeping the first group frozen, the facilitator asks the group what they see, specifying that at this point she would just like people to describe literally what is there. You see one person lying on the ground with their hand over their face and another person sitting on the ground close to the first with their arms wraps around their knees. Further away you also see three people standing and looking down in the direction of the two on the floor, one of them is pointing toward the pair on the floor and one is pinching their nose and scrunching up their face. After the group describes what they see, the facilitator asks what the image makes the group think of. Pretty unanimously it is decided that this group has chosen homelessness in the community as their topic. In this mini-reflection you hear ideas shared from within the group regarding the inconvenience of homeless people, worry about the safety of children, and sadness expressed for the homeless people portrayed. Perhaps you disagree with the view that homeless people should be looked upon as an inconvenience but are heartened when others offer differing views. It strikes you that the man who expressed sadness said that he was looking at the representation of the homeless people and he just felt — and then touched his heart with his left hand, lowered his head, closed his eyes, and gently shook his head with an expression of sorrow on his

the point of having nothing to share. If groups express that they need more time, often the facilitator will add a minute or two. This exercise also requires participants to work together using multiple forms of expression to create the image.

face. All of this information was exchanged and knowledge gathered within a matter of two to three minutes. The facilitator then tells the first group to relax, and asks if there is anything they would like to say about how about how they settled on that topic and what considerations they thought about in creating their image.

For much of the remainder of the last hour the groups share their images representing major concerns/issues within the community followed by observation, reflection, and then an opportunity for each group to talk about what they had created. By the time the exercise is completed, nine issues that needed addressing had been presented (one topic had been chosen by two groups). You're surprised that you're seeing some issues from a new perspective and thinking about how that aligns with what you already thought. You find yourself thinking that this might be something that sticks with you after this meeting. When the sharing of images is complete, the facilitator asks that everyone return to their seats in the circle. She writes the topics that had been presented on a large sheet of paper and asks the group to look at the list to see if there was anything they thought was missing. People share ideas that had come up in group discussions but hadn't been chosen as the topic for presentation. The facilitator adds each to the list.

Once the list is finished, with only ten minutes left in the meeting, the facilitator puts the new list next to the list of the ideas that had been shared out after the storytelling activity.³⁰ You remember the feelings of goodwill from the first list and think about the disagreements and different points of view regarding the topics

³⁰ The opportunity for reflection among the group is provided after almost every exercise, which provides the opportunity to shift in a new direction, if needed. Additionally, the stories, ideas, and reflections from this session will be the basis for the direction that the facilitator will plan for in the session to follow.

for concern that had popped up in just the short discussions today. The facilitator says that the meeting will be ending soon, but there is time to go around the circle once more to “check out” with one another. She asks everyone to share the one thing that they will take away with them from this meeting to keep with them until the next. As each person shares around the circle, you’re struck with just how much information was shared in such a short time. After the check-out the facilitator ends the meeting, thanks everyone for coming, and encourages everyone to come back next week. She also says that the space will remain open, and she will be available for about a half an hour if anyone has any questions for her or wants to stay and socialise. Your elected official offers to do the same.

In the week between meetings, you notice that a poll has been put out to the community to decide which topic should be the focus of the next meeting. The poll is posted in the newspaper, online community forums, community info boards at the grocery stores, and in all public buildings. There are several places where you can go to weigh in on the decision, as well as an online option to get input from as many people in the community as possible. You respond to the online version while waiting in line to check out for groceries on your phone. Additionally, you’ve noticed that there has been a call put out for people to submit about their experiences with the issues that were identified on the first night. Again, there are multiple options for responding: online, multiple drop boxes around the community, and at several community centres. You decide that you will definitely attend the next meeting.

On the day of the next session, you enter the space to see the chairs still in a circle, but this time there are posters up around the room, each with one of the topics generated in the last session written on it. You’re told as you enter to feel free to add

your thoughts/ideas about these topics to the posters with the markers that are next to each while you're waiting for the meeting to begin.³¹ You walk around, reading what others have written, sometimes adding your own thoughts anonymously to the posters. Once again, to start the meeting there is a check-in and everyone is invited to introduce themselves and respond to a short prompt from the facilitator focused on the topic for the evening. Next, the facilitator brings out the social contract that was created in the last meeting and reads it aloud. She then asks if there is anything that someone would now like to add or amend. No one changes anything, but she reminds you that it is always an option.

Next, the facilitator indicates that you're going to be working with each other collaboratively today, and that to prepare for that you're going to play some warm-up games together, a bit like the grouping game you played last week.³² This week you play two short games that take fifteen to twenty minutes total: When the Big Wind Blows and Heartbeat Ball.³³ After the games the facilitator checks in to ask the group why they thought they were playing these games, aside from the reason she gave beforehand. She asks what is needed to be successful in each game and what is challenging about each game. One person says that they got flustered during one of the games and ended up passing an item the wrong direction, but that it was all a good laugh and it was nice to see that most everyone made little mistakes here and

³¹ Beginning with this allows for immediate movement within the space, the sharing of ideas, but with the safety of anonymity.

³² This is a reference to the process of applied drama, which slowly works to build the relationships, skills, and comfort levels with working in new and different ways.

³³ Heartbeat Ball is a game that requires the passing around the circle of various objects in distinctly different ways. It begins with one object, the 'heartbeat ball' and then the facilitator adds more and more. The goal is to keep everything moving around the circle while prioritising the ball. For a description of When the Big Wind Blows, please see Chapter Two.

there. It was nice to have the freedom to know that if you messed up a bit, everyone was there with you. Someone else commented that the feeling of everyone working together to meet the goal was palpable in the room. As you listen to some of the responses, you're surprised at how much thought can go into such simple games.

Moving onward, the facilitator says that she would like volunteers to help share out with the group the submissions that were received during the week from the community regarding the topic at hand. Over the next fifteen minutes you hear narratives read aloud from people in the group (the elected official even reads one), two drawings that had been submitted are described and then shared around the circle, and even a poem that had been submitted. After the sharing, the facilitator has you count off from one to ten and then form a group with those who have the same number. She gives each group one of the submissions from the community that was shared. The groups are told that they can use the submission as a jumping off point if they would like, or something else the group discusses to create an image of what the issue/concern currently looks like in the community. You are given five minutes to do this. At the end of the five minutes, the groups are told to create another image that is what they would like the issue/concern to look like. Once the images are created, you're informed that you're just over the halfway point in the meeting, and there will be a five-minute break for those who need it.

After the break, the facilitator has you go back to your group. Within the groups she says that the new task is to figure out how to transition from the first image to the second. You are given absolute creative freedom to do this however you would like within your groups. At the end of the allotted time everyone is brought back together to share what was created, with each group volunteering one at a time

to share.³⁴ There are a variety of solutions to the final task: creating more images, narrating, and creating a scene that was acted between the two images. One group has each person unfreeze and speak a monologue while moving to their new positions. Just like last time, after each group there is a reflection on what was presented to get everyone's thoughts and ideas regarding the subject at hand and what this new view of it offered.

After all the groups finish sharing, everyone moves back out to the larger circle. There are only twenty minutes left in the meeting. The facilitator has created another poster for this topic with the word "solutions" added to it. She now asks the group who has ideas they would like to put forth for addressing the night's topic. She writes down every suggestion equally, even the one put forth by the elected official. A short discussion follows, and there are a few solutions that seem to be getting the most attention, though no consensus is reached. In the last couple of minutes there is another check-out much like the first meeting. The facilitator thanks everyone and says that the ideas generated tonight will be shared with the appropriate city officials, several of whom were in attendance, to work with the elected official to create legislative reform to address the topic. She references all the posters around the room and says that each week there will be a meeting to address issues of concern and reminds you that you can still add to all the posters on the wall. Just as before, the

³⁴ This exercise is scaffolded, with each step slowly building upon the one before it and allowing for collaborative emergence through the process. Participants are given some structure so that they feel secure in the task at hand, but also the freedom to decide together how they want to accomplish the task. The exercise also allows for and requires a wide range of communication styles, providing opportunity for everyone to feel comfort in the one they excel at and to be pushed a little out of their comfort zone to work in those they do not normally. This can also bring appreciate for those who excel in modes that are different from one's own preferred way or the realisation of a previously unknown ability.

space would remain open for about half an hour for socialising, and both the facilitator and elected official say they will stay to chat.

As you think back on the civic engagement you have participated in over the past two weeks, you're surprised at how you were able to cover so much, get so many different views, work through disagreements, and come to feel closer to your community. You never thought that participating in democracy could feel collaborative and creative instead of combative. You felt it was refreshing to listen to such diverse and multiple stories, experiences, and thoughts instead of repeatedly hearing the elected official try to "sell" their idea to you. This is what democracy can be.

A Theory of Creative Democracy

Despite calls by democratic philosophers and theorists such as Dewey, Bernstein, and Arendt for a more creative approach to democracy, and the flirtations of political scientists such as Bächtiger and Parkinson³⁵ regarding the usefulness of the art of drama/theatre within deliberative democracy, there remains a dearth of substantive consideration and practical application in this direction. Martha Nussbaum is one of the theorists who have taken up this idea in a meaningful way, insisting that:

When we meet in society, if we have not learned to see both self and other in that way, imagining in one another inner faculties of thought and emotion, democracy is bound to fail, because democracy is built upon respect and concern, and these in turn are

³⁵ See André Bächtiger and John Parkinson, *Mapping and Measuring Deliberation: Towards a New Deliberative Quality* (Oxford University Press 2019), pp. 75-76.

built upon the ability to see other people as human beings, not simply as objects. (6)

The approach of Creative Democracy, a deliberative democratic approach informed by applied drama praxis — depicted above in the story and theorised below — offers a substantive and viable approach to democratic practice.³⁶ Dewey expressed that championing, defending, and deepening liberal democracy “can become an actuality only as our defense takes the form of creative activity to make the democratic way of life a deeper and wider reality than it has been” (Dewey, *Vol. 14* 264).

The vision of democracy illustrated in the previous section gives just one glimpse of what a Creative Democracy — facilitated within the bureaucratic system through applied drama praxis — could be. In Chapter Two the case was made for applied drama as being inherently democratic, upholding and reinforcing the ideals upon which liberal democracy rests. In this section, the ability and suitability of applied drama to the task of providing the means through which deliberative democracy is facilitated will be established, providing a methodology for Creative Democracy. This will be done by engaging with the parameters outlined above for a reconception of deliberative democracy: (1) a flexible and inclusive communication exchange, (2) creating a continuous collaborative enterprise that encourages imaginative and creative problem-solving, (3) emphasis on shared and balanced power, (4) meeting people where they are rather than imposing restrictive definitions of an ideal setting, (5) opportunity for reflection to contend with conflict, and (6) an incorporation of the process of empathy into the act of deliberation. While the

³⁶ The ability of applied drama to support democracy and deliberation following chapter will be further interrogated in Chapter Four by putting the theory into conversation with the real-world practice of applied drama facilitators around the globe.

following section will generally flow through the above parameters in order, it will become clear how interconnected they all are, as there will be overlap in the discussion of each. What will become clear is that Creative Democracy is a way of realising the public sphere through the whole of our beings in a process that transforms the art into experience and the aesthetics into meaning.

A noted strength of applied drama praxis, as detailed in Chapter Two, is that it avails of drama/theatre's aesthetic capacity for polyphony within communication exchange. Employing these techniques within a deliberative democratic setting would allow for myriad entry points into the dialogue for participating citizens, recognising and supporting the wide range of styles of communication and comfort with expression present in the meeting space. It also supports the ability to take in and listen to information in a wide variety of ways, supporting the important communication feedback loop. The range of communicative styles available for use within the praxis is unlimited, and the flexibility of the praxis allows for accommodation of input from participating citizens and the ability to adapt accordingly. Additionally, as was mentioned in the story of Creative Democracy above, the praxis also allows for capturing the ideas/thoughts of all in the community through seeking input via submission in a wide variety of formats, so that those ideas can be taken up within the meetings as well — making space for contributions by those who are not able to attend due to scheduling³⁷ or who choose not to be present in the room.

³⁷ This is an area in which applied drama praxis can also inform deliberative democratic process as facilitators are keen to adjust schedules to work with the community to allow for maximum engagement, meaning the schedule is dictated not by the facilitators (or in this case the government), but by the citizens.

While the praxis makes space for citizens who are not physically attending the meeting to have a presence in the room through submission of their ideas, kinaesthetic intersubjectivity plays a key role in the communication exchanges that occur within a workshop and can transform democratic deliberation. The abundance of information that individuals and groups are able to consider and evaluate through live, embodied encounters is enhanced due to applied drama's incorporation of movement and image-based communication exchange. Beausoleil points out that "the individual body 'contains its own logic' that can expose, interrogate, and possibly transform the norms of inclusion, exclusion, and asymmetry within the social body" ("Political Actors" 265–266). Encouraging participants to be active and express with their whole bodies activates the participatory sensemaking that kinaesthetic intersubjectivity promotes. This is in contrast to the current scenography of most citizen-government interactions. Typically, elected officials are placed on some type of stage, with everyone else seated facing the stage like an audience. Citizens are asked to stand still one at a time in front of a microphone facing the stage (and usually with their backs turned toward most of their fellow citizens), using only their voices to speak to their elected officials. Though everyone in the room can hear what they are saying due to amplification, the arrangement of the room gives the impression that they are meant to speak to those up on the stage. The communication is not designed to be multidirectional, nor is it designed to be inclusive of modes of expression beyond standing still and speaking aloud.

Key within the range of communicative exchange offered by applied drama praxis are the many opportunities to truly listen, with the concept of listening encompassing "three essential dimensions of *reception*, *relation*, and *response*"

(Beausoleil “Listening to” 123). The story of Creative Democracy in the previous section reveals how applied drama praxis functions to allow space for accepting the ideas of others, relating to those thoughts, and responding via pointed moments and opportunities for reflection. This process is reflexive and allows for continual expression of thoughts/feelings, the opportunity to connect with and reflect on them in a meaningful way (individually and as a group), and then allows for the structure and approach of the workshop to adapt and change based on what has occurred. This falls very much in line with John Dryzek’s ideas around deliberative capacity’s need for reflexivity:

One aspect of deliberative capacity involves a distributed ability to reflect critically on preferences, including those about the structure of the political system itself. Thus, deliberative capacity ought to promote the ability of a system to identify its shortcomings and reform itself. (“Democratization” 1393)

The key principle of reflexivity that guides applied drama praxis can bolster deliberative capacity within these settings.

Additionally, applied drama’s polyphonic approach to communication, as mentioned in Chapter Two, requires and supports translation, which can also be a boon to deliberative processes, especially in deeply divided settings. Translation works to “take the differences between languages and tries to deal with them in a constructive way” (Clegg 348), leading to greater understanding between and among a group of participants. Beausoleil describes how this translation takes place concurrently through polyphonic communication:

By communicating through multiple modes, polyphony holds together an apparently impossible simultaneity that so often becomes simplified, reified, or conflated in other forms of representation. As such, it enables the articulation and exploration

of identity beyond tight scripts of fixed social categories or restrictive discourses. (“Political Actors” 261)

This could prove particularly useful when dealing with deeply partisan talking points and complex views represented by, and so often reduced to, soundbites such as “pro-life” and “together for yes,” which were used on different sides during the 2018 abortion rights referendum to repeal the Eighth Amendment in Ireland. Translating these soundbites into images, poems, movements, stories, and other modes of expression allows for greater nuance and greater understanding of the variety of viewpoints on the subject, which was most assuredly more than two. Polyphonic communication and translation promote a complication of the proposed subject matter at hand and help to realise a public sphere in which participants are actively learning and problem-solving together. Keeping the multivocal and multivalent quality of social and political issues at the fore through applied drama’s approach to expression and dialogue will enable the proposed outcomes (which are usually reduced to two, maybe three choices to be put to a vote) to be more nuanced.

As was revealed in the story of Creative Democracy, applied drama has the capacity to also incorporate Young’s ideas around greeting and Basu’s advocating of humour as important and inclusive elements of communication within deliberation and the public sphere more broadly. Young’s “greetings” can be translated into “check-ins” and “check-outs” that are often used with groups during applied drama workshops. These moments are informal and quick, allowing for input from the entire group as a way to greet and part ways from each other. Facilitators of applied drama are also keenly aware of the moments prior to the start and following the end of a workshop, as well as conversations that occur during breaks. All these moments feed into what happens within a meeting/session and can affect the dialogue within a

meeting. Basu's push for the inclusion of humour within deliberation is mirrored in applied drama's use of games and exercises that are used to create greater trust, collaboration, and ease with ambiguity.³⁸ These games allow for the expression of silliness and humour among the group, helping to build bonds. The harnessing of greeting and humour are also elemental in the undertaking to create an inventive and regular collaboration amongst participants that supports dialogue.

As detailed in Chapter Two, collaboration is one of the key principles of applied drama praxis. This praxis can provide for creative collaboration that is able to reflect Mouffe's call for agonism. Monica Prendergast and Juliana Saxton explain:

Drama process offers multiplicities of ways of thinking; participants are challenged to become more critical thinkers, to accept ambiguity (a tolerance for open-endedness), to be aware that there is rarely one 'right' answer, and to think collaboratively in more creative, non-linear ways. (3)

Their summation highlights that through this collaborative enterprise participants are opened up to ambiguity and the idea that there is usually more than one "right" answer. This is key in applied drama's ability to encourage a more agonistic approach. If participants can see that there is not one "absolute right" which relegates all other ideas as "absolutely wrong," then the dichotomy of friend/foe that is often propped up by party politics can begin to dissolve, and those with differing opinions are "no longer perceived as an enemy to be destroyed" (Mouffe, "Deliberative Democracy" 15). Notably, "[p]eace activists, in particular, have often resorted to artistic forms like theatre as a technique for peacebuilding in conflict-ridden societies" (Chou, et al.

³⁸ Games and exercises can be chosen to specifically address a wide range of purposes and are usually carefully chosen by the facilitator/facilitating team specifically for the group with which they are working.

613). David Davis asserts that “Drama offers a means to pierce the mantle of ideology that cloaks us all” (134). Instead of an us-against-them mindset, applied drama praxis encourages we-and-you thinking, and has a proven ability to bring people on opposite sides of experience and issues together.

Applied drama’s collaborative capacity to encourage agonism is highlighted in Jennifer S. Hartley’s account of her work in South America in the late 1990s, where she used applied drama to engage with people who had been torture victims, as well as perpetrators of torture, under the various dictatorships in Paraguay, Chile, Argentina, and Brazil (Hartley 13–47). She recounts, “It was tense at moments and some of the men were more willing than others, but everyone stayed and took part in the activities as one group” (Hartley 36). She describes the response from an image exercise and a specific image created by five torturers:

When I asked those watching what they saw, they called out: ‘guilt’, ‘shame’, ‘ignorance’, ‘defiance’, ‘pity’, ‘loneliness’. And then someone said ‘*trapped*’. There was a moment of silence before it was followed with the words ‘imprisoned’ and ‘victim’. I asked what they thought the message was and one man spoke up: ‘the tortured and the torturer is in every one of us — either way we’re all prisoners. (Hartley 36)

Moving through games and exercises that are focused on deconstructing ideas and experiences allows participants — even those on fiercely opposite sides — to set animosity aside, even if only momentarily to begin. Bringing in exercises in which it is impossible to be “right or wrong” is key to aiding this endeavour. When exploring best practice for facilitation within socially engaged settings, I discovered in my earlier research that:

planning activities that have no right or wrong answer encourages participants to share their opinion and validates their thoughts and

ideas in a safe setting. If there is no right or wrong answer, no stress is placed on participants to 'get it right.' (Grile 59)

Because applied drama's approach is rooted in the aesthetic, and the activities/exercises are focused on creating dialogue and sharing experiences through the entire body, the goal everyone is working toward is greater understanding through expression and reception, rather than "winning" an argument. Applied drama's use of narrative/storytelling, as exemplified in the story above, also allows Creative Democracy to lean into the benefits of collaboration and advancement of opposing views that Polletta and Lee asserted in their article, which examined the public deliberation held in New York City following the 11 September 2001 attacks.

While collaboration is bolstered by using storytelling, it is also fostered through the exercises and activities of applied drama, which allow participants "to stop talking about or around a topic and to begin working on it directly through action" (Prendergast and Saxton 17). In activities and exercises that seek to find solutions, multiple responses are requested, exemplifying Bakhtin's assertion of multiple truths and multiple realities within dialogue. Romney explains:

The multiple voices and perspectives revealed are not framed as either-or choices, but are all viewed as *potentially* correct. There is not just one idea or two opposing ideas to be debated, but many ideas to be heard and considered. Therefore, dialogue leads not to one certain outcome but rather to many possibilities. (5)

As a part of this dialogue groups are often given the opportunity to "try out" their ideas through activities that involve improvisation. Though these improvisations are fictional, Richard Courtney explains why they are of use:

When we think and act dramatically we create a fiction. But this fiction is not false; it is not a lie. It has a cognitive purpose. It is a way of looking at the environment that complements the actual world and, in so doing, it provides us with a new perspective on it. If

we put the two together, the actual and the fictional, our understanding of the world changes. (*Drama and Intelligence* 11)

Applied drama's ability to work through issues/topics (rather than talk in circles) while fostering democratic learning and social cohesion further underscores the need for this praxis within a sustained deliberative democratic framework through Creative Democracy.

Maintaining open discourse between the government and its citizens (a key liberal democratic ideal) necessitates the creation of an ongoing process of exchange. The practice of participatory budgeting that has taken place in democratic countries around the world has managed to be impactful in the places in which it has been implemented.³⁹ One reason for this impact could be the ongoing nature of the practice, especially in places like Porto Alegre, Brazil, where the practice started over thirty years ago. Creative Democracy thus requires that the process remain open and continuous, exemplified in the story of Creative Democracy through the announcement that the meetings would take place on an ongoing, even weekly basis. Maintaining a dialogue⁴⁰ shares import with the quality of the dialogue. This involves attention to the type of communication exchange focused on above, but also on the balance of power within that exchange.

As a facilitator of applied drama workshops, one of the main ways I measure my success in working with a group is in the progression of the group taking on more

³⁹ For more see Vijayendra Roa and Paromita Sanyal, "Dignity through Discourse: Poverty and the Culture of Deliberation in Indian Village Democracies." *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 629 (2010): 146-72 and Sérgio H. Rocha Franco and Wendell Ficher Teixeira Assis, "Participatory Budgeting and Transformative Development in Brazil." *Geoforum*, 103 (2019): 85-94.

⁴⁰ This can also be seen in David Farrell's 2015 op-ed to *The Irish Times* in which he asserts that "the Constitutional Convention 'brand' is in jeopardy" due largely to an end in the dialogue.

and more control over the process, so that there comes a point where I am operating much more as a guide/reference to the form, as well as a member of that community. Interviews in 2012 with applied drama facilitators revealed that “sometimes when things are going well, the facilitator might feel like they are being lazy or are not ‘leading’ properly; actually, the opposite is true; it means that the process is being facilitated well!” (Grile 61). The facilitator is charged with leading participants through the process, understanding that “leadership is a form of power, but power *with* people rather than *over* people” (Forsyth 247).

As the knowledgeable expert on applied drama praxis, the facilitator holds power in terms of *how* topics/issues will be interrogated — at least initially. The more groups work together and become more familiar and comfortable with the form, the more they are encouraged to assert how they want to explore an issue based on activities done previously, sometimes even suggesting alterations or changes to an exercise or combining exercises to explore a new topic. Importantly, the *what* that is under interrogation comes from the community involved in the workshop(s). The power to control subject-matter rests with the group. In her book *Theatre of Good Intentions*, Dani Snyder-Young emphasises this point when she writes that “The democratic ethos of applied theatre means participants take drama work in directions of *their* choosing” (16). Additionally, applied drama facilitators encourage participants to embrace the expert power of their own experience and knowledge within a workshop setting. To this point, James Thompson asserts:

One the ground communities can use theatre to explore their issues in an open forum that does not automatically impose systems of meaning. By creating images or scenes amongst themselves they have the power to check, alter, rearrange and validate the knowledge that is contained within their group. (*Applied* 126)

While balancing power is precarious, and the balance cannot ever be assured to be always distributed equally, facilitators of applied drama are trained to constantly be attuned to the dynamics within a group to allow for everyone to contribute meaningfully. Applied drama praxis provides a form for the constant shifting of power among the group, thus supporting “forms of power more compatible with democratic values” (Mouffe, “Deliberative Democracy” 14). This is achieved by using of the aesthetic dimension of the art form and the polyphonic approach to communication and collaboration that meets participants where they are.

One way in which Creative Democracy contends with the diverse and pluralistic reality of most liberal democracies is by embracing the idea that “power is constitutive of social relations” (Mouffe, “Deliberative Democracy” 13). This means that the issue of power *must* be contended with in a way that promotes democratic ideals, which applied drama is able to do because it is “predicated on a vigilant receptivity to difference across time, circumstance, geography, culture, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, and gender” (Cohen-Cruz and Schutzman 1). Snyder-Young states unequivocally that “Imbalances of power occurring in the real world are replicated in the theatre workshop and facilitators strive to even the playing field as best they can” (23). This is done by leaning into the guiding principles of the form, such as the use of polyphonic communication (allowing for every participant to have an opportunity to express themselves the way they feel most comfortable) and maintaining a reflexive praxis. Through the polyphonic approach to communication and the emphasis on collaboration, the sense of community and social cohesion within the group allows for a transformation of social relations, and therefore power as well. The approach of applied drama praxis allows for participants to contribute at

their comfort level, placing value on, and giving space, to every contribution.

Nicholson writes that applied drama “bears witness to a plurality of voices and experiences and maintains a commitment to a radical social democracy” (2nd edition 163). The entire praxis is about working with people where they are and allowing opportunities for reflection and growth.

Once again, one of the primary parameters for reconceiving deliberative democratic process — reflection — aligns with the emphasis on reflexivity in the praxis, which is inherently linked with reflection. The reflection that occurs within applied drama praxis is not only reflection on the “content that is being explored, but also the process itself” (Grile 44), as was represented in the story outlined in the previous section. The engagement, the dialogue that takes place, and the actual process of the deliberation are all important in creating a more democratised and sustained public sphere. Applied drama’s approach to reflection “requires reflective listening, using practices and in terms that people themselves use,” which “is not only more deliberative; it is more democratic as well” (Bächtiger and Parkinson 160). Prendergast and Saxton contend that reflection “also plays a role in building trust, refining communication skills and creating a safe environment which paradoxically encourages the taking on of greater risks” (30), which connects back into building social cohesion and inspiring creative collaboration.

Taking moments of reflection to consider a line of thinking or how something is impacting or resonating with a group draws attention not only to the subject-matter, but also brings focus to *how* the subject-matter is being interrogated. Reflection allows the opportunity to deconstruct images, messages, and ideas, enabling participants to think about their own thinking process. A certain image or

phrase can cause an initial emotional, visceral response; reflection then allows the opportunity to analyse how and why the gut response was what it was, in other words, “we consciously can see or be enabled to see the meanings of what has been done” (Prendergast and Saxton 13). Reflection also allows for the opportunity to learn about how others perceive and respond to the same stimulus, as well as the reasonings behind their response, which leads to the final criterion for reimagining deliberative democracy: the process of empathy.

A sure way for the empathic process to occur during deliberation is through applied drama praxis. While the process of empathy is not one of the core principles of the art form, the empathic process is inherently exhibited within applied drama praxis, as it is of all forms of drama/theatre. Helen Nicholson writes that applied drama encourages “relationships of empathy and imaginative identification” (2nd edition 170). It does this by leaning into the aesthetic qualities of the form that allow for the taking on of “roles” that are unfamiliar to participants. This can take the form of physically embodying novel positions or responding vocally from a new point of view. Morrell asserts:

The most cognitively advanced process of empathy, though, is role taking or perspective taking. This process ‘requires a deliberate effort by observers to imagine how they would feel if faced with the circumstances affecting the target’. We can characterize it as ‘the attempts by one individual to understand another by imagining the other’s perspective,’ and it involves ‘both the suppression of one’s own egocentric perspective on events and the active entertaining of someone else’s’. (*Empathy* 58)

While the nature of drama/theatre lends itself quite nicely to inviting role-taking, the process of empathy is encouraged in other ways by applied drama.

In addition to role taking, applied drama's embodied nature also allows for kinaesthetic intersubjectivity and empathy among participants.⁴¹ Taking place in a face-to-face setting and via exercises that encourage social cohesion, humour, and openness to ambiguity, connections are created among participants that encourage the process of empathy. Rose Parekh-Gaihede writes that "'immediacy', which includes spatial and temporal immediacy, or in cases involving family or friends" (Reynolds and Reason 178) strengthens the possibilities for empathic processes to occur. Additionally, the praxis holds space for the sharing of emotions, projection of ideas, and understanding via reflection, which all link back into promotion of the empathic process. Applied drama invites and stimulates the process of empathy, meeting Morrell's standard for a deliberative practice "most likely to fulfill democracy's promise that legitimate collective decisions will give equal consideration to everyone" (*Empathy* 17).

Creative Democracy has the potential to fulfil Young's idealised model of democratic communication:

A theory of democratic discussion useful to the contemporary world must explain the possibility of communication across wide differences of culture and social position. Such a theory of democracy needs a broad and plural conception of communication that includes both the expression and extension of shared understandings, where they exist, and the offering and acknowledgment of unshared meanings. ("Communication" 132–133)

Creative Democracy, informed by applied drama praxis, "creates a space through which the 'multiple, conflictual axes of identity/difference' that pose such a challenge

⁴¹ Refer to the previous section "Argument for a Live, In-person Approach" for more on kinaesthetic intersubjectivity and kinaesthetic empathy.

to conventional forms of political representation can be the very means for communication and coalition” (Beausoleil, “Political Actors” 267). This vision of democracy can hold space to contend with the pluralistic realities of the diverse democratic nations of the twenty-first century, allow for the negotiation of power, strengthen dialogue within communities through imaginative collaboration and communication, and give space for reflection and the process of empathy. Each of these features merge into the others, creating an interwoven form in many ways defined by its mutability. Just like the embodied process that is democracy, applied drama praxis is constantly evolving, responding to people, time, places, and happenings — all the while rooted to the ideals of freedom, individual human rights, equality, free and open dialogue, and collective learning.

Chapter Four: The Quality of Deliberation and Democracy in Applied Drama

“We are thus better equipped as practitioners to design techniques and approaches that speak to an ever-changing global context. Immersion into critical thought keeps our practices adaptable and honest — as radical in practice as they are in theory.”

— Jan Cohen Cruz and Mady Schutzman (2)

Introduction

Throughout this chapter the active practice of applied drama will be in conversation with the theory of Creative Democracy proposed in Chapter Three. As the quote from Cohen-Cruz and Schutzman above suggests, the artists who took part in this study will be shown to engage critically with their practice. This allows for constant interplay between theory and practice within applied drama, binding the two closely together. Chapters Two and Three laid out a theoretical premise for the use of applied drama as a democratising force and as a means by which to reconceive deliberative democratic approaches. This chapter will strengthen the assertions made in the previous two chapters by presenting data collected via survey and interviews with current applied drama facilitators reflecting on the realities of their work.

Overall, the data presented in this chapter strengthen the case for Creative Democracy, supporting the benefits to realising the concept in action. Using the ideal democratic and deliberative qualities identified in previous chapters as the lodestar, the data reveal that the praxis is effective at upholding liberal democratic values and has the capacity to generate productive deliberative environments. However, the data also further complicate the idea of Creative Democracy as described in Chapter Three. These considerations and nuances provide insight into what must be carefully navigated when the theory is translated into reality.

This chapter will begin with the practitioner's perspective, giving insight to the primary researcher as a responding facilitator to the study conducted. Next, the chapter will detail the inclusion of methodological approaches drawn from the social sciences adopted within this study. Once the methodological choices have been detailed, the chapter will move into sharing the findings of the study. The broad results, represented predominantly through the quantifiable data and supported by the qualitative data, will be introduced first. This will be followed by a section that delves more deeply into the themes and areas of complication that arose through the qualitative data analysis. These themes suggest areas for further exploration and consideration when actualising Creative Democracy. The chapter will conclude by taking account of the cumulative results of the study and sharing thoughts of interviewees on the topics of liberal democracy, deliberation, and applied drama.

Practitioner's Perspective: Starting from reflective practice

In many ways, I am the first data subject in this study. It was the reflections on, and inquiry into, my practice as an applied drama facilitator that spurred this research and guided it in so many ways. Even during my MFA research exploration in 2012–2013, I described the praxis as "a democratic process that allows every participant to give, and an opportunity for all involved to have their knowledge and skill set appreciated and utilized to its full potential" (Grile 12). Looking back upon what I wrote then, I can see the links to liberal democracy that were being formed without my full awareness of those connections or the implications of them. This section will take account of myself as researcher and survey participant.

After designing the survey around the qualities of democracy and deliberation that had been identified as being crucial and crafting the questions for both

facilitators and participants, I took stock of what my answers would look like from both positions, as I have experienced applied drama projects from both perspectives over the past fifteen years.¹ Before I was ever a facilitator, and even as I was learning to facilitate, I was a participant. It was my experience as a participant that fuelled my desire to become a facilitator, so that I could help create the type of exploratory, creative, and supportive environment I had experienced for and with others. In the paragraphs to follow I will move through the qualities being assessed in the surveys and share my responses to them.

Regarding the democratic qualities being measured (inclusion, community-building, and learning), my own responses to the survey questions matched my strong feelings in relation to applied drama being inherently supportive of liberal democratic values. However, my answers helped distil the workings of the praxis in this regard, clarifying the vagueness of my gut instincts. For example, as a participant I always felt like the space was welcoming and inclusive of everyone's ideas. Although, I had to reckon with the fact that there had been specific times/moments when I felt I wasn't able to share my thoughts precisely when I wanted to, though through the process I *had* ultimately been able to share what I wanted — it just wasn't always exactly when I wanted, which sometimes frustrated me. Additionally, with respect to feeling comfort expressing myself within the space, I had to admit there had been times when I had been nervous or anxious to do so, usually because of issues I was dealing with personally. However, I found that it was the praxis itself and

¹ My experience as a participant spans from work in educational to community settings in groups ranging from eight to more than fifty people. My experience as a facilitator has been in education, community, prison, and corporate settings with the number of participants ranging from four to sixty.

the approach of the facilitator which eased that anxiety and emboldened me to contribute.

Perhaps it was my experiences as a participant that guided my focus as a facilitator to carefully consider issues of place/space, as well as working to employ exercises and activities for maximum inclusion in my planning. I know from experience that each participant is bringing their own lived experience and context into the space, and any approach seeking to create an inclusive space for all must be sensitive to a wide variety of contexts, allow for multiple opportunities for engagement, and have the flexibility to respond to the group that is present.

However, even with all that, based on my experience as a participant, there is no way to get around the unpredictable nature of working with human beings. This is to say, I had the realisation that there will never be an unassailable and failproof process that guarantees that *all* participants will *always* feel included, comfortable, listened to/heard, and respected in every single moment. Further, while it may seem to be a worthy goal to create a space that is comfortable for all, one hundred percent of the time, I can't help but reflect on the types of moments that afforded me the most growth and learning: moments in which I was forced out of my comfort zone while simultaneously feeling supported within the space I was in. This is the type of space that must be sought and responsively balanced, rather than an unrealistic ideal that doesn't contend with human spontaneity and plurality.²

Additionally, in my experience as a participant I felt empowered to take control of my own story and even the process in the workshops I took part in. This

² This links in with the critiques of classical deliberation in Chapter Three that rejected the idea of theorising/planning around an ideal scenario.

bled into my focus as a facilitator on creating as many opportunities to diffuse and share power throughout the process with everyone in the room (though, as I attested to in Chapter One, there are contexts in which this is a bit inhibited, such as working in schools). The feeling of empowerment I felt as a participant was linked to the building of a strong sense of community with the other participants in my projects, which led to our encouragement of each other and an environment in which we supported one another even through heated disagreements. As a facilitator (who is also a member of the group), I have also felt this sense of community within the projects I have led, witnessed participants grow closer to one another, and had participants positively express that they felt they now had a support network/community through the project. Sometimes participants even chose to keep creating together beyond my working with them.

As for the learning that happened through the processes I was involved in as a participant, I felt that it was organic, that we learned from one another and made new discoveries together through the activities. The storytelling, image exercises, and improvisations allowed us to look at issues from many different angles and question them and our own perceptions of what we were creating/viewing. I remember clearly sharing a deeply sad and personal story about the passing of a mother-figure in my life and how I had been unable to attend her funeral, during an exercise in which my partner then went on to tell my story (and I, his) in a larger group of four. Upon hearing his telling, I was surprised and struck by how much anger he conveyed because I had always identified with and felt deep sadness when this came to mind. When the others in the group shared the ideas/thoughts that stood out to them from the story, one of them said “betrayal,” and suddenly I had a deeper understanding of

why I had carried the weight of this sadness as much as I had for over five years. My story, translated through another, had revealed to me the anger I had unknowingly harboured at not being told of the death until it was too late to attend the service. I realised that I couldn't let it go, because I was actually enraged at those whom I loved for denying me closure. It was possibly one of the most self-revelatory moments I had ever experienced, and enabled me to finally make peace with what had happened.

As a facilitator, I lean into opportunities for reflection through any project I facilitate — both reflection-in-action (which is often less obvious to participants through an exercise such as “spectrum of difference”)³ and reflection-on-action (which more explicitly takes place after most/all activities and at the end of a session.) Reflection-in-action often involves a degree of subconscious perspective-taking encouraged by being in-role or through telling someone else's story.⁴ Although sometimes the reflection-on-action can take the form of conversation, I also like to create space for reflection through action/gesture and in smaller groups/pairs. I have also found that I lean strongly into the capacity for polyphonic communication through varied drama activities to create as many entryways as possible, to allow for knowledge construction within the space. I can't count the number of times I have slightly frustrated some participants by setting a silent task involving using the body and image work to create within given timeframes, only to have those participants later delight in the ideas generated in this very different (for them) way of working.

³ Spectrum of difference is an activity in which participants are asked to physically move to different parts of the room depending on how much they agree/disagree with the statement, through the course of the activity participants are free to move along the spectrum as their minds may change.

⁴ While some participants might be aware of the empathic process encouraged through these activities that involve perspective-taking, for many it is an invisible process.

This highlights the idea that difficulty, minor irritation, and challenge are an integral part of this work that often results in new discoveries and breakthroughs for individuals and the group.

Following along on the thread of multiple communicative options and moving into deliberative qualities, as a participant the thing that so profoundly moved me about engaging in applied drama was that through the processes I had engaged in, I felt more heard/seen than ever in my life. Through applied drama praxis I was able to experience the sense of my full expression, as well as consistent reception and appreciation of what I had to offer. This was aided by facilitators often creating time and space for each person's story and instructing partners or groups to not move on to the next story until the time was up. Instead, if there was extra time, those of us listening were told to be curious and ask questions about what we had heard to get more detail (a practice I picked up when I began facilitating). Even though this "interest" was a bit contrived as it was part of the instructions, it did make me genuinely more curious about those in my group, and I perceived that their interest in what I was saying was genuine as well. As a facilitator I work to encourage this type of communication through modelling receptive behaviour, as well as creating opportunities for exchange to take place on all levels (partners, small groups, etc.)

In so many ways collaboration, for me, is linked to the formation of a strong sense of community within the group. Because bonds are formed through the process that allow for respect and trust, challenges that presented themselves through the processes I was involved in as a participant often worked themselves out quite organically through dialogue (using drama's various modes) and experimentation with ideas, which brought about changes in perspective. As a facilitator, this is the

type of collaboration I encouraged and frequently observed — though, I am once again reminded of contexts in which this was not always the case. When working with young people in school or community settings in which we were working within a time frame, there were times when (due to the pressures of the terms of my contract) I had to come in as the facilitator and nudge the group toward a solution or have them put the issue to a vote to be able to move on in the process. This indicates a need to clearly delineate a facilitation style appropriate to whatever context in which a facilitator is working, which has happened with many practices under the umbrella of applied drama and should happen with Creative Democracy as well.

Finally, when assessing the presence of the process of empathy within applied drama settings I had experienced as a participant, I do feel that I was better able to empathise with points of view that were different from my own, as I felt they were opened up to me in a very accessible and nonthreatening way. While this empathy brought about understanding on my part and even positive emotions toward those who held opposing views, I cannot say that it always changed my mind on a topic. However, it did force me to think about a topic in a different way and consider new pathways forward. As a facilitator I encourage this process through activities that promote perspective-taking through role play and encouraging curiosity. While there are subtle (and some not-so-subtle) clues that can reveal the empathic process, it is important to keep in mind that the process occurs through and is the result of a cumulative series of interactions between people. My assessment of this quality comes through feedback I have gotten from participants in which they express a greater ability to empathise or that they felt others empathised with them, as well as noticing changes in attitudes, positions, solutions, and ways of proceeding on a

topic/issue. These changes take the form of showing concern for others, making space for others to be seen/heard, and often, through thoughtful gestures toward others.⁵ My experience drives me to see applied drama as an optimal solution for integrating the empathic process into deliberative democracy, because it actively encourages and creates opportunities for empathising to occur while remaining responsive to participants and able to adapt as needed to continue to support it.

Two things leapt out to me from my responses to both surveys: (1) that generally the democratic and deliberative qualities were positively affirmed through my experiences; and (2) that I could almost always think of exceptions. As a praxis that brings together human beings and encourages expression and collaboration, it is not a process or approach that can ever be fully pinned down, due to the unpredictability of human nature. We are surprising to ourselves and to others. This has led me to believe that it is how those unexpected and explosive moments are handled that will reveal themselves to be the pivotal aspects of any approach seeking to bolster and maintain a healthy public sphere.

I was keen to learn whether my experience as a participant was atypical, as well as if my practice was divergent from the larger field within which I practice. Either way, this investigation would reveal the steps forward for Creative Democracy. The study would either indicate that the praxis is generally supportive of democratic and deliberative qualities or not. If the former, there would still be work around identifying important issues for working within a liberal democratic governmental

⁵ These thoughtful gestures can be as simple as remembering a birthday and bringing in a card for the group to sign.

context, and if the latter, there would be a need to create from scratch a new approach rooted in my own practice to put forth for consideration.

Unfortunately, the participant survey did not garner enough responses to be applicable to this study, making it difficult to comprehensively render a verdict on the efficacy of applied drama for supporting democratic and deliberative goals. However, I learned more about the practice of a wide array of applied drama facilitators and was able to consider their various viewpoints on the subject. Once the survey was made available, I was bolstered at the response and surprised by the number of practitioners who reached out regarding an interview. I chose not to look at the survey results until it came down on 31 March 2021, but through the interviews, which took place in February and March, I saw reason for tentative optimism for Creative Democracy. Because the interviewed practitioners were required to reach out to me to have a conversation, it likely indicated that they were probably already keen on the idea — hence my cautious optimism.

What I discovered through the analysis of the results of this study was encouraging and thought-provoking. Having the opportunity to read/hear how a diverse range of artists communicate about the field provided insight and nuance, though ultimately, the larger ideas/themes were essentially aligned. For example, whether an artist used the term “safe space” or “brave space,” they went on to describe the same type of environment. It also affirmed that I could not take facilitation for granted, as not all practitioners desire to lean into the democratic space and opportunities that the form affords. While I envision myself, along with a small team of artists, facilitating the initial Creative Democracy field experiment, it is my deepest hope that eventually this could become a model of deliberative

democracy at the local government level that is accepted and practiced widely. With this being the case, clearly identifying what is needed of facilitating artists, for what would be a new branch of the field, becomes critical. This notion will manifest quite clearly through the data presented in the rest of the chapter that follows.

Methodology

While this research was carried out within the department of Drama, the interdisciplinary nature of the topic under consideration and the type of data needed for this research dictated the need to draw from outside subject areas, notably the social sciences. It is from the social sciences that the methodological approach for data collection and analysis within this chapter is drawn. The modes of data collection that were used for this phase of the research project were: (1) an anonymous online survey of applied drama facilitators, (2) an anonymous online survey of individuals who had participated in an applied drama project, and (3) interviews with applied drama facilitators who had taken the survey and were interested in having a further conversation on the subject. Framework analysis, a qualitative method of data analysis, was used to analyse the data collected through the surveys and interviews. The following subsections will describe the survey design and implementation, interview typology and approach, and finally, the approach to analysing the data collected.

Survey/Interview Designs and Processes

The goal of the surveys and interviews in this study was to assess how the democratic and deliberative qualities of applied drama manifest in practice. This meant focusing on measuring specific beneficial qualities for liberal democracy and deliberation highlighted in the previous two chapters: inclusion, power dynamics,

community-building, community learning, communication, collaboration, respect, and empathy. These qualities led to the creation of six objectives around which the surveys and interview were designed: (1) How inclusive to people and ideas is an applied drama workshop?; (2) How effective is applied drama at building a sense of community?; (3) What type of learning, if any, occurs within an applied drama workshop?; (4) What is the quality of communication within an applied drama workshop?; (5) How well does an applied drama workshop foster collaboration amongst participants?; and (6) How effective is an applied drama workshop for allowing participants to empathise with each other? To achieve these objectives, the surveys and interview were divided into sections that contained questions focused on each objective and the qualities associated with it. The surveys collected quantifiable information as well as open-ended responses that allowed for qualitative information collection. The survey of applied drama practitioners had fifty-five respondents and provided a useful sample size for this study. However, the survey designed for participants of applied drama projects was not viable in this study, as it only received eight responses.

After undergoing an ethics review and gaining approval from the School of Creative Arts ethics committee, the survey link(s) and study information leaflet were sent to a compiled list of applied drama facilitators, socially-engaged theatre companies, and applied drama university programme contacts from across the globe. These contacts were encouraged to share the survey(s) with their colleagues as well. Additionally, a webpage was created with all the study information and links to the two different surveys. The link to this page was sent out via social media channels

and interest groups focused on applied drama. The surveys were made available for almost four months, from 11 December 2020 through 31 March 2021.⁶

The interviews were conducted to gather more information on the nuance and details of the experiences of applied drama facilitators, with an eye toward the democratic and deliberative qualities of those experiences. Much like the surveys, the pre-planned interview questions flowed through sections that focused on those beneficial qualities to democracy and deliberation outlined above. The interviews were designed to be semi-structured, with the pre-planned sections and questions acting solely as a roadmap. The fixed elements of the interviews were the initial question asked of each interviewee, and that at least one question from each section would be asked during the interview. The interviews were conducted in an active manner, with co-construction taking place between the interviewer and interviewee. Therefore, the sequence through which the interviews moved through the various sections was influenced by the interviewees' responses. Additionally, improvised follow-up questions in response to something an interviewee said were often supplemented within each interview.

Interviewees were self-selected applied drama facilitators who took part in the survey and reached out (as prompted at the end of the survey) to the email address provided to express interest in being interviewed. The interviews were conducted via Microsoft Teams and recorded for transcription purposes. An initial transcript generated by Microsoft Stream served as the starting point for the transcription

⁶ Appendix A contains the survey information leaflet and the facilitator survey appears in appendix B. The surveys were created and facilitated through the use of Microsoft Forms, via Trinity College Dublin's secure Microsoft OneDrive access.

process, which was then edited by hand using the recordings. This edited version of each transcript was then sent to the corresponding interviewee to ensure accuracy. All interviewees gave express consent for the use of their names in this research.

Approach to Analysis

To begin, the quantifiable data from the survey were extracted to get a broad view of the results. Light statistical analysis was employed through the creation of charts and graphs in Microsoft Excel, to allow for a clearer view of those results. The mean, mode, and median of each data set was calculated to determine the central tendency. Additionally, the outlying responses were identified. This analysis provided a look at the greater numerical trends within the data and helped to identify anomalous responses. This broad view of the subject matter was then put into conversation with the more nuanced qualitative data.

The qualitative data collected via survey and interview were analysed using framework analysis, because it “is better adapted to research that has specific questions, a limited time frame, [and] a pre-designed sample” (Srivastava and Thomson 73). Framework analysis calls for sensitising concepts to guide the analysis, allowing space for iterative knowledge production through a five-step process. The process begins with familiarisation, which entailed reading through the data collected and listening to the recorded interviews. This allowed greater awareness of “key ideas and recurrent themes” (Srivastava and Thomson 75) within the data. Although this study had a set of themes which guided the creation of the surveys and interviews, the creation of the analytic thematic framework was informed by notes taken during the familiarisation stage. However, in this study all the preceding themes were included in the analytic thematic framework along with new themes/issues that

emerged from the data. The third step is indexing/coding the textual data. At this point in the process, a computer-assisted qualitative data analysis software (CAQDAS) called Quirkos was employed. Quirkos was used to code the textual data, as well as aid in the fourth and fifth steps of the process: charting and interpretation. Once the data were coded and arranged in the charts, the data were mapped out and interpreted for the study.

With the data collected from the survey conducted for participants of applied drama projects being unsuitable for use, the scope of what was able to be determined regarding the democratic and deliberative qualities within applied drama praxis was reduced. However, what was gleaned through the viable facilitator survey and interviews is meaningful data around what many facilitators actually *do* and *how* they approach their practice, their observations and understanding of what is occurring in the space, and the relaying of information shared with them by their participants about their experience. While the data collected cannot provide a whole picture of the democratic and deliberative qualities of applied drama praxis due to lacking direct input from participants of the praxis, it can provide insight into how conducive for democracy and deliberation the actions of the facilitators are — both in their design/planning and how they facilitate. Additionally, it can give a sense for the effect, outcomes, and impact of the praxis by pulling from the information shared by the facilitators from their participants, as well as the facilitators' discernment of what occurs within their workshops.

The Big Picture

This section will provide an overview of the demographics of those who participated in this study, as well as the quantifiable data extracted from the surveys.

In addition to relaying the broad trends of the survey results, attention will also be paid to the outlier responses. The section will move through each objective outlined above and address the democratic/deliberative qualities associated with each, in conversation with the results of the practitioner survey. In general, the first three objectives focus more on democratic qualities, and the last three focus on deliberative qualities — however, there is some crossover. This conversation will be supported by the qualitative data collected via the surveys and interviews. It is important to note that there was a noticeable resistance from a majority of the practitioners surveyed to any question that appeared to make the praxis formulaic in any way, and a constant assertion of the need to always consider context and adaptability within the process. The purpose of this section is to identify the key findings that generally answer the questions asked in the objectives of this study. A close look at each objective reveals overall that applied drama facilitators actively work to create the type of deliberative democratic environment described in Chapter Three. That is, an approach that (1) accommodates for the realistic presence of agonism and emotions within the space, (2) is flexible and inclusive in incorporating a wide range of forms of communication and expression, (3) offers a form of ongoing collaboration able to work through differences and conflict, (4) allows for a democratic form of power sharing amongst all present, (5) incorporates opportunities for reflection, (6) and includes opportunities for the process of empathy to occur.⁷ Further, the observations of these facilitators, as well as feedback given to them by their own participants, indicate that there is some success in achieving the type of environment that they are working

⁷ Please refer back to Chapter 3, pages 197-215.

toward. While the data are limited to the perspective of the facilitators due to the participant survey being below the sample threshold, the information that can be harvested in this study is nevertheless encouraging for realising Creative Democracy in practice.

Demographics

The viable survey in this study, which was the one created for practitioners of applied drama, gathered fifty-five responses from practitioners around the globe. However, given the language of origin of the study and the immediate network of the primary researcher, the majority of responses were received from the United States (23), Ireland (9), and the United Kingdom (7). There was no notable discrepancy between those respondents' answers and practitioners who replied from Australia, Canada, India, Mexico, New Zealand, Norway, Poland, and South Africa. Further, most of the respondents identified as women (30). Once again, there were no noted discrepancies in the responses that came from those identifying as women and those identifying as men (18), nonbinary (1), gender non-conforming (1), person (1), and those who preferred not to answer (4). The years of experience of the practitioners ranged from one to forty-eight, with the average years of experience of all the respondents being twenty-one.⁸ The largest number of responses (18) came from the respondents who had eleven to twenty years of experience, followed by those with twenty-one to thirty years (11). In all, the survey garnered responses from a large swath of the globe, and despite differences across location, years of experience, and

⁸ This average only includes 54 responses as one appeared to be in error (it was "100+") and was not included.

identity, the survey responses tended to trend together — though, of course, the few outliers will be addressed.

Objective 1: How inclusive to people and ideas is an applied drama workshop?

The first objective is primarily a measure of the democratic quality of applied drama as it gets right to the heart of democratic equality — that every participant has full access to participating and their ideas are welcomed in the space. The results overwhelmingly point to applied drama as being inclusive in practice based on the responses received, indicating that the praxis falls on the more deeply democratic side of the spectrum. The questions in this part of the survey focused on the inclusion of ideas/input from participants, as well as the care practitioners took to consider issues of place/space in planning projects and workshops.

When asked how effective applied drama was at including the ideas/input of all participants, 96% of respondents said that it was effective (see fig. 2.). No respondent said applied drama was ineffective at this goal. This is bolstered by 84% of respondents saying that they always think

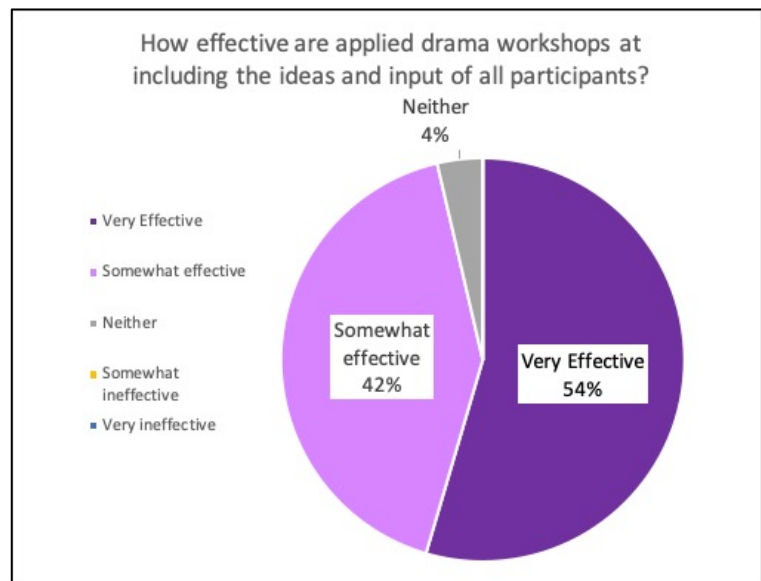


FIG. 2. HOW EFFECTIVE ARE APPLIED DRAMA WORKSHOPS AT INCLUDING THE IDEAS AND INPUT OF ALL PARTICIPANTS?

intentionally about how to involve all participants and 16% saying that they do this sometimes — once again, no respondents replied in the negative. Further, 93% of respondents indicated that they make a concerted effort to ensure that every

participant has an opportunity to express themselves within a workshop. The four practitioners who responded “no” to this question all indicated in their written response that not all participants might *avail* of the opportunity presented, but that they did try to create opportunities for this to happen. This means that all of the practitioners involved in this survey reported thinking intentionally about this topic, and most indicated that they practice this consistently in their work.

When it comes to inclusion and actively working toward it, typical survey responses were: “No one ever *has* to do anything. Everything is an open invitation and generally, quite fun. People who might start reluctant, eventually want to join in;” “workshops should be designed for maximum participation — which means that activities should be tailored to the needs of the workshop participants;” and “space is always given to enable all participants to participate (when they wish to).” However, to complicate this a bit, interviewee Cortney McEniry⁹ did make a point to say:

I can do my best to include folks in that sort of democratic, deliberative process of making the work together, but that doesn’t necessarily mean that they might feel a sense of inclusion or belonging in that space.

Her honest reflection highlights that striving for inclusion, checking in with participants, and maintaining vigilant awareness of nonverbal cues still does not equate to each participant feeling a sense of belonging. While this is always the case (in any field or situation in life), it is nevertheless affirming that so many practitioners surveyed indicated that they pay close attention to this factor. Having facilitators be actively attentive to this issue makes an outcome of an inclusive environment more likely than if they did not consider it at all in their approach.

⁹ All interviewees gave express consent for the use of their names in this research.

Additionally, based on their own feedback and observations, the facilitators surveyed felt confident that the practice is more effective than not at fostering an inclusive environment.

The above findings are further supported by considering the number of respondents who said that they always consider geographical location and accessibility when planning projects (see fig. 3.). Of the three respondents who said that they do not consider place/space in their project planning, one did not elaborate; another

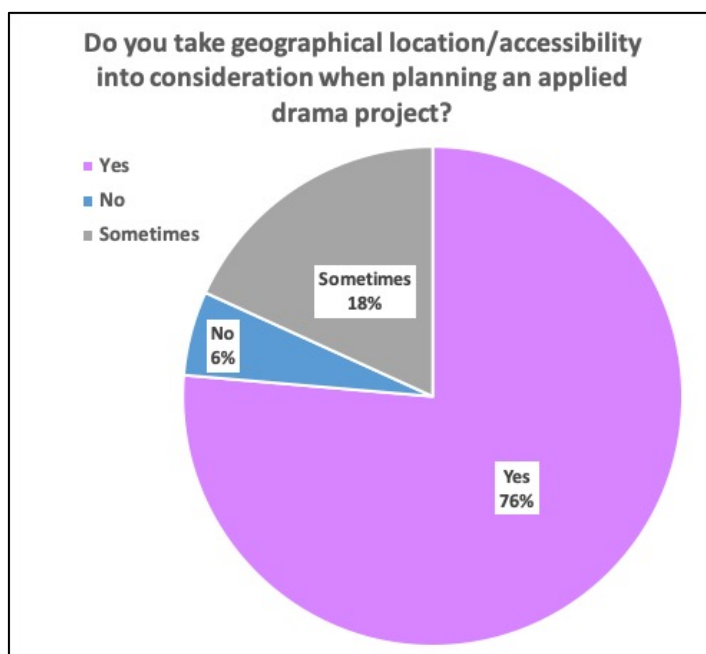


FIG. 3. DO YOU TAKE GEOGRAPHICAL LOCATION/ACCESSIBILITY INTO CONSIDERATION WHEN PLANNING AN APPLIED DRAMA PROJECT?

clarified that in their circumstance their workshops are always held in the same location; and the last one said that their project design never changed — though location and accessibility was taken into consideration when it came to the delivery of the workshop to communities. Typical responses for those who answered in the affirmative tended to resonate with the practitioner who wrote, “Of course, if people cannot get to a venue or space then you’re being exclusive before you start.” Further, 89% of respondents said that they always consider issues of space when preparing to lead a workshop, with 9% indicating that they only sometimes do this. Only one

respondent (who did not provide additional feedback) answered that they do not do this in practice.

These responses indicate that applied drama practitioners are aware of issues around inclusion and the majority actively take steps to work toward this goal, with the result being (based on their observation) that, in practice, applied drama is effective at including ideas/input from all participants. In regard to inclusion, interviewee David Grant expressed:

I think that what's important about applied drama practice is because it's an embodied practice, because it's a practice that balances the power of words with the power of what you see, it can be more inclusive, particularly in environments where people don't have the same kind of formal educational backgrounds.

Grant's response resonates with McEniry's final thoughts on the topic, despite her acknowledgement before regarding not truly being able to know how a given participant feels. She said, "Generally, I do find that working with an applied pedagogy in an applied practice allows more people to speak than any other pedagogy or any other art-making process that I've approached." On this point, the data clearly indicate that when it comes to inclusion, applied drama distinctly favours democratic principles in both theory and practice.

Objective 2: How effective is applied drama at building a sense of community?

As detailed in Chapter Two, community-building is a crucial component of liberal democracy, with David Mathews writing: "If community well-being is related to a habit of working together, people's inability to join together is a serious problem" (99). Power dynamics play into this idea of fostering community (as it is important that power is diffused and shared in creating an egalitarian community) and will also be considered here. While the data for measuring this element of

democracy indicate that the practice is, once again, firmly on the more deeply democratic end of the spectrum, there were complications brought up around the subject of power dynamics that will be addressed more closely in the following section, though it does link in with the practitioners' general agreement around the idea submitted above that no participant is *forced* to do anything and is offered a variety of options for participation (already an indication of power-sharing.) The questions in this part of the survey revolved around community-building, trust-building, and power dynamics. Questions focused on the practitioners' planning and actions within their practice, as well as their impression of the environment(s) within their practice.

Figure 4 shows how effective applied drama is at building a sense of community/comradery amongst participants, based on the respondents' experiences, with an overwhelming 73% indicating "very effective."¹⁰ This resonates with interviewee

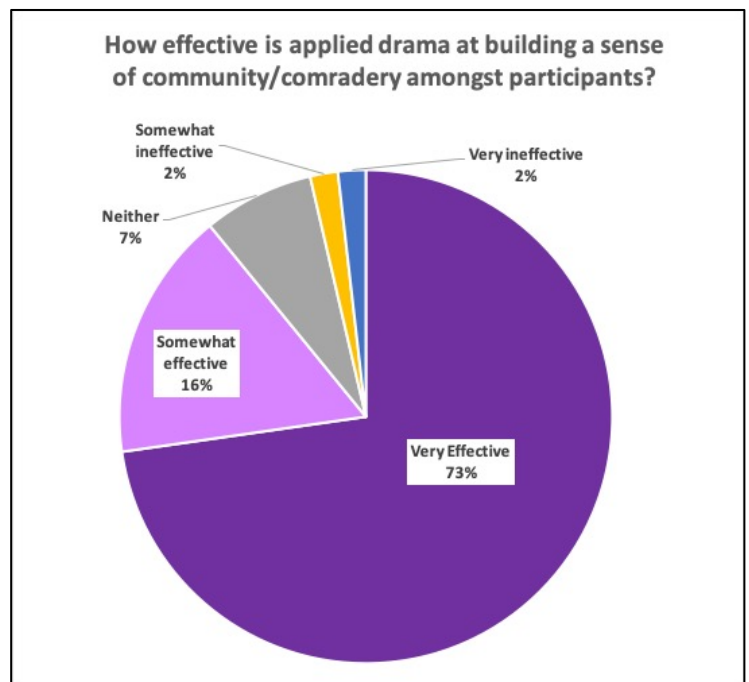


FIG. 4. HOW EFFECTIVE IS APPLIED DRAMA AT BUILDING A SENSE OF COMMUNITY/COMRADERY AMONGST PARTICIPANTS?

Michael Finneran's view when he said, "drama, for me, its power and its potency lies

¹⁰ The one "somewhat ineffective" and one "very ineffective" responses seem to have been mistakes, as the respondents indicated in their open responses that the praxis *was* effective at building community.

in the fact that it's a social art form and it brings people together.” When asked about applied drama’s ability to foster trust among participants (closely related to building a sense of community), once again 89% of respondents said that the praxis was effective in this regard.¹¹ Only one respondent chose “very ineffective” (the same who chose this option for the previous question) and it seems to have been in error once again, as their qualitative feedback indicated that the praxis does build trust and went on to describe how. Respondents who chose “neither effective or ineffective” for both questions indicated that it depended on the purpose of the workshop, and several practitioners asserted that it depended on the facilitator.¹² Once again, the data indicate strongly that applied drama is effective at fostering a sense of community and trust among participants.

According to the survey, over half of the respondents spend 61% or more of their time working on community-building during an initial workshop, with most in that group (27%) indicating that they spend 91–100% of the initial workshop on this crucial element. Many practitioners who chose lower amounts of time indicated that this was because they responded based on the amount of time spent *solely* on community-building. For example, one such practitioner elaborated:

The work I do is not really designed around community building, but I think it still DOES help build community. It does this by creating a space where we can wrestle with difficult issues in an honest way. The use of theatre allows for a degree of distance that allows the audience to deal with these issues (usually related to bias) in a civil way. One thing that does happen (and we try to point

¹¹ Of the 89%, 54% indicated “very effective” and 35% indicated “somewhat effective.”

¹² This idea of the facilitator/facilitation style as being a crucial factor was one of the issues that arose in both the surveys and the interviews that will be explored in greater depth in the following section.

out) is for everyone at the workshop to see the allies they have now established or are now aware of, in the room.

This is supported by another practitioner who asserted that “Even if community-building is not the stated goal it runs through the process.” Activities and exercises in the praxis may accomplish multiple tasks concurrently. For example, an exercise could achieve the goals of community-building *and* gathering ideas/input on a topic of exploration. This was an area of weakness in the survey design and left responses open to wide

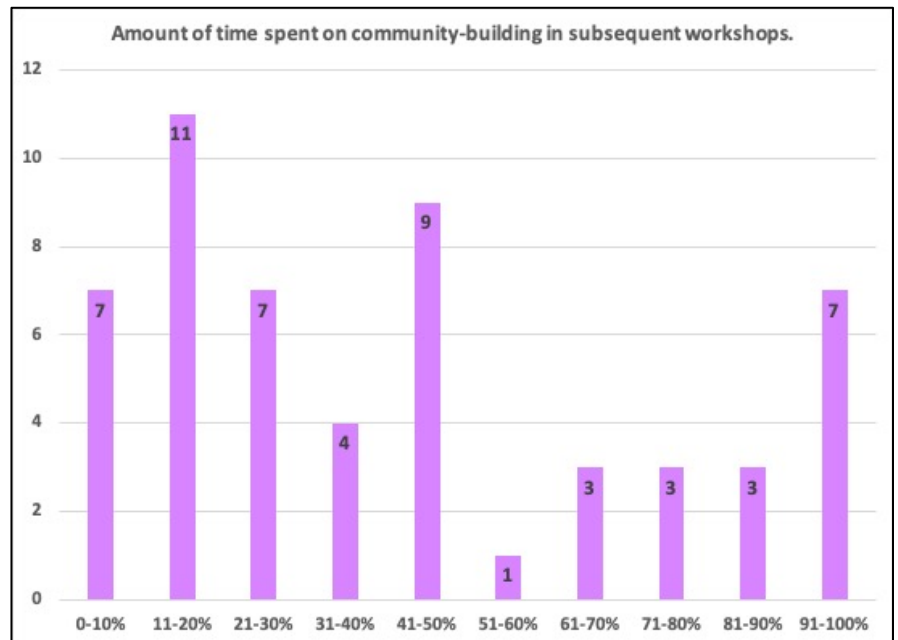


FIG. 5. AMOUNT OF TIME SPENT ON COMMUNITY-BUILDING IN WORKSHOPS AFTER THE FIRST ONE.

interpretation. This is also true of the question regarding time spent on community-building in subsequent workshops (see fig. 5.). Despite the flaw in design, the data still indicate that fostering a sense of community is something that practitioners report devoting a good deal of time to in initial sessions and making space for in subsequent sessions. Further supporting this notion, a Dublin-based practitioner shared that “Groups often start befriending and caring for each other outside of the drama room too. I have observed this in WhatsApp conversations with groups that have formed around applied drama.”

Though issues of power were addressed more clearly in Chapter Three when discussing deliberation, working to achieve and maintain egalitarian power dynamics is a democratic ideal. Mouffe explained:

if we accept that relations of power are constitutive of the social, then the main question for democratic politics is not how to eliminate power but how to constitute **forms of power more compatible with democratic values.** (“Deliberative” 14)

When asked in the survey to speak to the shifts of power within an applied drama setting, 71% of practitioners indicated that the shift in power dynamics in the space generally moved from the facilitator to the participants during the process. These responses indicate a general trend of moving toward an egalitarian form of power-sharing over the course of the sessions. Additionally, 95% of respondents indicated that they have witnessed participants becoming more empowered over the duration of a workshop/project. Of the two practitioners who said they have not witnessed this, one did not elaborate and the other took issue with the term “empowered,” preferring instead the term “agency.” This has revealed an area for improvement in the survey design, as better framing of the meaning/intent of the word “empowered” would have spoken to this issue.

Regarding Objective Two, the results suggest that applied drama praxis is effective at building a sense of trust and community amongst its participants and creating a space in which power can be shared in a more diffused and democratic way with the participants. Reflecting on how communities are built and strengthened in applied drama praxis, interviewee Joe Salvatore explained, “I think that’s part of what’s unique about it is that once people make something together, they are kind of bound to one another in an interesting way.” His assertion speaks to the constant

creation of images, scenes, and so on. that are generated by participants within workshops. Further, interviewee Sergio “Yeyo” Beltrán Arruti disclosed:

I start with the practice of the circle dialogue. We use a talking piece... and the rules of the circle dialogue are: every voice has a space; every voice is as important as any other. We sit in the circle because there's no hierarchy. It could start wherever it starts and finish when it is finished. And we use a talking piece that is passed to each participant in the circle. So, you could also choose not to speak. One of the rules is silence also speaks.

As you can see from his description of his practice, awareness of power is embedded throughout applied drama praxis, notably in building community, though it also becomes highly visible for communication and collaboration in the process as well. Questions around power prompted a majority of the respondents to elaborate further and became a major theme of interrogation by respondents in both the survey and interviews, which will be addressed in greater detail in the following section.

Objective 3: What type of learning, if any, occurs within an applied drama workshop?

As noted in Chapter Two, democracy is bolstered by learning that is collective, reflective, incorporates imagination, allows for ambiguity, and creates opportunities for empathy. Recalling John Dewey’s approach, Richard Bernstein noted:

Deweyan education places a rigorous demand and responsibility on teachers to cultivate the virtues required for a thriving democracy: to cultivate critical habits of thinking; to foster creative imagination; to encourage children to cooperate with, listen to, and learn from others, and to treat their classmates with respect and sensitivity. (“Democracy” 28)

Once again, the data collected indicate that the praxis fosters a highly democratic form of learning. The questions in this part of the survey were more qualitative, allowing for respondents to provide insight into their practice to describe the knowledge building they have witnessed. However, practitioners were also asked

ordinal questions around knowledge building, as well as reflection and reflexivity.

The quantifiable data will be addressed first, followed by the qualitative responses.

To begin interrogating this topic, it felt necessary to discover if practitioners had, in fact, observed knowledge building taking place in their practice. It is notable that not a single practitioner indicated that learning “rarely” or “never” occurred in their experience. Rather, 51% indicated that learning “always” took place, and 42%

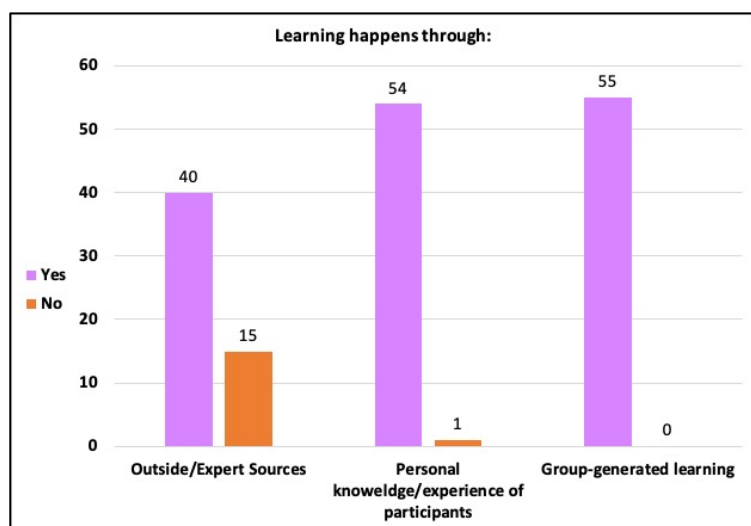


FIG. 6. IN WHAT WAYS DOES KNOWLEDGE CONSTRUCTION TAKE PLACE WITHIN APPLIED DRAMA WORKSHOPS?

indicated that it took place “often.” This suggests that knowledge construction not only takes place in applied drama, but that it is fairly common feature according to respondents’ experiences. Further,

figure 6 displays the ways in which learning occurs within the respondents’ practices, with every practitioner affirming that knowledge construction takes place collectively. This suggests that applied drama is an ideal form of collective knowledge construction, as well as offering opportunities for learning through personal experience and making space for outside narratives.

All respondents indicated that moments of reflection took place within their practice. With respect to the type of reflections, 93% indicated that they incorporate reflection-on-action, 85% indicated that they include reflection-in-action, and 31% indicated that they incorporated some other type of reflection, such as encouraging journaling outside of the workshop setting. The responses indicate that the process

engages deeply in reflection through a variety of means. Regarding reflexivity,¹³ 60% of practitioners indicated that they “always” engage in reflexive behaviour, 35% indicated “often,” and 5% indicated “sometimes.” No respondents said that they “rarely” or “never” engaged in this behaviour. Further, 96% of practitioners indicated that they have witnessed participants engage in this reflexive behaviour. Figure 7 shows the frequency with which those respondents witnessed this, with the overwhelming response being that it occurs frequently. These data support the assertions in Chapter Two that the learning that occurs through applied drama incorporates reflection that then frequently results in some form of meaningful action, which is indicated by the reflexive behaviour reported.

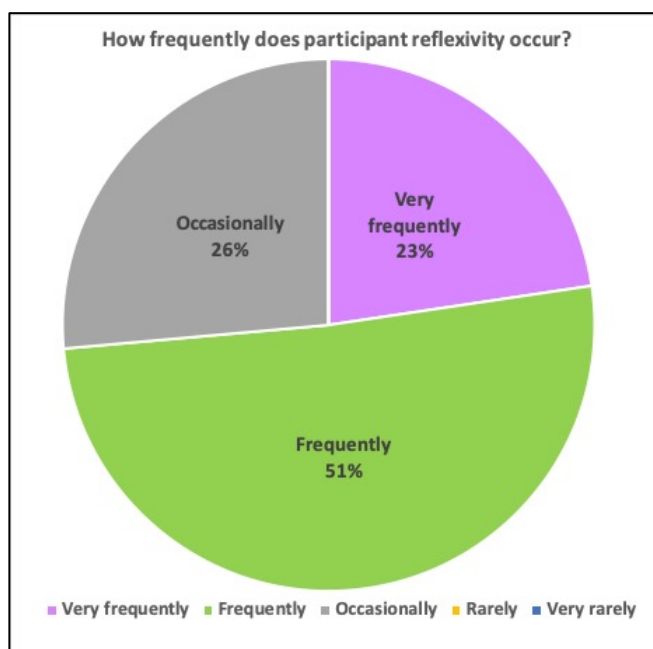


FIG. 7. HOW OFTEN HAVE YOU OBSERVED REFLEXIVE BEHAVIOURS IN YOUR PARTICIPANTS?

The qualitative responses revealed a more comprehensive understanding of what the knowledge building in applied drama *looks* like. Respondents’ descriptions of their work and experience in many ways bolstered the theory of the praxis that was detailed in Chapter Two. It must be noted that several practitioners made a point to differentiate the knowledge building that happens in their practice from any kind of

¹³ Reflexivity is defined in the survey for respondents as taking time to reflect and then taking action based upon the reflection.

“banking” system of learning, highlighting the co-construction that they have experienced. The quotes shared below are representative of all the responses received on the survey, though each practitioner expressed themselves a bit differently.

One respondent described their approach, writing, “Create opportunities to ask questions, have space for doubts and different opinions. Create task without ‘right answer.’” This indicates allowing for ambiguity and Socratic questioning.

Another practitioner observed:

Learning takes place when we consider information from different perspectives. As a facilitator, it’s my job to open up the opportunity to find those different perspectives in the room and open them up for everyone — myself included!

Perspective-taking, which often happens through roleplay, creates an opportunity for participants to empathise with views that are different from their own, which bolsters democratic learning. Additionally, there were many responses that resonated with the idea that “Embodied and physical learning allows them [participants] different ways to examine issues.” This emphasis on embodied learning through dramatic play points to the incorporation of imagination, bolstered by another response that framed it as follows, “Often it is unplanned, micro moments of realisation through powerful collisions between real worlds and fictional worlds.” This idea of the “unplanned” speaks to the flexibility of the form to adapt to the participants in the room. This flexibility is afforded by the reflexive nature of the praxis.¹⁴ Aiding in that, one practitioner offered:

I end every session with a chat back. Sometimes it's based on a prompt designed to make thinking visible such as ‘I used to think.... but now I think...’ or a ritual like ‘leave something here that no

¹⁴ Please refer to Chapter Two and reflexivity as a guiding principle of the praxis.

longer serves you and take something positive with you that bubbled up for you today.’

This idea of “making thinking visible” resonates with embodied learning and will arise again when looking at the communication that takes place within applied drama settings.

The data collected around knowledge building and reflection/reflexivity strongly support the theory detailed in Chapter Two, which is consistent with most of the published authors in the field also being practitioners. Importantly, this means that the praxis does offer an ideal space for democratic learning within the workshop setting. A respondent based in Norway explained:

Aesthetic (learning) processes are never straightforward. Ideal encounters of diverse ideas and utterances secure co-ownership but also bring necessarily tension, resistance, disagreement.

This response acknowledges that the approach to knowledge building within the praxis creates space for disagreement and tension — something that is important for deliberation, which is what the next three objectives look at more closely.

Objective 4: What is the quality of communication within an applied drama workshop?

With communication and dialogue being at the heart of deliberation, this objective seeks to better understand what that looks like in real applied drama settings to evaluate if it is compatible with the ideal deliberative approach outlined in Chapter Three, which calls for the inclusion of a wide range of communication styles.¹⁵ The questions in this part of the survey sought to uncover the quality of communication within workshop settings based on the experiences of the

¹⁵ See Young. *Inclusion and Democracy*. (Oxford University Press, 2000) and Romney “The Art of Dialogue.” *Animating Democracy* (2003)

practitioners surveyed, including communicative approaches and the quality of listening that takes place. Data outlined earlier on reflection and inclusion will be referred to, as they both also play a role within this objective. The overall results for this objective point to applied drama as being an exemplary process for fostering an effective communicative environment that welcomes a variety of communication styles, encourages participation and deep listening, and incorporates opportunities for reflection.

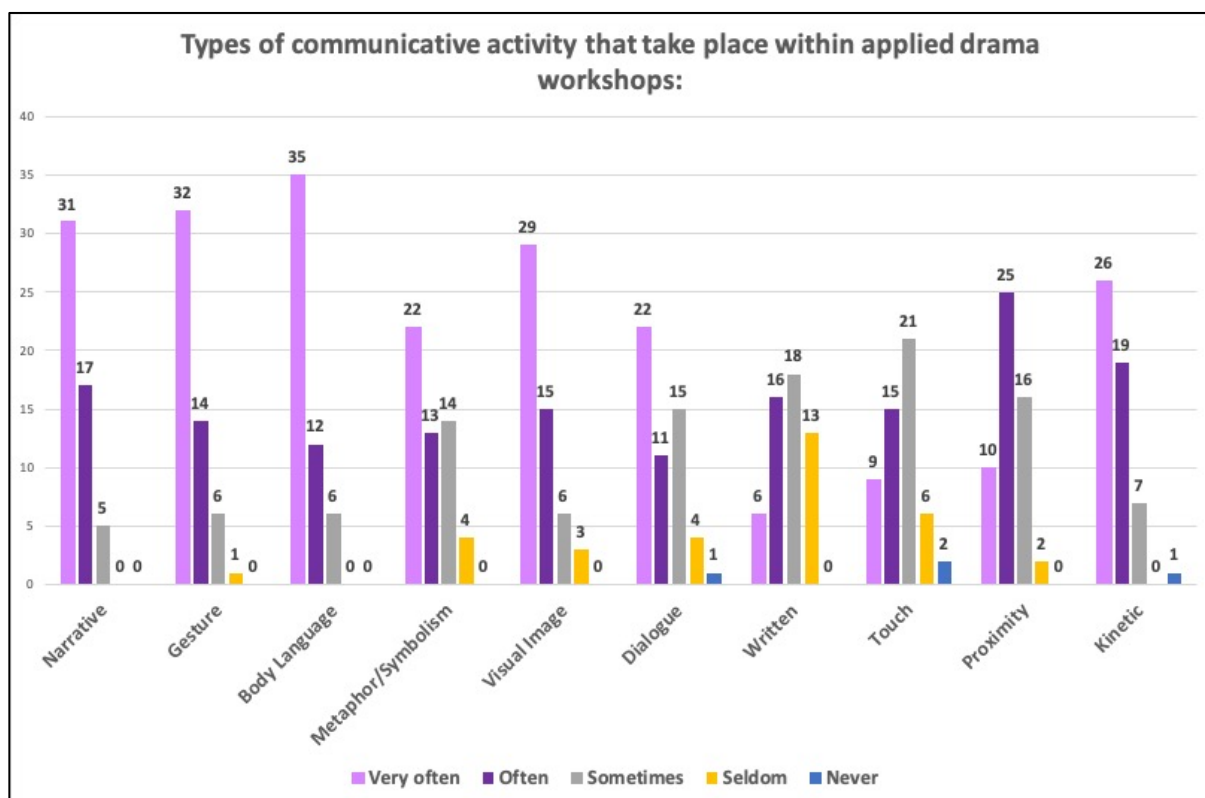


FIG. 8. WHICH OF THE FOLLOWING TYPES OF COMMUNICATIVE ACTIVITY TAKE PLACE IN A TYPICAL APPLIED DRAMA WORKSHOP THAT YOU WOULD FACILITATE? (TWO RESPONDENTS REPLIED “NEVER” FOR ALL RESPONSES, THEIR RESPONSES ARE NOT INCLUDED IN THE CHART ABOVE)

In the survey, the practitioners were given a list of different types of communicative activities and asked to indicate which of those activities they used in their own practice. The bar chart in figure 8 conveys that most respondents indicated that they incorporate all these various modes into their workshops “often” or “very often,” accentuating a truly polyphonic communicative approach. Further, the chart

in figure 9 makes clear that applied drama practitioners also offer a variety of focus levels for communication to take place, from partner work that takes place one-to-one, to opportunities for expression with the entire group. This is an important aspect, as it provides opportunities to individuals who may not feel comfortable expressing themselves in front of everyone, but who might operate well in lower-focus situations. While the balance between shifting from one level to another might be different with each practitioner, the chart indicates that there is a high degree of flexibility in this regard. When asked to describe the communication that takes place within their workshops, respondents wrote: “the entire experience is

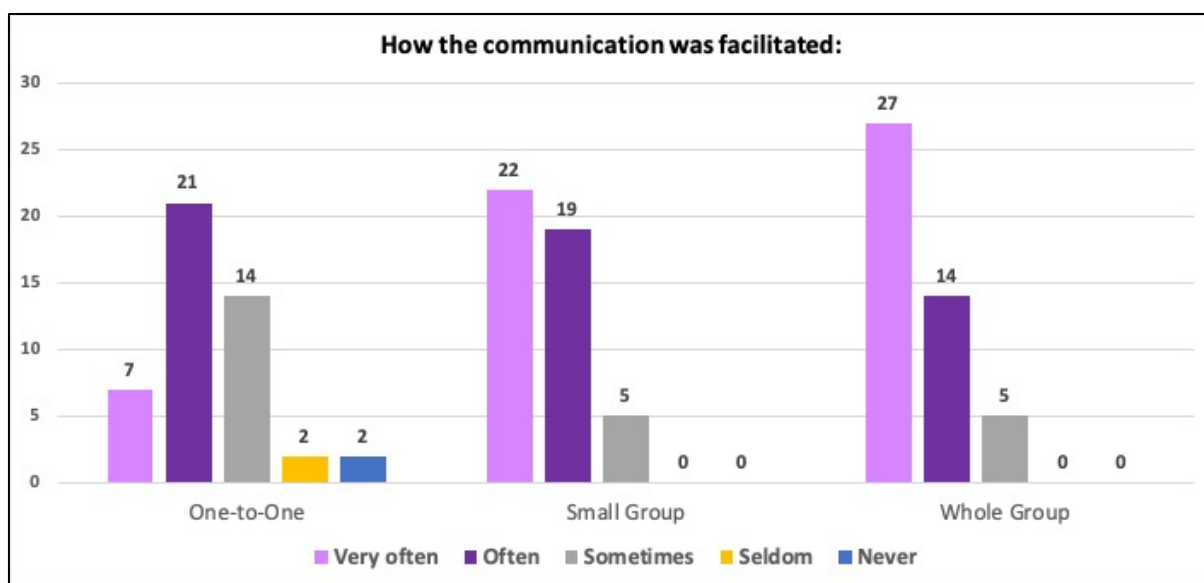


FIG. 9. HOW DO YOU FACILITATE COMMUNICATION WITHIN WORKSHOPS YOU LEAD? (TWO RESPONDENTS REPLIED “NEVER” FOR ALL RESPONSES, THEIR RESPONSES ARE NOT INCLUDED IN THE CHART ABOVE)

an opportunity for expression;” “communication in drama is always a whole-body experience — words, actions, interactions, movements, talk, speech, sound [...] intellectual and emotional;” and “writing, drawing, speaking, movement, tableaux/statues, pairs, small group, whole group activities. We repeat some of those

more than others, but usually draw from all at least once over the course of a program.” These descriptions of practice support the data presented in both figures 8 and 9, indicating that applied drama settings tend to offer participants an array of communicative options.

As to listening, a key element of communication, 98% of respondents ranked the level of listening that took place in their workshops at a six or higher, with 67% indicating eight or higher.¹⁶ The bar

chart in figure 10 clearly indicates that respondents claim that high levels of engaged listening taking place within their workshops.

Additionally, forty-nine respondents (89%) marked that their participants have expressed to them the significance of being

heard/listened to within the

setting.¹⁷ Many respondents made a point in their qualitative responses to say that

they actively incorporate activities that emphasise deep listening early within a

workshop to highlight the importance of receiving what others are communicating,

whether verbally or nonverbally. When asked about what they have heard from their

own workshop participants regarding this notion, respondents wrote: “Participants

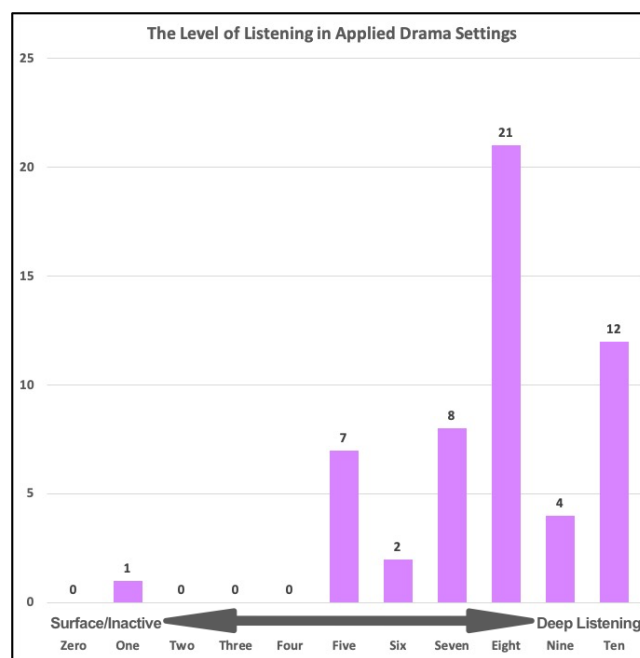


FIG. 10. HOW WOULD YOU DESCRIBE THE LEVEL OF LISTENING THAT OCCURS WITHIN APPLIED DRAMA WORKSHOPS?

¹⁶ The respondent that indicated “one” appears to have mistakenly indicated the wrong number as their qualitative response explicitly stated, “Participants listening to each other is valued.”

¹⁷ Given the variety of nonverbal communicative modes, this also translates into feeling seen as well, expressed by many respondents in their qualitative responses.

have often expressed that they have felt heard and that they can express themselves within workshops;” “have had participants say they felt deeply respected and heard. I’ve also had participants say there were moments when they didn’t feel heard by group members or other participants;” “people feel that they are witnessed with less judgement than some other settings;” and “Participants have told me that they felt cared for in the way someone listened [...] That because of the quality of the listening they could say things and discover things they didn’t realise they had within them.” While most of the feedback was positive as to participants feeling seen/heard, it is important to acknowledge that no process is infallible. The respondent who shared that some participants pointed to moments where they did *not* feel seen/heard, while in the small minority within this survey, was not alone. In a praxis that actively seeks to work with people *where they are* and allow space for them to be *human* (with whatever might be going on with them on a given day or moment), it is inevitable that there will be occasions on which someone may not feel heard/seen. Acknowledging this, it is in moments like these that the facilitation of the process becomes even more important to open new and more opportunities for genuine communicative exchange.¹⁸

What was revealed about *how* communication takes place within the practice of the applied drama practitioners surveyed and the typically rich levels of listening that occur within those settings point to applied drama as having the capacity to generate the type of dialogue and communication needed within deliberative democratic settings. Combining these findings with those around inclusion and

¹⁸ Facilitation style will be interrogated further later in this chapter.

reflection (in the first two objectives), the data become even more straightforward.

An Irish practitioner summed up the overall quality of communication within applied drama saying, “At best, communication can be enhanced through the affective and somatic capacity of drama. At worst, it remains as it would in any other teaching and learning context.” This observation suggests that the incorporation of applied drama has the capacity to raise levels of expression and communication within settings or leave them as they would be otherwise, but, importantly, not to worsen them. This is something to keep in mind even with the overwhelming response from the practitioners surveyed indicating that the quality of communication is generally very rich in these settings.

Objective 5: How well does an applied drama workshop foster collaboration amongst participants?

This objective gets to heart of bringing people together in a meaningful way that allows for genuine co-construction and creative problem-solving. Additionally, strong collaboration makes space for Mouffe’s agonistic pluralism by “providing channels through which collective passions will be given ways to express themselves over issues which, while allowing enough possibility for identification, will not construct the opponent as an enemy but as an adversary” (Mouffe, *Democratic Paradox* 103). Broadly, the results indicate that applied drama is effective at encouraging collaboration amongst participants. The questions in this part of the survey revolved around collaboration and creative problem-solving. However, elements of trust also play a role in collaboration, and the data collected around that topic will be referred to in assessing this objective.

When asked about collaboration, respondents all indicated that collaboration is encouraged through the praxis, with most selecting “frequently” or “very

frequently” for how often this occurred. A Boston-based practitioner emphasised that “every aspect of the work is designed to foster a sense of connection and shared purpose, respect for each person's contribution and activities that emphasize collaboration rather than competition.” This sentiment is repeated by all respondents in various ways, emphasising the collective ethos of their practice. With creative problem-solving the results were similar, with 51% indicating that it

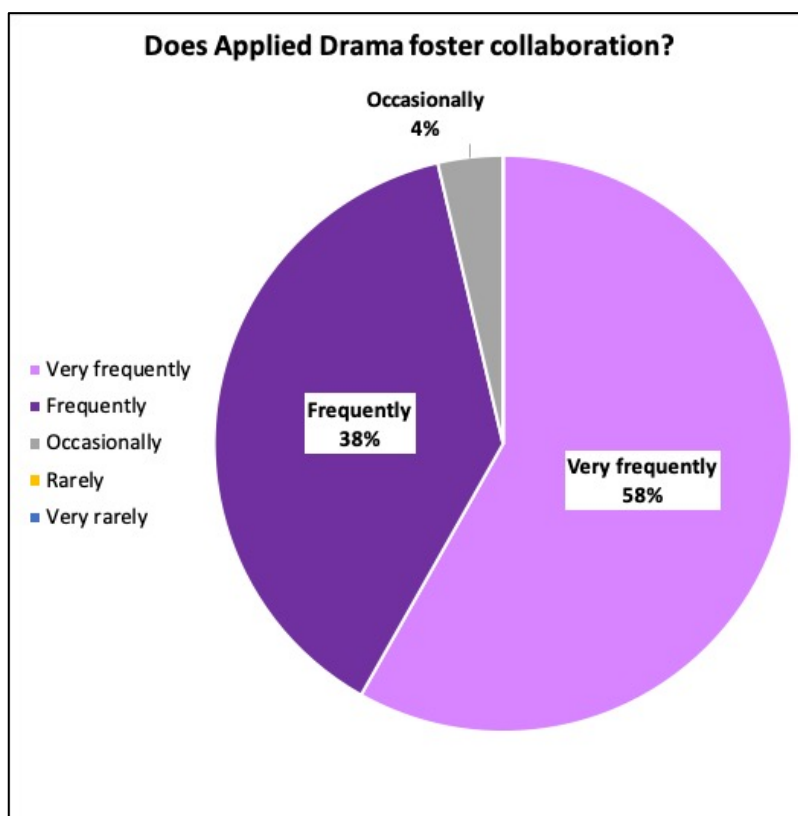


FIG. 11. IN YOUR EXPERIENCE, DOES APPLIED DRAMA FOSTER COLLABORATION?

occurred “very frequently,” 38% indicating “frequently,” and 11% indicating “occasionally.” Though six respondents indicated “occasionally,” only one elaborated, writing that “Every drama exercise involves a degree of problem-

solving.” While this is a bit confusing in terms of their decision to only select “occasionally,” their written sentiment reflects the larger trend that the praxis does generate creative problem-solving. Figure 12 displays how practitioners responded regarding how problems are typically solved within groups and how frequently each of the options occurs, according to respondents’ experiences. The chart reveals that issues that arise can be solved through a variety of means within the praxis:

compromise, trying out multiple ideas through active drama-based work, and a solution organically unfolding through the course of the drama-based work. This further displays the flexibility of the praxis.

An issue that arose primarily through the interviews, but which can also be seen in the qualitative responses on the survey, was working through issues regarding participants who hold extreme or hateful positions,

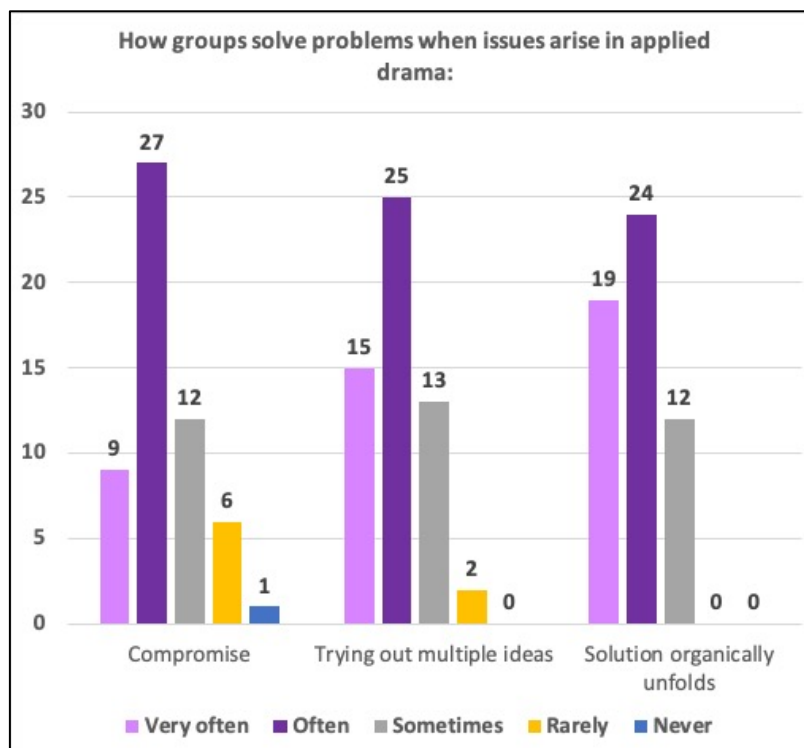


FIG. 12. HOW HAVE YOU OBSERVED YOUR PARTICIPANTS SOLVE PROBLEMS WHEN THEY ARISE WITHIN THE WORKSHOP?

leading to contention within the setting.¹⁹ No data was collected on how frequently this occurs, but the qualitative data reveal that it does happen and speaks to how practitioners respond within the applied drama setting. As this is something that is likely to occur more frequently within political settings, especially in the ever-increasingly polarised political atmospheres of the twenty-first century, this is an area that will be investigated more thoroughly in the following section.

The results from this part of the survey, combined with the positive results regarding trust-building, indicate that collaboration and creative problem-solving are

¹⁹ These positions are based on what the facilitator and participants within the workshops find to be extreme or hateful.

fostered within applied drama settings. Not only are these processes encouraged in applied drama settings, but also the way they are encouraged indicates that the praxis would be effective for the type of collaboration needed within deliberative settings outlined in Chapter Three. Speaking to the process as one that is a continuous collaborative enterprise, one respondent wrote:

By investing time into community creation and trust, you strengthen the bonds required for true collaborative creation and therefore the group can withstand the pressures of the process and/or production. They also tend to want to stay together to create more maybe within other art forms, but the main thing is that they wish to do it together.

The reference to withstanding the pressures of the process sheds light on the complexities and difficulties that most processes experience, whether it is dealing with a tough problem that has come up, determining the best way forward as a group, or resolving tensions between individuals within the group. However, there is an emphasis on withstanding those pressures, suggesting that the process does indeed, in their experience, offer a way of working through because of the emphasis that exists on community-building and trust. Two other practitioners affirmed this, writing: “People learn to trust each other with small and apparently trivial shared tasks, and then realise that this can be taken into their day-to-day world” and “If you have a group that trusts each other meaningful and constructive communication can be reached.” This relates back to Dewey’s notion that:

To cooperate by giving differences a chance to show themselves because of the belief that the expression of difference is not only a right of the other persons but is a means of enriching one’s own life-experience, is inherent in the democratic personal way of life.
(*Vol. 14* 228)

Additionally, while compromise *is* used to address issues/problems, it is not the only tool that is offered through the process and, according to figure 12, it isn’t the only or

even the most frequently used method for addressing issues — exposing more potential for holding space for Mouffe’s agonistic pluralism.

Objective 6: How effective is an applied drama workshop for allowing participants to empathise with each other?

The questions related to this final objective look at both empathy and respect, as both were found to be crucial for deliberation. The data in this section is much more qualitative, however the quantifiable data will be used as a springboard for the investigation of this objective. The need to take a closer look at highly contentious moments and facilitation in the following section will become even more evident within the context of respect and empathy. However, taken together, all the data still suggest that applied drama can create spaces that are generally respectful and

encourage the process of empathy. This is critical because “An intersubjective agreement among deliberators, or even a common framework on which to premise future cooperation, requires that we view others’ personalities and behaviors as being as complex as our own” (Morrell, *Empathy* 109).

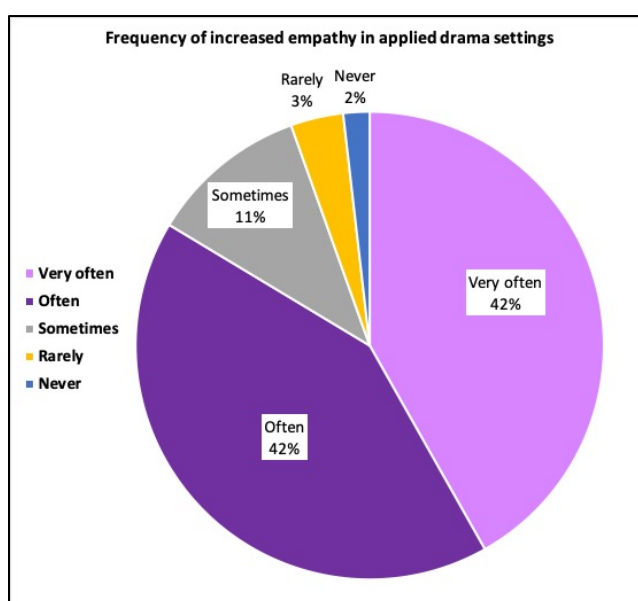


FIG. 13. HOW OFTEN HAVE YOU OBSERVED AN INCREASE IN EMPATHY WITHIN APPLIED DRAMA WORKSHOPS

When asked about the frequency with which they noticed increased empathy within their workshops, 84% of practitioners indicated that it occurred “very often” or

“often.”²⁰ The overwhelming response was that practitioners were observing changes in participant behaviour and/or actively being told by participants that they understood something new about another’s perspective, they were moved by other’s situations, and their behaviour/actions have changed as a result. When asked to elaborate on how empathy was expressed, practitioners explained: “Spectactors²¹ who come from an Oppressor background standing in for an oppressed person and then saying, ‘Wow. That was hard... I had no idea how hard that would be;’” “Participants getting very still and quiet during a scene where a character is targeted by bullying or oppression. Expressing anger at their mistreatment. Being excited for ideas about how to help a character being mistreated;” “Usually it takes the form of the group members expressing more care for one another. Expressing more patience for one another’s opinions, quirks, and needs;” “Within one particular project in the North Inner City, it manifested itself in the group creating care packages for rough sleepers based on their research of what was useful to them;” and “Reactions turned into response. Arguments turned into questions. Orders turned into offers.” Though measuring empathy in any circumstance is difficult, facilitators can observe empathic behaviours exhibited through the actions of participants. What emerges through the qualitative responses is that the workshop settings allow for changes in perspectives and a more nuanced approach to investigating the topic at hand.

²⁰ The one practitioner who indicated “never” was adamant that empathy was a wholly internal process and that he was therefore unable to witness it. While empathy is an internal process, based on general empathy research and the view of empathy adopted by this research, there is an understanding that it can be expressed in a tangible way, through verbal acknowledgement and actions.

²¹ Spectactors is a term from Augusto Boal’s Theatre of the Oppressed techniques that describes participants within workshop settings who are both acting within the space and observing others.

Respect within a group setting is an important quality that makes space for the process of empathy to occur. 95% of respondents indicated that applied drama settings are “always” or “often” respectful (see fig. 14.). Practitioners that indicated “sometimes” primarily noted the “tension, resistance, [and] disagreements” that can arise through the work. Though these tensions were brought up in the qualitative responses of practitioners who responded “always” and “often” as well, it is the personal judgments of each practitioner as to how they weighed the level of respect still present within the space. However, as expressed above, the qualitative responses make it clear that this is an area that needs to be interrogated further, especially considering the desire to use applied drama within potentially polarised political environments. Elaborating on the idea of respect, practitioners wrote: “Everyone is always really respectful and supportive of everyone else, even if we don’t always agree’ is a VERY common reflection I read from students;” “seeing others stepping outside their comfort zone usually builds courage and respect;” “Respect is negotiated in an opening contract with participants that can be revisited throughout the project;” and “The use of theatre allows for a degree of distance that allows the audience to deal with these issues (usually related to bias) in a civil way.” These responses represent the more common occurrence of respect within the workshop setting; however, it is crucial not to ignore the moments of disrespect.

When it came to expressing experiences around disrespect, practitioners relayed: “we do take our own contract (created in first session) seriously and explore incidences of disrespect as a group;” “Disrespect is the exception rather than the norm;” and “The majority are respectful, because the majority of facilitators and participants are respectful. I have been present on many occasions when this is not

the case, unfortunately. Particularly with facilitators who are on a superman mission

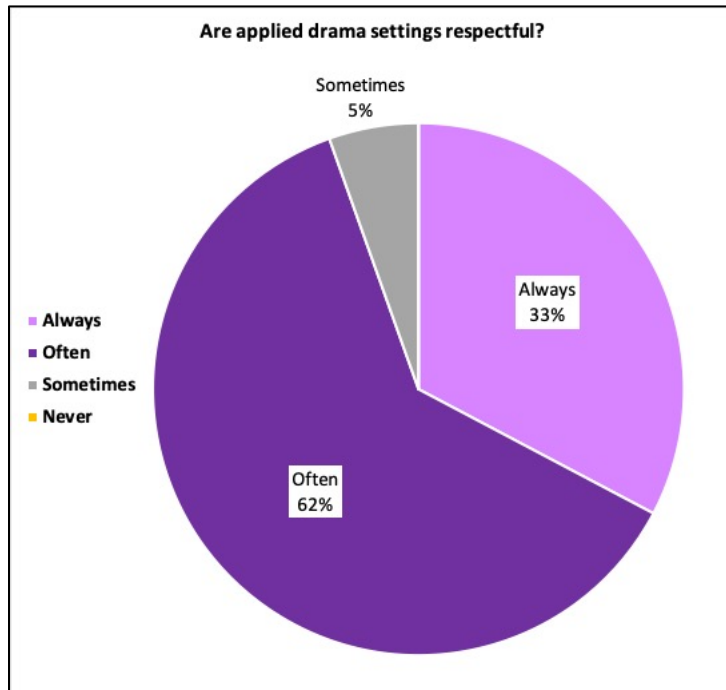


FIG. 14. IN YOUR EXPERIENCE, ARE APPLIED DRAMA SETTINGS RESPECTFUL ENVIRONMENTS?

and sometimes with participants who just do not want to be present.” Though it becomes clear that occasions of disrespect are rare, they are nevertheless extremely important, and as the last response makes clear, the facilitator plays a key role in establishing and maintaining a respectful environment. A

Canadian-based practitioner summed it up this way:

It is well understood that community arts is a messy business, which is compounded when dealing with issues of social justice. Between the participants' prior histories/experiences with one another and with the theme, and with conflicts that arise in the making of a show, there will inevitably be fissures and explosions and occasionally feelings of personal attacks, betrayals and injustices.

How these “messy” moments are navigated becomes crucial to the integrity of the process, as it affects communication, social cohesion, and the ability to collaborate.

On this objective, the results indicate that applied drama is suited to creating generally respectful environments (even when dealing with contentious ideas) and encourages the process of empathy amongst participants. This suggests that the praxis would be able to support the type of deliberative atmosphere described in Chapter Three as being optimal. This is not without its caveats, however. As has been

evidenced throughout the exploration of all the objectives, there is a need to look more closely at power dynamics within the space, moments of heated contention, and most importantly, the facilitation style needed to support the fully realised practice of Creative Democracy.

A Closer Look

Analysing the qualitative survey and interview data, it became clear that the context in which applied drama work is taking place affects where on the spectrum of democracy a given workshop might be. While none of the respondents described the praxis as moving fully into an authoritarian or hierarchical structure, there were specific contexts described in which power-sharing may not go as far as others. The aspect of sharing power within the space can be hampered by the context of working with young people and/or within a prison setting, as these spaces tend to have very strict rules and regulations that are imposed upon both the practitioner and the participants involved. However, some aspects of the process consistently remained deeply democratic according to the data, such as inclusion within the space, the building of social cohesion, and democratic learning.

Most of the practitioners who took part in this study work in a variety of contexts, constantly moving between them and adjusting their facilitation to meet the needs of each. Many of these different frameworks have best practices articulated around them to help guide practitioners in shifting between contexts, especially when they are just getting started. This highlights the need for best practice to be articulated within the context of Creative Democracy as well, to enhance the democratic qualities of the praxis. The first step is to take a closer look at the themes

emerging from the study that might further complicate achieving the ideals of democratisation and deliberation (as outlined in Chapter Three).

This section will take a closer look at the three areas of complication that arose through the qualitative data analysis from the survey and interviews. The exploration will begin with aspects of power dynamics and then look at those moments of high contention and disagreement. It becomes quite clear from the data that facilitation style is pivotal to these precarious issues, which are laden with responsibility and possibility. Finally, there will be an examination of approaches to facilitation articulated by the respondents in the study.

Power

The issue of power (as raised in the survey) was a contentious one, and some respondents did not feel comfortable using the term, preferring to use the words “responsibility,” “care,” and/or “guidance” instead. However, whatever a practitioner wants to call it, a facilitator leading a workshop for the purpose of engaging in democratic deliberation must consider issues of power dynamics. In the last chapter, a theoretical understanding was established that applied drama can encourage relationships of power that are more in line with democratic values. This is done by acknowledging the wider power relations in and outside the space, and then leaning into the guiding principles of the praxis, which allow for a messier and more egalitarian power dynamic. While this was revealed to be possible through the survey and interviews, it was also disclosed to be quite challenging in practice and deserving of further attention. To explore this further, the idea of power will be broken down into two aspects: (1) fostering a more equitable flow of power within the space; and

(2) contending with the existing hierarchies of power outside the space and how applied drama works to break down and transform non-egalitarian power relations.

With respect to power or control within the workshop space, the consensus from the practitioners who took part in this study was that the facilitator of the workshop starts out holding most of the power within the space. This is due in large part to their expertise of the form and role in guiding participants through the process. However, many practitioners also pointed out the power held by participants — since participants have the power of choosing whether to be present,²² whether to engage, and their level of engagement. While not every practitioner agreed completely about where the power rested at the start of a workshop, they all agreed with Rachel Rhoades's assertion that "from really early on you're trying to share that power as much as possible." Rhoades elaborated further, explaining:

I feel like it's always driven by what people are sharing and then it's kind of my role to give some different theatrical tools and say what do you think about this or this way to explore this further and then eventually it gets to a point where people are like, 'Oh well let's try this out or this out' because they're already familiar enough with those theatrical tools. So, I think they're always somewhat in control.

Initially, the power-sharing comes in the form of the participants choosing the topics for exploration, with the facilitator engaging in games with the group as an equal participant. However, in line with Rhoades's experience above, the other interviewees also spoke of participants becoming more comfortable with the form and taking more ownership of the process. Jenny Macdonald mused that "So, you start to realise that

²² While this is not true for every context and is described as such, it would hold true for Creative Democracy.

there's so much in the room that I'm delightfully becoming irrelevant ... I think sometimes your job as a facilitator is to get to that point.”

With facilitators actively seeking to co-create and work in a co-intentional manner, the outcome is that the power within the space is constantly in flux: sometimes with the facilitator, sometimes with a group sharing out, sometimes with an individual within the group, and sometimes diffused through the circle-led or small group work. This is in keeping with the US-based practitioner who said, “I try to discourage static/fixed leadership roles and encourage a more messy and emergent kind of non-hierarchical collaboration.” With the goal being that the dynamics of power are constantly shifting within the space, facilitation style becomes extremely important — even more so when considering that quite a few respondents made a point to say that not every practitioner works to diffuse power in this way. Those who take up the mantle of Creative Democracy must be willing and able to do so. This will be investigated further when looking at facilitation style. The next section discusses how the wider power relations outside of the workshop are contended with.

Concerning the power structures present outside the walls of a workshop, a survey respondent eloquently wrote, “the workshop space doesn’t exist outside of all of the inequitable structures and cultures that can lead to diminished trust and disrespect in the first place.” Rhoades taps into this idea when she asserted her preference for the term “brave space” as acknowledging the wider power dynamics and working to create a space in which participants can recognise harm when it happens and call it out. She elaborated:

I just state that there are always power dynamics instead of shying away from it and acting like it's going to be the same experience to share one's life from one person to the next. That's not necessarily

the case because there's different levels of marginality, danger, risk, everything. So, I feel like first before we even get to that question you have to have a really considerate discussion about, like, what are the attitudes and behaviours that we need so that you can even share anything with each other. And that list looks different based on the group.

What she is describing is the process that almost all respondents expressed engaging in, which is the creation of a social contract with the participants at the start of a session. Though not all respondents asserted that they pointedly bring up the issue of power dynamics, the creation of this social contract is a subtle tactic that works to upend, disrupt, and call out those outside relations of power.

Further interfering with outside power relations are the guiding principles that underpin the praxis. An embodied and polyphonic approach to communication is demonstrated in Macdonald's description of her practice:

I would use a lot of image theatre, a lot of body-based work. I often ask people to try to do things without speaking because I think the verbal, in our hierarchies, is very dominant, so if too much of the communication is verbal people who speak the dominant language as a mother-tongue dominate and people who tend to be intellectually confident dominate. I love exercises where those hierarchies are inverted and things need to be expressed through the body, through movement, or through image.

The disruption of existing hierarchies through somatic expression is exemplified through Scoriah's relaying of an occurrence within one of her workshops:

I had them all standing in a circle and asked everyone to make a body shape that represented being included. One guy who's very academic and very high status said, 'I don't know what you're talking about. How do I do that?' And a woman in the group who's a dancer and is dyslexic looked across the room and said to him, 'Welcome to my world. Every time someone asks me to explain things in words, I have the response that you have.'

Leaning into an embodied practice and polyphonic communication allows for disruption within existing hierarchies and creates space for new knowledge

production. Disruption also occurs by constantly shifting from working in pairs to small groups (of various sizes) to the whole group flexibly, allowing opportunities across the spectrum from high to low focus. This creates space for more participants to have an opportunity to express themselves in the workshop. Additionally, the choice expressed by so many practitioners to work in circles, such as the circle dialogue that Beltrán Arruti described, is an active choice made to diffuse power within the space.

The way in which the praxis contends with and disrupts existing power relations, while also working to disperse the held power within the room, is a complex dynamic and must be handled with care. The significance of the role and responsibility of the facilitator becomes evident when grappling with these concerns, which are paramount for achieving greater democratisation within the praxis. This will also be shown to be the case when working with groups within which views are expressed that participants feel are egregious, and working through these moments of tension and disrespect.

Contentious Moments

Although only about a third of the respondents remarked upon moments of contention or disrespect within the workshop setting, it became an interesting point of discussion within the interviews. Through analysing the responses around this topic two major threads emerged: (1) addressing the potential for sizable conflict and constructively working through and across it in the early stages of the workshop; and (2) how to continue to work through moments of disrespect/harm in a productive, inclusive way. Both threads further the case for the importance of the facilitator to create a space that allows for the clash of ideas without disrespect or harm to

participants, and to navigate carefully the moments in which disrespect flares up. The concept of frontloading the workshops to effectively manoeuvre the sharing of diverse and divergent ideas without incivility will be addressed first, followed by examining how practitioners have successfully negotiated moments in which conflicting ideas progress into harm or disrespect.

Holding space for conflicting ideas in a respectful way is a prominent characteristic of applied drama. This is highlighted in the survey by nearly all respondents remarking upon the importance of creating space for diverse ideas and opinions, which makes it notable that only about a third mentioned moments of disrespect or harm. Why are those occurrences far less frequent? The answer, as indicated by survey respondents and interviewees, lies in the process: how community-building, communication exchange, and knowledge building occur through it.

The creation of social contracts, referred to above in discussing power dynamics, was found to be the common practice when beginning to work with a new group. As discussed, when addressing issues of power dynamics, this set of agreements is created for the purpose of generating a space that allows for the sharing of ideas in a respectful way; importantly, it is a living document which can be updated throughout the process. A survey respondent laid out why this is important: “because participants are bringing their own lives and ideas into these spaces, there’s the very real opportunity for a participant to hurt another participant through their words or actions.” Preempting the potential for disrespect by creating a set of collectively generated agreements is a powerful but gentle start to establishing a

space in which differing opinions can be expressed respectfully. The effect of this is highlighted by a Minnesota-based practitioner, who relayed:

It can also be very important to remember that we speak in draft (rather than perfectly revised and crafted speech), but impact matters. I was in one moment where a white student had made a sort of blanket statement about Black people that a Black student found upsetting. Because of the agreements we had in place, the Black student felt comfortable naming that moment, and the white student apologized immediately. I'm glad we had the agreements in place, because they helped the Black student understand that the white student was not speaking out of malice, and it also helped the white student to realize they had caused harm by what they said and to own their impact. We were able to proceed forward.

How the social contract is generated is also important. McEniry impressed the importance of really questioning what participants need to feel able to express themselves, saying, “do we really want to say assume best intentions? Or do we want to say this instead?” Urging participants to decide together how they would like to work collectively by focusing on what is needed for everyone. Will Weigler noted that he prefers the term “promises,” explaining, “A list of rules can feel like an imposition upon us that that we need to obey, and the rebels among us can feel that rules are meant to be broken, but this alternative phrasing makes the activity relational.” What Weigler expresses here regarding relationality was also emphasised by the others — the idea that the group has ownership of these agreements or promises together. In describing her approach to generating a social contract, Rhoades also touched upon how communication and knowledge production occur within the space, saying, “But first there has to be something really silly. Then you make the community agreement so people are having fun, just like getting out of their comfort zone.” Her reference to the games and exercises used within the praxis leads to the next way in which applied drama pre-empts disrespectful encounters.

Earlier, the idea was articulated that aesthetic processes are never straightforward, meaning that there is no binary within the process of what might be “right” or what might be “wrong.” The process allows participants to wade into ambiguous territory and hold many ideas at once for reflection. Scoria emphasised, “We are not looking for answers and we’re certainly not looking for quick answers. We’re looking to explore.” Games that get people working together that do not contain a “right” or “wrong” binary within them help participants become more comfortable with ambiguity, making space for a wider range of diverse ideas to emerge. Additionally, practitioners generally emphasised that exercises are rooted in working toward a common goal. Scoria elaborated on this point, saying, “we’re working to express something together, and sometimes it takes people awhile to get out of their very egocentric Western way of doing things. Which is ‘this is all about me’, but I think that happens quicker in a drama setting.” Macdonald spoke to this idea of getting participants out of old habits by saying, “that’s one of the things you really consider from the start — what activities are you going to plan and how to allow for people really listening to one another, and again, it doesn’t happen by accident because we don’t do it in society very well at all, right?” Layering in games and exercises which have no “right” answer, encouraging working toward a common goal, and creating opportunities for listening/taking in what others are expressing allows participants to continue to engage despite differences of opinion.²³ Macdonald phrased it this way: “looking at it through physicality and embodiment and image-based work allows everybody to really participate in a nuanced sense of discovery. It’s

²³ This resonates with Jennifer S. Hartley’s experience working with torturers and torture victims relayed in Chapter Two.

an exploration, not a competition. No one has to win.” Rhoades shared a story of a project she led in which participants held extremely divergent views, and yet, through the process of applied drama they were able to continue engaging:

I'm thinking of the group of refugees that I worked with. One woman was born-again Christian, who proselytized all the time. Always encouraging people to read the Bible and love God and everything. And instead of that being something that shut other people down or caused antagonism — because there were other folks who were like my life has been incredibly frustrating, how can there be a God if you took my children from me, you know, like those are like intensely oppositional views. But instead it was that we just told both peoples' stories and didn't bring in judgment. It was more about getting to the essence of what helps people to survive and move through the world and be able to thrive despite struggles. So, the point isn't to evaluate a person.

Her experience imparts how space is made for a wide range of opinions through the exercises and activities used in the process. Each survey respondent, in their own way, expressed using the drama-based games and activities within and throughout their practice, which could account for two-thirds of respondents not mentioning moments of disrespect within the space, and aligns with the theory of the praxis articulated in Chapter Two. However, those moments can still happen, because nothing is certain when working with human beings.

Within quite of a few of the interviews, practitioners reflected on moments of disrespect that had occurred within their practice in ways that exposed deep thought around the subject and expressed a continual effort to work through this “tricky territory,” in the words of Macdonald. While not every person who was interviewed had experienced an outright moment of disrespect within the space, several had and were willing to share their experiences and how they worked through them. Weigler recalled:

I was working one day with actors on centres of energy and of the idea of how one can embody the way another person walks or speaks in a way that honours them. One of the young men said, 'well, I can show you how a gay guy walks' and he did this clichéd, flamboyant swishy walk. This was problematic for all of us, particularly for our gay participant in the group. I dialled down into it and said, 'let's take a look at that' and we wound up building an exploration of what it might be like to be a queer teenager in the 1980s... It was a teaching moment and revealed to me that when these collisions come up — especially if the prejudice is based on a lack of exposure, which prejudices often are — then we say let's take a look at this. It's not always easy, but I believe the main thing is not to shy away from it or shut it down, but to use it to drop into a learning moment to explore it. And again, if we can explore through a performative mode, then we can move through it in a relatively safe or distanced way.

Weigler continuously goes back to using the drama exercises which allow for aesthetic distancing from an intensely volatile subject to complicate the narrative and allow exploration of an idea in a respectful way. Macdonald also had experiences to share when it came to harm arising within the space around anti-Semitism and sexism, which she felt was her responsibility to intervene in as the facilitator. She explained:

As soon as the space is not safe for somebody, a diversity of ideas is no longer possible. So, actually to say any idea, including extreme homophobia or racism or sexism — any idea is valid — well, those ideas are saying that a whole slew of people's experiences and ideas are invalid, so I think you have a contradiction there. If you say that even that type of thought can be articulated, that kind of hateful thought can be articulated, then your space is no longer a space where everybody is able to be equal and heard, and so the core values that you're trying to create are no longer there. Of course, if you just say to somebody 'that was a racist comment, leave and never come back,' you may have missed an opportunity for deep learning or deep growth. So, I think you do want to give people opportunities to explore where those ideas are coming from and to change, especially because often those ideas come from deeply rooted and connected cultural or familial places. So, to be told just that it's wrong is very threatening and upsetting and distressing, and somebody may just be repeating what their parents say at the dinner table and they love their parents and they need their parents so you're hitting a primal need if you rock that opinion, but you

must do so because there's also somebody else who you have in the room, who that opinion is so hurtful and damaging to that you can't, you can't let it go aired without intervention.

She further explained that most people responded to her intervention with an “Oh”, as if they hadn’t thought of it that way before, and then she would be able to lean into image work and dramatic activity to explore controversial ideas. However, she felt it important to name what had happened, echoing what Rhoades said about generating a “brave” space. Her experiences and Weigler’s have a common element, which was a strong facilitator to intervene and find a way to work through the moment. While these moments can be successfully navigated by leaning into the embodied practice and polyphonic communication approaches, the approach to facilitation is critical for determining how these moments play out. Weigler summed it up by saying:

For me, the key to navigating it involves what’s sometimes called a *second order change*. How can a facilitator respond to a conflict not by reacting to the surface level (first order) outburst or expression, but try to gauge what's happening underneath — to bring it up and invite an inquiry to respond to that outburst (second order).

Despite applied drama’s ability to lean into aesthetic, embodied drama techniques that overwhelmingly allow for the exchange of opposing ideas in a productive and respectful way, it is important to note that there will still be times when this isn’t the case. In those moments, the role of the facilitator becomes even more pivotal.

Facilitation Style

A recurrent theme throughout all the qualitative data in the study is the key role the facilitator plays within the process, and the importance of how the process is facilitated. Practitioners within the survey and in interviews repeatedly qualified their responses by emphasising what “well-led” workshops look like or stipulating “good” and/or “strong” facilitation. Some even felt it important to clarify that they are aware

of facilitation that has not upheld the vision of the praxis. In his interview, Salvatore acknowledged, “I think that you and I both have been either part of or witness to applied drama projects that inadvertently are more about the lead facilitator than they are about the community being worked with.” His observation aligns with the overall consensus of the practitioners involved in the study that, as in most fields, there is a continuum of ability in regard to facilitation. This indicates a need to clarify the skills and actions of a practitioner who embodies the full values and ethos of the praxis. Based on the experience of the practitioners involved in this study, a consensus emerged around the optimal characteristics of a facilitator within applied drama: responsibility, responsivity, and reflexivity. The following paragraphs will examine these qualities in greater detail, attempting to parse out each element on its own, while acknowledging that there is a confluence of these qualities within the excerpts cited and within the actual practice.

The weight and care of the responsibility felt by all the practitioners within applied drama settings becomes evident while reading the survey responses and interview transcripts. The responsibility is described as a duty to create and maintain an inclusive space in which participants feel they are able to step out of their comfort zone and engage in collaborative dialogue involving diverse ideas and opinions.²⁴ To emphasise the importance of creating this type of space, Beltrán Arruti stressed, “it’s more important that you set the right conditions for people to trust and feel themselves and to step into engaging.” In agreement, Rhoades expressed, “A lot of this is the foregrounding that you have to do as a facilitator before you should expect

²⁴ This resonates with various practitioners’ version of a “safe” or “brave” space.

anyone to share anything. There's a lot of work that has to be done first before we even get to that." Weigler shared:

In opening sessions, I often introduce a wonderful term that I got from Doug von Koss who begins by saying 'This is a perfection-free zone.' It's just such a wonderful invitation to people who are worried about messing up, that they need not worry — that they are welcome as they are.

In addition to creating an inviting and inclusive space, a facilitator has a responsibility to preserve that space. Reinforcing this responsibility, Grant asserted that "the facilitator has a mediating role" and Rhoades advised, "Well, you have to hold this space, but that's always your responsibility." This resonates with Macdonald's expressed need to intervene when moments of disrespect or harm arise.

One further responsibility that was expressed by the practitioners was the commitment to model the open, inclusive, and respectful engagement meant to take place within the space. Mirjana Rendulic phrased it this way: "The idea of safety is kind of connected to that empathy and it should start with the facilitator." Reinforcing the idea of modelling, but also touching upon the idea of different facilitation styles, Finneran detailed:

I tend to use my body. I'm like a rubber ball bouncing off the walls. I tend to be around the space quite a bit, encouraging people to their feet and encouraging participation and leading from the front through example, particularly with neophyte participants, people who haven't much experience — showing them that it's OK.

While not every facilitating artist might express themselves in the same animated way Finneran does, the core responsibility of modelling respectful and open engagement is critical. The praxis holds space for a large range of styles and energy which practitioners can bring to it, but the responsibilities of facilitation remain the same. To fulfil these responsibilities, there were broad descriptions within the

qualitative data that predominantly revolved around notions of responsivity²⁵ and reflexivity.

While responsivity and reflexivity are very similar, the two are being individually spotlighted to tease out and emphasise two important qualities of a facilitating artist: (1) the ability to respond and adapt in the moment (responsivity); and (2) the habit of reflecting upon one's practice and incorporating changes to one's practice based on that reflection (reflexivity). While these concepts are closely related, there was an emphasis in the data on both "in the moment" decisions and a routine of reflecting outside of the workspace that becomes translated into action within the workshop. Notions of responsivity will be shared first, followed by reflexivity.

As for actively responding to participants in the space, one survey respondent pointedly wrote, "it's their job to be responsive to how the group takes on the process," and another expressed, "It's also important for the facilitator to maintain flexibility in conducting the workshop, so that if the initial strategies prove to be ineffective, changes of direction are possible." In her interview, McEniry emphasised "the ability to notice what's happening in the room and change my plans accordingly in the moment." Salvatore expressed:

I think if a facilitator doesn't have a good sense of reading nonverbal cues then there are problems, right? Like you know, the person who I think is an extraordinary facilitator in this way is Chrissie Poulter. I've known Chrissie now for almost twenty years and every time I see her facilitate, I am struck by how much she relies on reading the room. She listens to the room also, but she

²⁵ A concept proposed by Kay Hepplewhite in her book, *The Applied Theatre Artist: Responsivity and Expertise in Practice*, which describes practitioners' ability to respond to participants in the moment and be responsible to them.

really reads the room and she talks about that in a very articulate way.

The responsive practice that Salvatore described within Poulter's workshops links in with Rendulic's experience as well:

you also need to be able to go with a flow when the course of the workshop changes by the participants, perhaps because of their energy or just the general mood of the day. If you, as a facilitator, notice something in the workshop that would be useful you move forward with it.

In her book, *Playing the Game: A Drama Workshop Guide*, Poulter described a bit of her process, writing, "I spend time becoming aware of the group — even in the simplest of activities such as when they are walking around the playspace, and even before that, at rest before the workshop" (238). She conveys the idea that her ability to be responsive in the way that Salvatore witnessed is anchored in observation and awareness of participants within the space, even outside of official workshop activity.

Finally, Macdonald emphasised

you can never say, 'oh I know what to do. I've got the skills. I've got the templates. I've got the workshop designs. I'll just go in and do it.' It's always different. It's always responsive and you need to be in a constant state of reflection to catch that and to act upon it.

Her description ties in a notion of reflection which is instantaneous and allows for responsivity to take place, but a slower, more contemplative form of reflection is also needed.

All the interviewees exhibited signs of reflexive behaviour within the interview itself when describing their practice. In their descriptions they were reflecting upon previous reflections they had on various project and how it had prompted them to begin working in a different way or try a different tactic. Carol Preston described how "evaluating after each cycle allows you to have a look at the

pros and cons of what you're doing and to re-evaluate your plan based on that.”

Finneran explained:

I suppose I have a strong sense of the work of Jürgen Habermas and the Frankfurt School, the modernists around critical consciousness, and so on and so forth. So that notion of pausing — of reflecting on action, of becoming more self-aware, and becoming more agentive as a result of that is absolutely at the heart of my practice.

In describing her process, Macdonald shared that “there's this constant mix between planning, releasing the plan to allow what the plan reveals, and then regrouping and re-planning in response to that.” Each of their descriptions to their approach within the process touches upon the idea of a kind of deeper reflection that takes more time and space than the instant responsivity required within the workshop setting.

Additionally, linking action and a change to future workshop plans rooted in the habit of reflection feeds back into the continuous cycle of planning, releasing the plan, adjusting within the workshop space based upon what is happening with the participants, reflecting upon the workshop session, and then planning once again based upon what was learned. Within that process responsivity and reflexivity work together to uphold the responsibilities of the facilitator.

Conclusion

In his article on a creative democracy, Richard J. Bernstein described the democratic personality as “flexible, fallible, experimental, and imaginative” (“Creative Democracy” 226). Each of these qualities is highlighted in this study of applied drama praxis. In their responses, practitioners largely revealed a readiness and willingness to be responsive and adaptable to the environments and contexts in which they work. The use of drama/theatre exercises and activities shows emphasis on incorporating imagination into the work, and the spirit of experimentation is

shown through the ability of the form to allow for the trying out of ideas. Lastly, through the qualitative data collected, the fallibility of the praxis was revealed through the areas of complication. Noting imperfections, however, does not disqualify the approach from aiding in democratisation, but rather reveals it further to be a kindred spirit to democracy: a democratic model able to grasp the nature of the political [...] an approach, which places the question of power and antagonism at its very center” (Mouffe, “Deliberative” 13).

The data collected in this study, based on the experience and practice of fifty-five artists in the field, compellingly support the case for Creative Democracy. However, this is not without further elucidation of the practice, as the exploration in the previous section revealed the importance of facilitation style, especially when dealing with issues of power and conflict. Additionally, the study found the practice of applied drama to predominantly align with the theory of the art form — provided there is sound facilitation. This section will provide a brief summary of the findings of the study and end by sharing the thoughts and reflections of the interviewees when asked to put their art form into conversation more broadly with liberal democracy and deliberation.

Regarding the liberal democratic qualities of inclusion, community-building, collective knowledge creation, and egalitarian power dynamics being measured within the survey, the results conveyed a powerful propensity of the form to create space for these qualities. In fact, the qualities came across as being rooted into the ethos of the practitioners involved in the study. This also holds true to the qualities of deliberation measured within the study: collaboration/creative problem-solving, broad communicative options (which make space for both cognition and affect), and

opportunities for the process of empathy to occur. While the survey data support the notion that applied drama can manifest the desired qualities within practice, the number of practitioners who emphasised the role of the facilitator in this was striking.

The overwhelming data collected around the importance of how a session is facilitated and the more deeply democratic process needed for Creative Democracy make it clear that there is a need to clarify what “best practice” looks like for this context within the theory. Though the current theory of Creative Democracy might imply that these qualities are needed, the survey data reveal that this cannot be taken for granted and must be articulated clearly. Any attempt at actualising Creative Democracy should clarify and speak to these qualities when seeking a facilitating artist to take part. Not only would this allow for the process to lean more deeply into its liberal democratic and deliberative qualities, but it would also ensure higher calibre facilitation catered to this specific context during moments of incivility within the setting.

During the interviews all the practitioners were asked to consider their experience of applied drama more widely, in conversation with specific aspects of liberal democracy and deliberation. Their thoughts reflect a combined total of 218 years of experience from eleven interview participants, across seven countries. While it was crucial to take account of each of the specific qualities desired within liberal democracy and deliberation, it is nevertheless insightful and compelling to hear experienced practitioners ruminate on the whole of their experience and the larger ideas of liberal democracy and deliberation. Their thoughts on deliberation in

conversation with their experience in the field will be shared first, followed by their assessment of liberal democracy and applied drama.

Each of the interviewees was provided with the following quote from Jane Mansbridge regarding deliberation:

In its very character, the word is thus 'evaluative-descriptive.' The term itself derives from the Latin root *liber* (scale) and thus connotes some weighing of pros and cons... The word also has the connotation of a deliberate — that is, well-considered and not hasty — process. (Mansbridge 28–29)

They were then asked to share their thoughts on the above description in conversation with their experience of applied drama. Some immediately grasped on to the idea of “pros” and “cons,” wanting to make it evident that applied drama complicates things beyond a simple binary. Grant asserted:

I think, you know, anything that requires that pros and cons balance of scales is going to be reductive to that extent. It doesn't accommodate the nuanced, the blurring, the liminal ground that actually allows for these two extremes to blend... it's a fluid environment.

His assessment makes the argument that deliberation with applied drama settings is not about only looking at simplistic “pros” and “cons,” but also all the nuances and ambiguities in between. Rhoades also grasped on to this binary as an area for interrogation, replying:

Well, I would say that first of all the binary of pros and cons doesn't really relate. Is that OK? Can I say what doesn't relate? Yeah? OK. It's where my mind goes first is like, how do you deconstruct it first? I would say because everything that people bring to this space is an asset and the process of applied theatre is not evaluative, — in that everything is taken as an opportunity to expand creatively, but also to expand one's understanding of others and oneself...but certainly the well-considered portion. That it's as much about the reflection that occurs throughout the process as it is about what is created.

Weigler also embraced the “well-considered” and “not hasty” description:

So, in these instances the deliberation, the type that Mansbridge is talking about — deliberation without haste — is achieved by experimentation with different attempts to make meaning in a performative mode until the group lands on something that they recognize perfectly captures the sense of their experience. That's what I've seen — people will create a performative expression of their experience and even the creators themselves will be moved to say, 'Oh my god, that's it: that's the essence of we're trying to convey.' So, there's less of a kind of individual authorship of a scene and more of a feeling that the group has discovered it together through their performative deliberations.

It must also be noted, that although he didn't directly contend with the "pros and cons" concept, he articulated a process which allows for the shading and gradation of ideas and thoughts well outside of a binary conception. In general, the interviewees, each in their own words, described applied drama as being thoughtful, unhurried, and allowing for both deep and wide exploration of ideas through embodied practice.

When it came to liberal democracy, the interviewees were asked to imagine a continuum with extreme individual expression on one side and the idea of the collective on the other. They were then asked to think about the tension between those two things — the individual expression and the collective expression — and speak about applied drama and where the process might be on that continuum or where it moves along it, if it moves. Macdonald homed in on the movement across this spectrum, asserting:

In a really strong applied drama process, there is a healthy movement along that continuum. There's this capacity to be in all of those spaces because I think everybody can be equal and there can still be moments of really strong individual expression ... I think there are moments where everybody's perhaps doing a movement exercise like flocking and the focus is on everybody moving as one and being as one and then it's beautiful to see somebody emerge from that and be strengthened by that and take their own space and just deliver a straight monologue about their own experience. And then there are so many places in between those two.

Finneran also described sliding along this spectrum, noting it as a strength of the praxis. He continued, saying:

If you think about a more didactic teaching context or facilitation context, it's presentational all the time, where you've got content being delivered and we don't get to play with that. Whereas in drama we do get to play with that and we get to say, well, this is a moment where you think individually — maybe draw a little picture of what's actually going on, or you reflect on the card, or you gather your thoughts or whatever — and then we're going to come back to the group, and we're going to capture all of that. It's a space of possibility in terms of messing with that continuum.

Supporting Macdonald's and Finneran's take on the process, Scolah added:

I hadn't thought about this before, but it is the best model of a liberal democracy because everyone is valued for what they bring and yet we are all there to do something together. And also, there is a very quick realization that if we separate and fight, we're not going to get anywhere.

Their understanding of the praxis as moving along a continuum, allowing moments of individuality and collectivity, resembles in many ways the delicate balance that plays out within liberal democratic states around the globe. Scolah's articulation of the standstill that materialises when polarisation and fighting occur also eerily reflects a trend of governmental inaction within liberal democracies in the twenty-first century. Applied drama has been shown to be able to contend with these issues in a balanced and productive way, bolstering the need to conduct field experiments using Creative Democracy.

Conclusion: Giving Creative Democracy A Chance

“And finally, and perhaps most importantly, drama offers an aesthetic space in which to care. In a world where caring is often not encouraged or the scale of the world’s threats are so great that we simply do not know what we should care about, maybe this is the greatest gift that drama can give democracy.”

— Kelly Freebody and Michael Finneran (61)

Introduction: Concluding at a New Beginning

Sometimes the overwhelming scope of the issues that haunt our democracies can somewhat numb the senses, but the art form of drama/theatre (and even more specifically applied drama) can offer a space in which to question, explore, and experiment with others through a creative lens. These probes are expressions of care — for the issue at hand and for how that issue affects others. The drama workshop creates an imaginative container in which people are free to explore ideas and perspectives within a type of fictional space which “needs to be understood not as simply rehearsal but as an intense experience that creates a network of meaningful activities in the present” (Thompson, *Applied* 72). It is this condition which allows for the praxis to be a powerful proponent for liberal democracy. Connections that are made within the workshop setting link people, their stories, experiences, public policies, and the larger institutional structures in which they all exist. The form of applied drama provides an active and engaged method of dialogic exchange that validates and supports all forms of expression, allowing for a greater inclusion of ideas and increased opportunity for all present to learn from others and grow in new ways.

Within the pages of this dissertation, I have endeavoured to unpack and dissect the intangible essence of applied drama praxis, and the transformative experiences which are a direct result of the praxis, to demonstrate its relevance for use within formalised deliberative democratic practice. Notably, this research reveals and affirms the radical and untapped potential for applied drama praxis to transform and energise a public sphere that has been “‘linguistified’, made fluid and mobile to the point where it was not a space in which a certain kind of communication could take place, but a space generated by a certain kind of communication” (Crossley and Roberts 51). It can accomplish this by providing an inclusive, creative approach to dialogue and community interaction that is able to make space for disagreement, ambiguity, and empathy. Chantal Mouffe wrote:

Envisaged from the point of view of ‘agonistic pluralism’, the aim of democratic politics is to construct the ‘them’ in such a / way that it is no longer perceived as an enemy to be destroyed, but as an ‘adversary’, that is, somebody whose ideas we combat but whose right to defend those ideas we do not put into question. (*Democratic Paradox* 101-102)

An increased resilience in the face of equivocacy and increased empathy amongst citizens offers a greater ability to achieve Mouffe’s agonistic pluralism, allowing for debate and conflicting ideas to exist alongside respect and care.

Further, this research has affirmed that applied drama has the capacity to rebuild/strengthen community bonds and support collective knowledge construction that pushes through superficial slogans and catchphrases to get to the crux of an issue, which is often messy and complex, mirroring both the art process and the process of democracy itself. In *Age of Propaganda*, Anthony Pratkanis and Elliot Aronson assert:

Every day we are bombarded with one persuasive communication after another. These appeals persuade not through the give-and-take of argument and debate but through the manipulation of symbols and our most basic human emotion. (7)

To counteract the effect of such widespread propaganda, honest conversations and connections on the citizen-to-citizen level must be nurtured. Additionally, integrating this form into the structure of government itself will allow it to become a formal and recognised part of the democratic process, heeding the calls of K. Sabeel Rahman for “radically new institutions, organisations, and practices” (1555) and Katherine Goktepe for “more tools and institutional mechanisms to foster and acknowledge alternative perspectives in civic life” (384). While each attempt at Creative Democracy will be working on a small scale, with a geographically localised government, the impact this approach could have on meaningful community-building and civic dialogue is consequential to repairing social bonds within liberal democracies.

The implications of incorporating applied drama praxis into formalised democratic institutions and practice hold promise for deepening democratisation in the current political atmosphere in which polarisation within advanced liberal democracies is growing — tragically evidenced in the 6 January 2021 attack on the US Capitol building, which ended the tradition of a peaceful transfer of power that had marked the American democratic experiment to date.¹ The calls to defend democracy involve finding a means through which to rebuild bonds between citizens and create spaces in which meaningful dialogue and engagement can take place, in place of

¹ On 6 January 2021, thousands of Trump supporters believing the lie that the election was “stolen” from Donald Trump attempted to violently overturn the results of the election by disrupting the electoral vote count to formalise Joe Biden as the winner of the 2020 Presidential election.

manipulated sound bites intended to stir emotions or retreats into online echo-chambers that reinforce pre-existing views. Re-establishing a strong, critically engaged public sphere is vital for not only fighting back against the tide of de-democratisation, but for reversing that tide and then establishing a new path of deepening democratisation. With the stakes being as high as they are, it is time to look to creative solutions outside the traditional political toolbox. Applied drama, which is well-established as being able to promote community-building, collaboration, communication, and empathy while operating effectively within a wide-range of disciplines and fields provides an opportunity to do this.

Thinking about this creative research journey as a practitioner, I am struck that the final product appears in fairly linear form, while the process was anything but. I have come to appreciate that the place which I was so eager to get to back in 2015 — realising official communication within democratic structures through applied drama — was not something that I could or should just dive into without a proper understanding of the implications of such work in all the disciplines upon which it touches. That has been the work of this research.

The following section will review the fundamental questions and arguments of each chapter, as well as the critical contributions made to the thesis and to the various disciplines that it unites. After summarising where this research has been, there will be a change in focus to imagine how this research could continue. There will be a look to the next steps for this research, which does not end with this dissertation, but rather finds a brief pause to prepare for the next stage of this journey.

In Review

As the chapters within this dissertation build upon one another, moving from broader relationships and ideals toward a more specific practice, this summary will move through the argument similar linear fashion. The practitioner's perspective section within each chapter supported the argument and told the story from the researcher-artist's perspective. In Chapter One this section, mirroring the historical outlook of the chapter, looked to past practice to reflect upon the new information gathered by looking at the case studies through the dual lens of a spectrum of democratisation/de-democratisation, as well as monologic/dialogic discourse. In Chapter Two the practitioner's perspective provided insight into exact exercises and activities within applied drama, linking them with the type of community-building and education that supports liberal democracy. The perspective became forward-looking in the third chapter with a vision of what Creative Democracy *could* be. In the fourth chapter, which put theory and practice into conversation, the practitioner's perspective was reflective of personal practice and experiences in response to the surveys conducted. This viewpoint is scaffolded through the dissertation so that it remained present in the discoveries, conclusions, and provocations throughout, and ultimately undergirds the foundation of the participatory action research and teaching that should come next.

Chapter One worked to better understand the historical relationship between drama/theatre and democracy by focusing on four case studies in which there were considerable shifts toward democratisation or de-democratisation within a nation. The case studies were chosen from the Enlightenment through the twentieth century only, so that the type of democracy within the state would be more characteristic of

the liberal democracies of today. They were: The French Revolution (1789–1799); The Weimar Republic (1918–1933); The Velvet Revolution (1989); and the work of Augusto Boal in Brazil in the last half of the twentieth century.

The use of monologic and dialogic discourse was employed within the chapter to broadly frame how the art form was used in certain moments and to then be able to draw parallels in the fluctuations happening regarding democracy. Through the case studies the relationship between the art form and states of democracy was firmly established, as well as the trend of the use of dialogic forms of drama/theatre coinciding with junctures of deepening democratisation. The research within this chapter was crucial not only as a base for establishing the lengthy relationship between drama/theatre and democracy, but it also supported the notion of applied drama as being a good fit for democratisation, as it is one of the most dialogic forms of drama/theatre practice.

Building upon the historical context illustrated in the first chapter, Chapter Two sought to understand further how the dialogic practice of applied drama might align with liberal democratic values and support the types of environments most conducive to deepening democratisation: the public sphere, education, and community. This chapter was the start of making the theoretical case for applied drama to be incorporated into democratic structures and institutions within the government by highlighting the ways in which the praxis can support the type of education and community-building needed for a thriving public sphere. Additionally, this chapter also contributed to the field of applied drama in the form of a reframing of applied drama praxis around six guiding principles. This was conceived of to better be able to put the praxis into conversation with the ideals and principles of liberal

democracy. The chapter made the theoretical case for how the public sphere can be realised as a creative space with genuine dialogue and active participation that involves collective-learning and problem-solving. In doing so, there was recognition of how applied drama projects currently operating outside of the official governmental apparatus are generating this type of public sphere, though their full impact is not realised because of their operating outside of formal institutions. This thread is picked up in the following chapter through the investigation of Legislative Theatre projects taken up in the twenty-first century.

The third chapter examines in greater detail *how* applied drama could be integrated into democratic structures and institutions by looking to deliberative democracy and engaging with the critiques of the practice to understand how applied drama could potentially address them. A theoretical framing of how applied drama could operate as a type of deliberative democracy through Creative Democracy was offered, providing a vision of what it could be and research to bolster the theory. Additionally, the chapter engaged with the debate around the push for computer-mediated solutions to democracy and demonstrated why in-person approaches cannot be completely abandoned in this effort. To further make the case for an actualised experiment of Creative Democracy, the theory articulated in this chapter was put into conversation with actualised practice in the fourth chapter.

The fourth chapter provided the final provocation for realising Creative Democracy in practice, by putting the theory that was laid out in the two previous chapters into conversation with the on-the-ground practice of theatre practitioners working in applied drama across eleven countries. The survey and interview plan were designed to measure the qualities of democracy and deliberation that were

found to be optimal in Chapters Two and Three, allowing for both quantitative and qualitative data collection. The quantifiable data overwhelmingly revealed that practitioners' planning and actions support both democratic and deliberative ideals as characterised previously. The practitioners' perceptions and reporting from participants also indicated that the praxis largely succeeds in creating environments conducive for democracy and deliberation. The qualitative data, however, also pointed to areas which might provide complication and would require attention in translating the theory of Creative Democracy into practice. Though many applied drama practitioners would intuitively sense that the praxis is democratic, it is a benefit to the field to have data collected regarding practitioners' actions and viewpoints from a range of artists that make this relationship more explicit, rather than tacit. This chapter was the closest to putting the theory of Creative Democracy into conversation with the realised practice of applied drama, barring the creation of a substantive field experiment. The data and insight provided through the study bolster the theory described in the previous chapters and substantiated the expressed need to attempt Creative Democracy in a real-world experiment.

Next Steps for Creative Democracy

The pages of this dissertation contain the rationale for realising Creative Democracy in practice. This section will look to the next phase of this research inquiry beyond the PhD by proposing the form that it might take and considering further potential opportunities this could create for inter- and transdisciplinary research. The next thing to consider is how to go about setting up a field experiment — what form should it take? Because applied drama has been proven to work efficiently on a small scale, the logical step would be for Creative Democracy to have

its first foray on the local government level. This calls to mind images of the town meeting from the founding lore of US democracy. These were envisioned as open assemblies in which the citizens could gather to discuss issues of importance and that had legislative and policy action as a result.² However, the history of the town meeting is not quite as rosy as it has been portrayed. In the early years of the US democratic experiment, the town meetings were flawed in that they were extremely homogenous (typically white and male) and excluded women and indigenous peoples living nearby.³

Presently, meetings held under the banner of “town hall” often operate more as question and answer sessions with politicians, and sometimes even political rallies. In their article asserting the need for a newly conceived townhall for the twenty-first century, Carolyn J. Lukensmeyer and Steve Brigham write:

Public hearings and typical town hall meetings are not a meaningful way for citizens to engage in governance and to have an impact on decision making. They are speaker-focused, with experts simply delivering information or responding to questions. Little learning occurs, for citizens or decision makers, because airing individual concerns too often devolves into repetitive ax grinding, grand-standing, or even a shouting match between various stakeholders. (351)

The moniker of the “town hall” or “town meeting” has been used over the years to mean different things and facilitate interaction between government officials and citizens on a large sliding scale between active, engaged dialogue and one-way

² See Frank Bryan, William Keith, James Kloppenberg, Jane Mansbridge, Michael Morrell, and Graham Smith, "Collective Interview on the History of Town Meetings." *Journal of Public Deliberation*, 15.2 (2019): Article 8.

³ See Paula Cossart, Andrea Felicetti, and James Kloppenberg, "Introduction: The New England Town Meeting: A Founding Myth of American Democracy." *Journal of Public Deliberation*, 15.2 (2019): 1-39.

communication. The form has even found its way into other contemporary democracies, evidenced in the variety of Brexit town hall meetings that took place in the United Kingdom between 2015 and 2019.

Despite the misperceptions, evolution, and flawed history of the town meeting, it is within this smallest of units within the democratic structure of government in which Creative Democracy should first be attempted. In larger towns/cities, this might even be further reduced to district meetings. Whatever they are to be called (if the term “town meeting” is troublesome), meetings between citizens of these smaller geographical areas and their local elected official(s) and government administrators could be optimal settings for realising Creative Democracy.

The purpose, goals, and approach of Creative Democracy align well with that of Action Research (AR) according to Davydd J. Greenwood and Morten Levin. They write that “AR is a set of self-consciously collaborative and democratic strategies for generating knowledge and designing action in which trained experts in social and other forms of research and local stakeholders work together” (Greenwood and Levin 1). Greenwood and Levin go on to describe how AR is an active doing “with” rather than “for” and maintain that it must consist of three elements: action, research, and participation (5). Interestingly, James Thompson proposes applied theatre as a type of “theatre action research (TAR) in his book *Applied Theatre: Bewilderment and Beyond*. He aligns the praxis as a research method unto itself, connecting it with the idea of a democracy on the ground.

Applied drama has been revealed in this body of work to be intentionally collaborative and inclusive, as well as having the flexibility and adaptability to foster

shared power-dynamics.⁴ Applied drama has been shown to be an active way to explore ideas and generate new collective knowledge within the group of participating individuals. Though applied drama praxis does not always incorporate outside “expert” knowledge,⁵ the proposed approach of Creative Democracy (the combination of applied drama and deliberative democracy) would most likely incorporate “trained experts” in a variety of areas, in the form of government officials working in areas such as health, education, and safety. The overlaps between AR and the proposed Creative Democracy of this dissertation point to the potential for yet another layer of interdisciplinarity and further opportunity for the expansion of new practice and new collaborations which could result from a practical, actual attempt at Creative Democracy.

Moving into the next phase of this research inquiry will involve opportunities for the deepening of the interdisciplinary research between the political sciences, social sciences, and drama/theatre studies begun in this dissertation. Additionally, with the links between AR and Creative Democracy (as envisioned), there exists the potential to cross into transdisciplinary research. According to the European Union Horizon 2020 funded project Shaping interdisciplinary practices in Europe (SHAPE-ID), transdisciplinary research tends to “imply active co-creation of knowledge between academic and societal partners” and “transgress boundaries between disciplinary knowledge” (SHAPE-ID). This is exactly the type of creative approach to the process of democracy that John Dewey championed throughout the twentieth

⁴ This relies upon the ability of the facilitator to create and maintain this precarious balance.

⁵ This is not a foreign idea to applied drama, as when working in settings such as healthcare, subject experts have been known to take part in the process.

century and that political scientists have been imploring for and invoking in the twenty-first century (with even more earnest appeals since 2015). While their vision of a more creative and imaginative approach to democratisation may not have entailed the incorporation of arts practices into governmental structures and practices, Creative Democracy nonetheless responds to their provocations and holds potential for aiding in the process of democratisation.

Finally, it is necessary to revisit Creative Democracy to more specifically define the goals and detail a practical approach. This arises out of the need to prepare the way for this potential new subfield within both applied drama and political science to be attempted. The theory that was developed in the third chapter, and data collected in the study detailed in the fourth chapter, are both necessary for articulating a framing of a pilot Creative Democracy project. To bring maximal clarity to this undertaking, what follows will be an outline of the purpose, goals, conditions, and duties of Creative Democracy and those who might wish to facilitate it.

Purpose

The purpose of Creative Democracy is to realise the public sphere as an accessible and inclusive space in which genuine dialogue is generated by active participation of communities and their elected officials, through collective knowledge construction and problem-solving on issues of social and political importance.

Conditions

The following conditions must be met for Creative Democracy to take place:

1. This democratic practice is housed within the structure of government — not as a community partnership or an outside project, but as an integral piece of

the civic engagement approach of the administration of government, whether local, state, or federal.

2. This democratic practice is facilitated using the methods and approach of applied drama praxis.
3. This democratic practice is facilitated by a trained practitioner/facilitator in applied drama with all others (citizens, elected officials, government officials) participating as equal contributors to the process.

Goals

The goals of Creative Democracy are to:

1. Foster genuine dialogue between and among citizens, elected officials, and government administrators — including opportunities to listen/take in information, as well as provide input.
2. Create an environment that is open and well-disposed to pluralism and agonism, as well as the conflict of ideas that comes with them.
3. Create opportunities for communication that allow every participant the occasion to express their concerns in a manner which they feel most comfortable and able, as well as to receive information through a variety of modes of expression.
4. Cultivate a space that allows for individual and shared knowledge construction.
5. Support the creation and nurturing of community bonds and relationships to improve social cohesion.
6. Provide opportunities for the process of empathy to occur simultaneously with the meeting/session/workshop being held.⁶

⁶ This understanding of empathy draws on Morrell's multidimensional process-oriented view described briefly in the Introduction and in more detail in Chapter Three.

7. Stimulate a continuous collaborative enterprise between and among citizens, elected officials, and government administrators.

Duties

Facilitators of Creative Democracy must:

1. Accept that their responsibility is to allow for the exchange of ideas and experiences of the participants in the space in an effort to realise the purpose of Creative Democracy.
2. Strive to disseminate power within the space equally amongst all present, aiming for a democratic balance of power.
3. Endeavour to create and maintain an inclusive space.
4. Model the type of open, inclusive, and respectful engagement Creative Democracy wishes to encourage.
5. Remain responsive to all the individuals present and able to adapt as needed in the moment as conditions change.
6. Commit to a reflexive practice within the meeting/session/workshop itself, as well as in the time between meetings.

A Space in Which to Care

Elizabeth Kiss writes, “the heart of liberal democracy lies in civil society; it is in efforts to promote and revitalize civil society that the struggle for liberal democracy succeeds or fails” (387). I am aware that this proposal is just one small action toward democratisation starting on the level of local government. However, generating genuine social cohesion in the diverse and pluralistic liberal democracies of the twenty-first century must start somewhere — and it will take time. Such a task, to be done well, must involve a massive investment of time and care — the very type of investment that is exemplified through applied drama praxis. If liberal democracy

truly is an ongoing process that must steadily be attended to, then looking for shortcuts or fast solutions is a fallacy.

Christina Lafont advocates “defending a democracy without shortcuts” (358). In her article she specifically references the types of shortcuts that cut out deliberation in the public sphere, addressing approaches that seek to coerce citizens into indiscriminately ceding their power to the elected representatives. Another shortcut that should be added to this list is the mind-boggling push to develop solutions through the singular use of technology and online/social media applications. While these solutions may aid in some small way toward the democratisation effort, to rely on them alone would be reckless, especially after understanding the devastating effects that computer-mediated communication (CMC) has had on democracy thus far.⁷ Lafont goes on to assert that “The *only road* to better political outcomes is the long, participatory road that is taken when citizens forge a collective political will by changing one another’s hearts and minds. Commitment to democracy simply *is* the realization that there are no shortcuts” (356). It is expected that Creative Democracy will take time to strengthen social cohesion and, even if that were to happen, that the agreements or compromises that the community arrives at will take time, because they must include the dynamic engagement of the entire community. It will also take time for the practice of Creative Democracy, if it does prove to be successful in practice, to spread and be taken up in more communities. It will be a slower process, but it has the potential to do much to address the underlying issues at the root of the crisis of democracy.

⁷ Please refer back to Chapter Three for more on the effects of CMC on democracy.

In this moment it is not enough to simply put forth approaches that act as stopgaps to the current crisis. K. Sabeel Rahman pointed out that “the crisis of democracy encompasses more than the threat of backsliding; by extension, the remedies for the crisis need to go beyond the push to restore a status quo” (1571). Rahman, as noted in the introduction, points to not only the aspects of the current wave of de-democratisation, but the failures of liberal democracy to fully live up to its ideals prior to this wave. There is a need for novel, creative approaches that seek to address the underpinning ideals and principles of liberal democracy, to move our democracies even closer to truly free, diverse, and egalitarian societies.

The seeds of meaningful engagement and dialogue must be replanted within the democratic societies of today — and they must be constantly tended, so that there is not another decline of civic engagement in twenty, fifty, or more years from now. Thompson asserted that “[t]he meeting of theatre and areas of application will create unpredictable moments, ripples or affective responses that are perhaps minute or sometimes powerful but always worthy of attention” (*Applied* 114). The moments, ripples, or responses that would occur through the realisation of Creative Democracy might take time to reveal themselves (or not). However, whether slow or quick in their manifestation, these ripples are bound to have a profound impact in the community in which Creative Democracy is realised — and perhaps even more so within the fields of political science, applied drama, and sociology. The arts and humanities, and specifically applied drama praxis as envisioned in combination with deliberative democratic practice through Creative Democracy, have an important role to play in this democratising effort. Ruth O’Brien warns in her forward to Nussbaum’s book that “neglect and scorn for the arts and humanities puts the quality of all our

lives, and the health of our democracies as risk” (xi). Her warning makes clear the importance of putting forth well-researched and viable approaches to respond to the current crisis of democracy that incorporates the arts and humanities. Creative Democracy is such an approach.

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Appendix A: Participant Information Leaflet

Name of Study:

Reimagining the Public Sphere:

Addressing the Crisis of Democracy through Applied Drama

Site:

Online (interviews and surveys)

Researcher:

Courtney Helen Grile, MFA

PhD Candidate, School of Creative Arts

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Supervisor:

Dr Nicholas Johnson

Associate Professor, School of Creative Arts

Trinity College Dublin

Dublin 2

Study Organiser/ Sponsor Data Controllers:

PhD in Drama, School of Creative Arts, Trinity College Dublin (for research data)

Data Protection Officer:

Data Protection Officer Secretary's Office

Trinity College Dublin

Dublin 2

You are being invited to take part in a research study that is being done by Courtney Helen Grile of the School of Creative Arts, as part of her qualification for a PhD in Drama. Before you decide whether or not to take part, please read this information sheet carefully. Ask Courtney any questions you have. Don't feel rushed or under pressure to make a quick decision. You should understand fully the risks and benefits of taking part in this study, and you are encouraged to make a decision that is right for you.

This leaflet has five main parts:

- Part 1 – The Study
- Part 2 – Data Protection
- Part 3 – Costs, Funding and Approval
- Part 4 – Future Research
- Part 5 – Further Information

Part 1: The Study

Why is this study being done?

This study is being done to explore the potentialities of using applied drama praxis within the framework of deliberative democracies, and to offer insights and solutions to those who are looking to create more inclusive practices of democratic communication. This stage of the research will result in a PhD dissertation that will collect, evaluate, reflect upon, and disseminate insights from historical precedence of drama's relationship with democracy, democratic, social science, and drama theory, and insights from the reality of applied drama praxis through surveys and interviews with facilitators and participants who have operated within the field. We hope this study will have value for the fields of drama and theatre and political science.

Why have I been invited to take part?

You have been invited to take part because you either a) are a working practitioner and facilitator using applied drama methods, or b) have been a participant of an applied drama project.

Do I have to take part? Can I withdraw?

You do not have to take part in this study; it is entirely voluntary. If you decide not to take part, it will have no impact on your relationship with the researcher or the institution. You can change your mind about taking part in the study and opt out at any time during data collection, even after the interview (or survey) has begun. If you decide to opt out, this will not prejudice the researcher in any way, and your data will not be retained.

Once results are collated and entered into the study's written outputs, it will no longer be possible to withdraw. This will occur around 15 September 2021. You will still retain certain rights over your personal data after that stage (see below), but your personal input will be part of the study at that point already and cannot then be removed.

How will the study be carried out?

If you are part of Group A (applied drama facilitators), you will be contacted electronically with a survey link (either by email or via social media). You will have until 30 April 2021, during which survey results can be recorded, and the deadline will be clearly posted. The consent form will be integrated into the online survey. All data will be held securely using TCD-based servers or equipment, and analysed only by the researcher. If you opt at the end of the survey to participate in an interview, you will be asked to email the Researcher at grilec@tcd.ie. If you consent to participate, then the researcher will set up a phone call (of no more than an hour) with you using Microsoft Teams. This interview will be recorded securely using TCD-based servers, and then transcribed by the researcher. There will be structured questions to organise the conversation that you will be sent in advance, if you agree to participate. The data collected will not be anonymous, but you will have control over whether you would like personal attribution of specific comments. You will have the right to make off-the-record comments during the interview (by declaring "off-the-record") or to specifying that certain types of feedback should not be attributed. Any such comments will be held separately from your interview in a transcript labelled "anonymous comments." Any names or institutions mentioned may be anonymised in the results, as may be required to retain confidentiality.

If you are part of Group B (applied drama participants), you will be contacted electronically with a survey link (either by email or via social media). You will have until 30 April 2021, during which survey results can be recorded, and the deadline will be clearly posted. The consent form will be integrated into the online survey. All data will be held securely using TCD-based servers or equipment, and analysed only by the researcher.

What will happen to me if I decide not to take part?

If you decide not to take part, you do not have to do anything; just don't answer the survey. If you decide in the middle of taking the survey that you do not want to take part, do not get to the end of the survey and do not click "submit." If you click "submit" and reconsider, you will have to write to the researcher to ask your data to be taken away from the study manually. As your contribution may be anonymous, you may have to take note of the specific time and see if you can recall other identifying details of what you entered, so that the researcher can identify which data should not be included.

What will happen to my data?

All data will be held temporarily (through September 2022) on the researcher's own laptop based at home, where it is held in an encrypted folder on a secure (encrypted) hard drive. The laptop itself cannot be accessed without a password. A backup will be held in TCD cloud services at a level requiring two-factor- authentication security until the data is processed and archived. The researcher will restrict all access, only the researcher and advisor will have access to all data.

As the researcher is continuing to publish in this area, retaining/archiving the collected data beyond the life of the study is important. For this reason, personal data (such as that provided through interview) **will be kept securely** beyond the completion of the study. However, if the data is repurposed outside of the remit defined in this particular study, participants in Group A who identified themselves will be contacted again for explicit consent to have the data reused. The reuse of any past data will be cleared through an ethics committee at the time of use. This research may happen outside of the European Economic Area and thus will no longer come under GDPR at that time. At no time will this research be commercialised.

If you agree to this use of your data in future, your consent form will be retained indefinitely, and destroyed only when the data is securely deleted or no longer usable.

Are there any benefits to taking part in this research?

Taking part in this study will not directly benefit you, other than by creating an opportunity for your own reflection and learning. However, the research performed with any information provided through surveys and interviews may help the researcher (and any readers of publications that may result) to better understand the potential for applied drama praxis as an essential part of liberal democratic institutions. As this is part of a long-term research project, the benefits of this research may not be seen for several years. By participating, you are

helping to advance the study of drama pedagogies, and democratic participation generally, for future generations.

Are there any risks to me or others if I take part?

Identification. Those who agree to participate in on-the-record interviews may have attributed quotations in the study and will no longer be anonymous. We consider any risk to individuals arising from disclosure of identity in this context to be extremely low, as individuals have the option to request to remain anonymous in any publications.

Confidentiality. Names of individuals that may arise in connection with critical comments may be redacted or altered/coded in publication to preserve confidentiality, to protect individuals from reputational damage in the course of the study. Identifying details in such cases where reputation could be at risk will be minimised in any public version of the writing that results.

Emotions. Discussion of past experiences can bring up unexpected emotions, both positive and negative. Participants in the study are encouraged to 1) decline participation if they have reason to expect an adverse outcome from thinking about these past experiences, 2) disclose any discomfort openly to the researcher and seek support for it, and 3) pause or cease participation in the study if it occasions significant discomfort at any time.

Will I be told the outcome of the study?

The results of this study will first be submitted in September 2022 as part of the dissertation for the PhD in Drama, a degree being undertaken by the researcher at Trinity College Dublin. This submission will be entirely confidential between the researcher and the examining committee, and you will not be given access to this submission. Based on feedback received for the PhD, all of some of the dissertation will be revised for publication in the coming few years, targeted at political science/drama journals. At that time, non-anonymous participants (Group A participants who agree to be non-anonymous) will be contacted and informed of impending publication. Digital copies will be shared with non-anonymous participants, who will be acknowledged for their participation within the article. Anonymous participants may access an ultimately published version, if they desire.

Part 2 – Data Protection

What will happen to my personal data?

All identifying data such as consent forms, survey responses, interview sound files, and interview transcripts will be minimally processed **only as necessary** to achieve the narrow objectives of the research. The research collection process is designed to involve no damage or distress to participants.

Data will be kept in two locations (TCD servers and the researchers's personal laptop) from the moment of collection until submission of the dissertation (September 2022). Thereafter, audio interview files will be destroyed, replaced by transcripts only (with redacted confidentiality elements and separated "off the record" statements). Consent forms will be kept for a minimum of 7 years in keeping with GDPR guidelines. The archived material will be retained for further pedagogical study and the personal archive of the researcher, but it will not be repurposed for another study without passing through a further research ethics committee review. Participants have the right to agree to this ongoing use of their data on the consent form, where they can clearly state whether they wish to be contacted again if the data is to be reused.

There is no algorithmic or automated data processing involved in this study.

Who will access and use my personal data as part of this study?

Courtney Helen Grile (researcher) and her supervisor, Dr Nicholas Johnson, will have access to your personal data provided during the study.

Will my personal data be kept confidential? How will my data be kept safe?

All data is held electronically in encrypted or two-factor authentication locations. A **risk assessment** has been carried out and indicates that the level of risk by identification or disclosure of this data is extremely low. Presentations or publications arising from the data can only identify those participants who have offered explicit consent. Anonymity in data collection is the default for all survey participants. The researcher has taken all relevant training in data protection law and will adhere to professional standards expected by the Trinity Research Office.

What is the lawful basis to use my personal data?

The **lawful basis** for the use of your personal data is the European General Data Protection regulation. By this law, we can use your personal information for scientific research (Article 9, 2j) in the public interest (Article 6, 1e). We ask for explicit consent for the use of your data at the time of data collection to uphold our obligations under this standard, and in line with contemporary TCD research standards.

What are my rights?

You are entitled to the following rights. How to avail of these rights is also indicated below:

- Right to access data held
 - o Participants may write to ask to see the data I hold in relation to them.
- Right to correct inaccuracies
 - o Participants may ask for corrections to this record during the limited period prior to the data's processing into submission/future publication.

- Right to erasure
 - o Participants may ask to have their interview/transcript/consent revoked and deleted, and evidence will be provided of this having occurred.
- Right to object to processing or profiling
 - o Participants may inform me of any objections to how data is being processed and to have their own content deleted if the situation necessitates it.
- Right to data portability
 - o Participants may request their own data held by me for the purpose of using it themselves, for their own purposes unrelated to my research.
- Right to object to profiling
 - o No profiling or automatic processing is involved in this study.

By law you can exercise all these rights in relation to your personal data, unless the request would make it impossible or very difficult to conduct the research. You can exercise these rights after data collection by contacting the researcher at grilec@tcd.ie or the Trinity College Data Protection Officer, Secretary's Office, Trinity College Dublin, Dublin 2, Ireland. Email: dataprotection@tcd.ie. Website: www.tcd.ie/privacy.

Part 3 – Costs, Funding, and Approval

Has this study been approved by a research ethics committee?

This study has undergone ethics review and was approved by the School of Creative Arts on 10 December 2020. The operative guidelines for this committee can be seen on the web here:

<https://www.tcd.ie/creative-arts/assets/pdf/School%20of%20Creative%20Arts%20Research%20Ethics%20Policy.pdf>

Who is organising and funding this study? Will the results be used for commercial purposes?

This study is conducted by Courtney Helen Grile for the primary purpose of obtaining an academic qualification. I am currently funded by a Trinity College Dublin Postgraduate Scholarship. The research forms part of a degree course at Trinity College Dublin. No one is being paid to recruit participants to the study. The results will not be used for commercial purposes.

Is there any payment for taking part? Will it cost me anything if I agree to take part?

There is no payment to any participants for taking part in the study. All participation is given voluntarily. Participants will not be reimbursed for any expenses incurred in the course of their use of online tools to contribute to either surveys or interviews. The costs involved should be

extremely minimal to any participant; the main cost is time (up to an hour is the maximum anticipated).

Part 4 – Future Research

Will my personal data be used in future studies?

Those who consent to participate will have **only given permission** for their data to be used for the current study, but the researcher is also seeking permission to store the data for possible future use in research. This could only be the researcher's own research (not someone else's). This participation is voluntary, and consent to use data for future research may be withdrawn at any time prior to that research's publication. Such future research could only occur if it also has approval from an ethics committee.

Part 5 – Further Information

Whom should I contact for information or complaints?

If you have any concerns or questions, you can contact:

- Researcher: Courtney Helen Grile, grilec@tcd.ie
- Supervisor: Dr Nicholas Johnson, johnson@tcd.ie
- Data Protection Officer, Trinity College Dublin: Data Protection Officer, Secretary's Office, Trinity College Dublin, Dublin 2, Ireland. Email: dataprotection@tcd.ie. Website: www.tcd.ie/privacy.

Under GDPR, if you are not satisfied with how your data is being processed, you have the right to lodge a complaint with the Office of the Data Protection Commission, 21 Fitzwilliam Square South, Dublin 2, Ireland. Website: www.dataprotection.ie.

Will I be contacted again?

If you would like to take part in this study, you will be asked to sign the Consent Form (as a separate attachment/page) and specify what you understand based on the information provided. You will be given a copy of this information leaflet to keep. After your data has been provided and processed, you will not be contacted again unless there is a planned publication arising from this project, in which cases the non-anonymous participants will be notified.

Thank you for your contribution to this research.

Appendix B: Facilitator Survey

You are being invited to take part in a research study that is being done by Courtney Helen Grile of the School of Creative Arts, as part of her qualification for a PhD in Drama. You have been invited to take part because you are a facilitator of applied drama.

For the purpose of this research, applied drama is the term used to encompass workshops in which tools of drama and theatre are used in order to create dialogue within a group around issues that are of common concern. It includes practices labelled as community-engaged theatre, socially-engaged theatre, theatre for social change, theatre for social justice, theatre of the oppressed, playback theatre, and theatre for development. Applied drama is focused on the process - not an end-product or final performance which may have resulted from the process.

This study is being done to explore the potentialities of using applied drama praxis within the framework of deliberative democracies and to offer insights and solutions to those who are looking to create more inclusive practices of democratic communication. Deliberative democracy is a practice of democracy which focuses on engaging citizens in dialogue around social/political issues with each other and their government.

The survey is broken up into nine sections and should take around 30 minutes to complete. Your honest responses to the questions below will aid greatly in this study. If you need to contact the Researcher, Courtney Helen Grile, her email address is - grilec@tcd.ie.

Thank you very much for agreeing to take part in this survey! Please answer the questions below regarding the process that you facilitate within the workshop setting.

* Required

Consent

Please select the box if you agree with the statement.

1. I am aware of the topic and intent of this study, and I confirm that I wish to participate in this study by answering survey questions anonymously about my experience with applied drama praxis. *

☐ Agree

2. I understand that this study is entirely voluntary, and if I decide that I do not want to take part, I can stop taking part in this study at any time without giving a reason. *

☐ Agree

3. I understand that my survey responses will be collated and evaluated by the researcher. I agree that my records created by proceeding with the survey can be accessed for this purpose.

*

☐ Agree

4. I understand that my survey responses are anonymous by default but that I may choose, on the last page of the survey, to identify myself as someone willing to be contacted again for an interview or further discussion/detail on my responses. *

☐ Agree

5. I understand that personal information about me will be protected in accordance with the General Data Protection Regulation. *

☐ Agree

6. I understand that I will not be paid for taking part in this study. *

☐ Agree

7. I know how to contact the researcher if I need to (details above). *

☐ Agree

8. I understand that there are no direct benefits to me from participating in this study other than the opportunity to reflect and learn. I understand that results from analysis of my personal information will not be given to me. *

☐ Agree

9. I give permission for my personal information to be stored for possible future research related to the current study without further consent being required. *

☐ Agree

10. I understand I will not be paid for any future use of my personal information in publications arising from this research. *

☐ Agree

Inclusion

11. When planning an applied drama workshop, do you think intentionally about how to involve all participants at varying levels (meaning, participants are able to participate in a multitude of ways in which they feel most comfortable)? *

☐ Yes ☐ Sometimes ☐ No

12. If you answered "Yes" to the above question would you please describe your process and if you answered "Sometimes", would you please describe in which situations you would/wouldn't. (*open space to answer*)

13. In your experience, how effective are applied drama workshops at including the ideas and input of all participants? *

☐ Very effective ☐ Somewhat effective ☐ Neither effective nor ineffective
☐ Somewhat ineffective ☐ Very ineffective

14. Do you take geographical location/accessibility into consideration when planning an applied drama project? *

☐ Yes ☐ Sometimes ☐ No

15. If you would like, please elaborate further on the answer above regarding location and accessibility. (*open space to answer*)

16. Do you take the working environment (ie space/room/building) and the signifiers around that space into consideration when planning an applied drama project? *

☐ Yes ☐ Sometimes ☐ No

17. If you would like, please elaborate further on the answer above regarding the working space. (*open space to answer*)

18. How would you describe the power held by the facilitator at the start of a workshop or workshop series? (*open space to answer*)

19. How would you describe the shifting of power dynamics within a group from the beginning through to the end of an applied drama project? Please type your response to the blanks in the sentence below, identifying which is (a) and which is (b).

____(a)____ holds most of the power at the beginning of a project, which then shifts to ____ (b) ____ during the course of the project. *

20. Have you witnessed participants and the group as a whole becoming more empowered throughout the course of an applied drama workshop/project? *

☐ Yes ☐ No

21. If you answered "Yes" to the question above, can you please describe how this empowerment is expressed/demonstrated? (*open space to answer*)

Community

22. When planning an applied drama workshop, approximately what percentage of the time do you give in the first workshop to community-building? *

0-10% 11-20% 21-30% 31-40% 41-50% 51-60% 61-70% 71-80% 81-90%
91-100%

23. When planning an applied drama workshop that is part of an ongoing series and not the first workshop, what percentage of the time in the workshop do you give to community-building? *

0-10% 11-20% 21-30% 31-40% 41-50% 51-60% 61-70% 71-80% 81-90%
91-100%

24. In your experience, how effective are applied drama workshops at building a sense of community/comradery amongst participants? *

☐ Very effective. ☐ Somewhat effective ☐ Neither effective nor ineffective
☐ Somewhat ineffective ☐ Very ineffective

25. In your experience, how effective are applied drama workshops at building trust amongst participants? *

☐ Very effective ☐ Somewhat effective ☐ Neither effective nor ineffective
☐ Somewhat ineffective ☐ Very ineffective

26. Would you like to elaborate on your experience with building a sense of community and trust within applied drama settings? (*open space to answer*)

27. In your experience, are the environments created within your workshops respectful? *

Always ☐ Often ☐ Sometimes ☐ Rarely ☐ Never

☐ 28. Would you like to take a moment to describe further the level of respect within the workshops and/or point out moments when there has been disrespect shown? (Please take care not to include any identifying details, such as names, regarding people who may be involved in an anecdote) (*open space to answer*)

Learning

29. In your experience, would you say that learning/knowledge building takes place within applied drama workshops: *

☐ Always ☐ Often ☐ Sometimes ☐ Rarely ☐ Never

30. Does learning happen through: * (select all that apply)

- ☐ Outside/Expert Sources (News/Research/ Outside data)
- ☐ Sharing of personal knowledge/experience by participants within the group
- ☐ Group-generated learning/understanding through activities and reflection

31. How would you describe the learning/knowledge building that takes place within applied drama workshops? *(open space to answer)*

Communication

32. How would you describe the communication that takes place within applied drama settings? (Please take care not to include any identifying details, such as names, regarding people who may be involved in an anecdote) *(open space to answer)*

33. How would you describe the listening that occurs within applied drama workshops? Use a scale of 0 -10, with 0 representing Surface/Inactive Listening (little focus is given to what is expressed) and 10 representing Deep Listening (when a connection is forged in such a deep way you become generative with your hearing — adding more, much more than what is being said. Helping the other person experience hearing themselves). *

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

34. Have you had previous participants express to you their feelings regarding listening/being listened to within applied drama workshops? *

☐ Yes

☐ No

35. Would you please describe the feedback you have received regarding listening/being listened to from previous participants? *(open space to answer)*

36. Which of the following types of communicative activity take place in a typical applied drama workshop that you would facilitate: * [participants were able to select the degree (Never, Seldom, Sometimes, Often, Very Often) to which they used each of the following options.]

Narrative/Storytelling, Gesture, Body Language, Metaphor and Symbolism, Visual Image (such as tableau), Deliberation (reason- giving and listening), Written, Touch, Proximity, Kinetic (movement based), One-to-One, Small Groups, As a whole group

37. As a facilitator, are you aware and do you make a concerted effort to make sure that every participant has an opportunity to express themselves (verbally and/or nonverbally) within a workshop? *

☐ Yes

☐ No

38. Would you please describe further how you go about providing opportunities for participant expression? *(open space to answer)*

39. Which of the following types of reflection do you offer when you facilitate drama workshops (please check all that apply): *

☐ Reflection-in-action (such as writing in role, hot-seating, or pair-share)

☐ Reflection-on-action (such as after an activity or at the end of a session)

☐ Other

40. Within your role as an applied drama facilitator, do you actively engage in a reflexive practice, taking time to reflect on your practice and take action based upon that reflection? *

☐ Always ☐ Often ☐ Sometimes ☐ Rarely ☐ Never

41. As a facilitator, have you ever seen participants engage in this type of reflexive behaviour?

*

☐ Yes ☐ No

42. If you answered "Yes" to the above question, how frequently does this reflexive behaviour occur in your experience?

☐ Very frequently ☐ Somewhat frequently ☐ Occasionally

☐ Somewhat rarely ☐ Very rarely

Collaboration

43. In your experience, do applied drama settings foster collaboration amongst participants? *

☐ Very frequently ☐ Somewhat frequently ☐ Occasionally

☐ Somewhat rarely ☐ Very rarely

44. In your experience, do applied drama settings foster creative problem-solving amongst participants? *

☐ Very frequently ☐ Somewhat frequently ☐ Occasionally

☐ Somewhat rarely ☐ Very rarely

45. When an issue/problem arises, how do groups that you have facilitated in the past arrive at a solution? * [participants were able to select the degree (Never, Seldom, Sometimes, Often, Very Often) to which they used each of the following options.]

☐ Compromise

☐ Trying out multiple/all ideas to see what works

☐ A solution organically unfolds within the group as participants make suggestions, strengthening ideas as they develop

46. Are there other ways in which you have witnessed groups problem-solving? Please describe. (*open space to answer*)

47. What is your favourite exercise/activity for exploring a topic/issue for creative problem solving within an applied drama group? Why? Please describe. (*open space to answer*)

Empathy

48. In your experience as a facilitator, how often have you noticed increased empathy amongst participants in an applied drama setting? *

☐ Very often ☐ Often ☐ Sometimes ☐ Rarely ☐ Never

49. If you have observed empathy among participants, can you please describe how this empathy is expressed/demonstrated? *(open space to answer)*

Demographics

50. How many years of experience do you have as an applied drama facilitator? * *(open space to answer)*

51. Where are you currently based? * *(open space to answer)*

52. How do you identify? *

Man Nonbinary Transgender Woman Prefer not to answer Other

53. Please note your preferred pronouns (ie. She/Her/Hers) * *(open space to answer)*

54. Do you identify with any marginalised community? (this can be based on sexual orientation, religion, race, ability, etc.) Please list. * *(open space to answer)*