

**OPEN THE EYES: A DRAMA THERAPIST'S EXPERIENCE IN HONDURAS**  
**A self-revelatory research inquiry reflecting how a cross-cultural drama therapy  
experience can affect the development of a drama therapist**

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## **ABSTRACT**

### **OPEN THE EYES: A drama therapist's experience in Honduras**

A self-revelatory research inquiry reflecting how a cross-cultural drama therapy experience can affect the development of a drama therapist

Patricia Roy

This research is a self-reflection on a cross-cultural drama therapy experience. The methodology used has been the development of a self-revelatory performance as a container for this introspective process. The choice of this methodology is further validated in this paper by the documentation of the author's creative and performance processes which were part of it. This research is meant to catalyze other students or professionals in the field to integrate this kind of self-reflection into their work.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

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**ANNEXES:** The consent form and the performance program

**N.B.:** The DVD of the performance is available in Concordia Library with the bond copy of this research paper.

## **INTRODUCTION**

### **Statement of Purpose**

The goal of this research was to use the frame of self-revelatory performance as a methodology to process how my cross-cultural drama therapy experience of five months in a rehabilitation project with children at risk in Honduras has affected my development as a drama therapist.

### **Brief description of the experience's context**

To put this experience in its context, I will say that three centers, with three different populations at risk, were chosen as places of intervention:

- An experimental educative center with children who have behavior problems.
- A closed center where children and adolescents with drug abuse problems and who mainly come from street find shelter.
- An open-center for children, adolescents and young adults who have intellectual disabilities.

The source of this project came from a Canadian organization involved in international cooperation.

### **Source of the research**

This research has evolved from the need to make a self-reflection on this experience in order to become more aware of what it brought me. So, it represented a time in my professional development when I needed to undertake an introspective process after a significant experience of cross-cultural drama therapy. This period of

transition corresponded to the time following my coming back home. The focus of the exploration was on the meaning of being immersed as a drama therapist in a different culture than my own, including the difference of language, and how it has affected my professional development. So, the findings correspond to insights that will eventually influence the way I work as a drama therapist.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Cross-cultural experience and drama therapy**

I have to clarify the notion of culture and the way it influences us: “ what we take in not only gives meaning to our lives but also provides the structure and form our social relationships and the kind of self and personality structures we construct” (Dosamantes-Beaudry, 1997, p.129). Culture could be viewed as an iceberg where our ways of acting are the part over the water and the ways of thinking and feeling represent the one under. And these ways of acting, thinking and feeling are learned, shared and transmitted by a collectivity that embodies them (Rocher, 1970).

By definition, a cross-cultural experience is an “immersion into a new culture” (Mio, Trimble, Arredondo, Cheatham & Sue, 1999, p.5). However, the first immersion to do before making this “jump” is a self-immersion: “awareness of self is a vital element in learning to work with clients from different backgrounds than that of the therapist” (Baird, 1998, p.87). It comes from the idea that we cannot understand other cultures if we don’t know ourselves as a reference point. So, in correlation to this, it meant for me: being immersed in Honduran culture and being able to define my own identity as a Quebecer and Canadian; and in being sensitive to the differences between the two.



And, in a context where we lose our reference points, the first person that we meet is ourselves. This loss of meaningful cues from others is what we call a *culture shock*: “a more effective predictor of the intensity of the culture shock is related to the degree of similarity between the sojourner’s home culture and the host culture – the greater the similarity, the less intense the culture shock” (David, 1971, p.48). Related to my experience, I would say that I lived a culture shock in being immersed in a culture where safety was a preoccupation of day-to-day life, very different from my own, in Quebec, where I consider it to be a safe place to live. The difference of language was also part of this state, in feeling that it was not integrated yet for me, and that I had to fight to manage it, as if the learning of language became a vital need, an essential element to survive in my new culture.

To be able to go over our references cues, we have to decode the way of acting from the other culture by exploring their way of thinking and feeling in comparison to our own. We can talk about this cross-cultural empathy as “empathic imagination that invites the therapist to look into the lives of clients who are culturally different from them, to accurately imagine their world, and to allow themselves to be touched by clients’ experiences” (Dyche & Zayas, 2001, p.248). And this empathy has to include not only the culture but the context as well: “the awareness of the impact of demographic/cultural variables in peoples lives” (Constantine, Melincoff, Barakett, Torino & Warren, 2004, p.381). We can also relate this empathy to a state of *decentralization* which means embodying the host culture by changing the focus of the reference points that create our own identity.

A similar state of the culture shock can also occur on coming back home – a shock of return as it was mentioned in Gullahorn & Gullahorn (1963). It could correspond also to a moment where the person is lost after a state of decentralization and where the identity could be reconstructed by integrating new elements to the initial one. This period of transition that followed the immersion can be perceived at a certain level as a moment of “de-rolling,” prior to beginning to embody parts of the host culture identity.

The American drama therapist Robert Landy was practicing for some time in Taiwan. This experience confirmed his point of view about the self: “that there is no central Self or core to the human being and that through drama therapy one does not essentially concern oneself with altering or healing the Self and one`s conceptions of it” (Landy, 1997, p.172). In that way, living in another culture can put our own knowledge into a new perspective. In relationship to the Self, I would say that, personally, it reinforced my thought that we can integrate parts of different cultures and, by consequence, begin to embody an intercultural identity. Cross-cultural effectiveness is associated with intercultural identity: “a stranger who has developed an intercultural identity does not identify exclusively with his/her particular social group, but with other groups and subgroups as well, thus reflecting a more inclusive perspective” (Taylor, 1994, p.157).

This kind of experience also helps us to be more sensitive in using our tools and techniques that will, in turn, make the communication with the other culture easier. Research has indicated that non-verbal language and universal expression of emotions

are helpful cues in therapy but this awareness emerges “particularly in the process of communication where therapist and patient are from different background and language differences” (Kinzie, 1978, p.514). Penny Lewis declared in one of her articles about multiculturalism: “the search for a transcultural world view and universal unsituated, deconstructed techniques of healing and transformation is clearly part of global competency for an expressive arts therapy clinician” (Lewis, 1997, p.125). Also, it could help us to develop some helpful skills for this kind of work. Ann Moir-Bussy (2003), an educator and a counselor, demonstrated how traveling transformed the way she works. She talked, for example, about the way she could deal better now with the feeling of uncertainty.

Culture is inseparable from art and art, specifically theater, is a base of drama therapy. This is one of the reasons why creative arts therapies could be applied all over the world: “the creative arts provide individuals, including clients and counselors, an appreciation for their own cultural heritage and experiences” (Henderson and Samuel, 1998, p.183). In that sense, we can make a parallel between creative arts therapies and cultural therapy: “cultural therapy is a psychotherapy that uses cultural formations and icons as the driving process in psychotherapy” (Hickling, 2007, p.2).

I used these perspectives in the exploration of my own cross-cultural drama therapy experience in Honduras.

## **Self-revelatory performance as a reflection tool**

Samantha May (2002) and David-Jan Jurasek (2005) used this method to do introspective work on their own processes of becoming a drama therapist. They both undertook a self-reflection by means of self-revelatory performance.

May said that creativity was for her “a search for meaning and the finding of form for this meaning” (May, 2002, p.3). As I will approach it, later, my research process was a lived experience in that sense also. She mentioned that her process of embodying the role of a drama therapist included intense external and internal questioning. And this is this questioning, specifically in link with my experience in Honduras, that is reflected in this research.

And, Jurasek said that a choice of creative methodology “springs from the unique interplay between the person`s talents and needs, the nature of the research question and the field of inquiry” (Jurasek, 2005, p.10). I could say that these factors have all influenced this choice of methodology.

Both May and Jurasek confirmed the appropriateness of the methodology of self-revelatory performance to their particular research projects.

Jurasek talked about his process as a way to “elucidate, de-stigmatize, de-mystify, and make sense of some of the fears, doubts, and losses that are part... of becoming and being a drama therapist” (Jurasek, 2005, p.3). In that sense, a parallel could be made between the creative process, in itself, and the process of becoming a drama therapist, in thinking about the fears, the doubts and the losses, for example, that often arise during creativity and, in this context, a performance process.

## **Storytelling and self-revelatory performance**

Often, when we want to do a performance in front of an audience, the first impulse comes from the need to share a story with a public. The research project of Sheila Rubin (1996), using self-revelatory performance as a methodology, emerged especially in regards to this need to share a part of her life experience.

For my part, in addition to my need to explore this experience and to construct this research project as being part of a learning transition that eventually would be integrated into my work, I would say that I also had this desire to share this significant period of my professional development as a story. This desire was turned specifically towards a sharing with my community of creative arts therapies, like someone who returns to her or his family to share the experiences of a journey. And, I felt that instead of a formal presentation, for example, which is an interesting approach in itself, but seems to me limited to an intellectual level, a performance was, to me, the right way to embrace both emotional and intellectual levels. At the same time, the performance process gave me the opportunity to explore more deeply what this experience brought me and what I had lived.

And, if we want to reveal ourselves, then, this “self” is automatically related to a personal experience, a true story to share. So, the story becomes the frame and the way to understand the meaning of our experience. For myself, I wanted to understand the meaning of my experience in Honduras.

Christine Ciona (2001) and Sheila Rubin (1996) started with this desire of sharing their personal story through the process of a self-revelatory performance. Ciona shared

a period of her childhood where she had to live with cancer and Rubin, childhood memories of her mother who suffered from schizophrenia.

## **RESEARCH METHOD**

### **Self-revelatory performance and its implementation**

According to Renée Emunah (1994), self-revelatory performance is a way to use our own experience as material for a creative piece, which will be ultimately presented as a performance. In this context, my cross-cultural drama therapy experience in Honduras became the material of creation. This creative process in itself became a tool for a self-exploration and self-examination. And this tool was used to explore how this experience has affected my development as a drama therapist.

This method is influenced by Grotowski (1968) who perceives the work of the actor as a self-penetration. By consequence, this internal exploration could be associated to heuristic research that is “the focus on the human person in experience and that person’s reflective search, awareness, and discovery” (Douglass & Moustakas, 1985, p.42). And, in adapting Grotowski’s technique of poor theatre, the importance becomes giving priority to internal instead of external. We don’t talk about a performance in the meaning of impressing a public, but if it takes place, the person is supposed to present the outcome of his or her process on the stage and it implies some courage and risks. That’s why I really paid special attention to my collaboration with the director and the technician, so as to not add some artifices to the theatrical piece that would not serve the transmission of the process outcome.

It is not related to autobiographical theatre because it is based on unresolved issues that are “emotionally on-the-line” (Emunah, 1994, p.224) and deal with emotional and psychological vulnerability. I could say that even if five other months were separating me from my experience in Honduras, I felt that I was still emotionally close to it. This is in line with the perspective of Artaud (1958), for example, who views the theatre as a ritual of sacrifice where the performance exteriorizes a real state of vulnerability and authenticity. When the performer is disarmed in front of a public, a connection with this same vulnerability from the audience can happen. By consequence, the performance acts as a facilitator to the public’s response around the issue by the state of openness established. And, according to the feed-back that I will report later on in this paper, I could say that the performance helped to open a discussion around the issue of being immersed in a different culture while doing drama therapy work. Emunah mentioned that to optimize this connection with the audience, “the personal must translate into the universal; the experience of the particular actor must elucidate the broader human experience” (Emunah, 1994, p.292). This was my goal in regards to my cross-cultural drama therapy experience and I kept it in mind, especially, the way I would share it through performance in front of the public.

To be able to reach this goal, I had to take into consideration the super objective of the performance process. Stanislavski (1963) described the super objective as the guideline of the performance; it is the main theme that the actor bears during all the process. In using performance as a research tool, the super objective becomes an internal motor for the actor. The focus of this research meant exploring being immersed

in another culture, so as to gain greater awareness of its effect on me as a drama therapist.

## **DRAMA THERAPY METHOD**

### **Role method and its implementation**

According to Landy (1993) and his role theory, the role is the protagonist, the counter-role, its antagonist, and the guide, the mediator between the both, which aims to harmonize their coexistence. It is mentioned that the existence of the counter-role is dependently correlated to the presence of the role. It is not necessarily described as a dark side, but more as a role that would be on the other side of the point of balance within the personality. And, in that sense, the role of the guide is to establish or re-establish the equilibrium. So, the person has to be able to shift from one to another in a certain way, accepting this ambivalence (Landy as cited in Johnson & Lewis, 2000, Chap.4). The method includes eight steps:

1. Invoking the role.
2. Naming the role.
3. Playing out/working through the role.
4. Exploring alternative qualities in sub-roles.
5. Reflecting upon the role play: discovering role qualities, functions and styles inherent in the role.
6. Relating the fictional role to everyday life.
7. Relating roles to create a functional role system.



8. Social modeling: discovering ways that client's behaviour in role affects others in their social environments. (Landy as cited in Johnson & Lewis, 2000, p.59)

The first and the second steps corresponded to the moment when the rehearsals started and I needed to embody and render my experience in a concrete way. I imagined myself as a warrior ready to be part of a journey. At the same time, it was important that this journey was seen as peaceful. So, I named this role, the Peaceful Warrior.

The third step was associated to the moment when this role was explored in the play space. In the fourth step, the exploration tended to associate this role to its counterpart. The counterpart is related to this role but represented another facet of it with different qualities. These steps corresponded, first, to the moment when I evoked the role of the Butterfly as the counterpart of the Peaceful Warrior. So, by consequence, this new role took the position of the counter-role. At first, I did not realize that these two roles were interrelated and could coexist. I perceived them as two distinct entities that could not interact together.

After that came the fifth step. At this moment, the role of the Peaceful Warrior was identified as strong, grounded and loyal. Its functions were associated to the fact that this role served for engagement and facing obstacles. So, its style was similar to a warrior who embodies some rigidity, with a voice that expresses self-assurance and could refer a little bit to the metaphor of "the heroine". But, at the same time, this character undertook a personal transformation in showing a shift in her behaviour

during the theatrical piece that could be associated as an increase of awareness, and this metaphor of “the heroine” was, in some way, transformed to the role of the “learner”.

After it, came the sixth step. So, concretely, at this time, I attributed the role of the Peaceful Warrior to my involvement in this cross-cultural experience in being ready to face the possible obstacles as the difference of language, the difference of culture, and the adaptation related to it. I was keeping my feet on the ground, fixing realistic objectives and having progressively more awareness about the whole context of my experience in Honduras and in being more sensitive to all the factors as social, economic and political that represented barriers in the work as a drama therapist and especially in a country in development.

In the seventh step, the role of the Peaceful Warrior had to be integrated and put in a partial perspective of a role system. By this way, it could be interpreted as the moment when this role had to take its place in relationships to other roles and its counter-role. The intervention of the guide helps during this quest for harmony. The evocation of the Intuition helped in that sense. And during the experience, it was representative of the way I was working with those children, for example, by intuitively following the clients; being sensitive about what they brought to the process and less rigid in my planning. I could say that this moment corresponded to the one where I changed the way I perceived the counter-role, the Butterfly, who represented my sensitivity. First, I thought that my sensitivity would be a weakness in my work, but, finally, I saw it as strength to embody empathy and authenticity. It allowed me to be

touched by my clients and, by consequence, gave space to possible personal transformation.

Finally, in eighth step, when the person reaches a state of equilibrium, its process outcome could represent a social modeling for his or her environment. In that sense, my acceptance of the involvement of sensitivity in my work, in realizing its benefits, could influence other people in the field to model this type of “sensitive” approach. The awareness that I got in perceiving me more as a learner could influence workers implicated in similar experiences in keeping in mind that we can learn from it. In that sense, it could influence them to perceive it as an opportunity to exchange knowledge with workers from the host culture and also to realize how in some countries, social, economical and political factors can be important barriers to the therapeutic process.

This use of the role method emerged by itself during the rehearsal process and helped to find insights that I will describe further. The characters appeared at different moments of the process and have been seen as the bearers of the story and the process of transformation. I became aware that the confrontation of these characters in the play space and their interactions between each other helped me in the progression of this reflective process. And the more I felt that this reflection moved me, the more the description of the characters could be revealed with additional details and the more their interactions brought sense and meaning to this journey. The power of the metaphor was brought by them and permitted me to have distance towards the story and to give meaning to the theatrical piece and its aesthetic components. I realized that the presence of each of them during the performance was crucial. I felt that the

presentation of only one of them, for example, the role of the Peaceful Warrior, would render the experience as one-dimensional and would not explain the transformation that had been lived.

The integration of Landy's drama therapy method helped me, in projecting the self as a recipient of many roles that correspond to "discrete patterns of behaviour that suggest a particular way of thinking, feeling or acting" (Landy as cited in Johnson & Lewis, 2000, p.52), to reinforce my thoughts in line with the theoretical perspective of Landy (1997). It confirms the perspective that during an introspective work, represented as a research process in this context, but also in a therapeutic one, we can not perceive the self as a core unique and rigid, but, need a more open and expansive view of it. In this research process, three internal roles represented a different component of the self and each of them embodied a specific behaviour: the Intuition, the Butterfly and the Peaceful Warrior.

## **THE PERFORMANCE PROCESS**

### **Its evolution**

Firstly, the beginning of this introspective process started with a state of vulnerability in relationship to my cross-cultural experience in Honduras. I was living a difficult period of transition in feeling a state of "being between two places" and I became aware that a creative process might be the best way to approach this situation. I needed to keep an emotional distance by integrating over-distanced exercises to process this experience at this point of the research: "Overdistancing becomes a cognitive process of remembering the past; underdistancing, an affective process of

reliving or reexperiencing a past event. At aesthetic distance, the two extremes states are in balance.” (Landy, 1983, p.177) I was in a state of being “lost” which could be associated to the shock of return. My immersion in the other culture implied decentralization. Decentralization in that context meant, as I said previously, enrolling this host culture the same way as we do in embodying a character and in being able to shift the focal points of our own identity. Personally, I felt that I had adjusted to this decentralization but the weakness was at the level of being able to come back to my own cultural references. So, to integrate what I wanted to keep from this experience in regards to myself, I needed a moment of transition. And, this research project responded to this need.

First of all, I started to mentally review all significant moments that I had had in my cross-cultural journey, like watching it as a movie passing in front of me. I reviewed my planning and my observation notes. This part was done in a rational way just to get an overview of my experience.

After that, I came back to this anamnesis and made a selection from these moments choosing the most important ones.

Following this, just letting go this kind of overwhelming situation, I used poetry to explore my emotions. And, it was also in reaction to the fact that I was trying to separate my work experience from my personal experience. But, I realized that I could not do it because they were so interrelated. I became aware that I had to start firstly with what I had lived simply as a human being.

I started to write using “I” but felt, in reading it, that it was too under-distanced and that I needed to use “She”. Also, by consequence, it would facilitate the identification by the public and help the performance to be perceived as a story that might have been lived by another person.

So, in that sense, these two approaches gave me rational and emotional lines. I identified my rational and emotional states before and after this experiment. The initial rational state was a need to open my mind to what happens in others countries and the return corresponded to growth of awareness and sensitivity in that area. The emotional state, before this experiment, had been identified as a need to live a new challenge and the return was qualified as a state of being more grounded in embodying an attitude more realistic in my work, in contrast to my original idealistic expectations.

For the rehearsals, in collaboration with my director, the main theme, i.e. the meaning of being immersed in a different culture and the effect on me as a drama therapist, was explored in the play space with the use of different objects. We used realistic and metaphoric improvisations about the experience and, subsequently, the script began to emerge. So, after each rehearsal, the writing process was implemented. It was all still in process until the day of the performance. A journal had also been used during all this period. I felt at the beginning insecure with this type of process, because nothing was really fixed until the day of the performance but, at the same time, it permitted me to view it as a “work in progress” that was never really finished. It helped me to not see the performance as the transmission of the final results, but more as the results that appeared at “this time”.

The date for the performance was something that had been reviewed many times, to make certain it was the right moment to present and that I felt really prepared with what I would perform.

An exploration of gestures had been integrated as an addition to the poetic part. Three languages had been integrated into the performance reflecting the way I lived this experience: French, English and Spanish. The French language corresponds to my identity, in being francophone. The English is related to my professional studies that had been mostly approached in this language. Spanish corresponds to the one present in the culture I had been immersed in. Three roles emerged during the rehearsal process and were kept for the performance, the Peaceful Warrior as the role, the Butterfly as the counter-role, and the Intuition as the guide.

At the end of the performance process, a technician helped to integrate the lighting set up. This really acted as a powerful and metaphoric element; helped to transpose, theatrically, this sharing; and supported the transitions, especially where the places changed. I had a desire to integrate a musician who would play percussions during the performance because music was really an element that was present during my experience of Honduran culture. From my perspective, I felt that music was really an art that was connected to this culture and even more present than theatre, for example. And I integrated it during the therapeutic process with the children and adolescents because it came by itself in the earliest phase of working with them. But, finally, I decided to only integrate it at one moment as a sound track so as to not disturb the intimate contact with the public. I chose to present the performance in a studio to

facilitate an intimate atmosphere. I chose the one where I spent most of the time during my studies in Drama Therapy. It was representative of the way I wanted to project this story, i.e. as a learning experience in my professional life.

### **The Performance experience**

The transmission of this experience's exploration via performance was moving at an emotional level. Around five months passed and separated this cross-cultural drama therapy experience from its development into a performance, but it was still perceived as "emotionally on the line" (Emunah, 1994, p.224), even if I used the third person to share my story to get greater distance towards it. I still felt that this experience was close to me. And I really felt vulnerable to share this theatrical piece where the content came from my own life. I was afraid of being judged, especially in link with the fact that it might not be perceived as a "learning experience" but more as a "failure". Another thing that preoccupied me was the notion of performance. I had come from an artistic background and I was afraid that people would critique my performance from an artistic point of view, firstly, and not recognize the process behind it. I wanted to transmit this emotional experience to the public, but my fear was that I would not be able to establish this connection.

### **The post-performance discussion**

Finally, the performance, in fact, was received as an emotional experience by the public according to the feed-back I received. And, it seemed to act as a good catalyst for the post-performance discussion. The fact that people were touched by the performance seemed to indicate that it played the role of awakening their own



emotions and memory during the experience, especially considering that the invitations had been mostly addressed to people who had lived similar types of cross-cultural experiences.

Stanislavski (1963) explained that affective memory is something coming from inside, as a thought, or from outside as a sound, a smell or an object which can awaken a moment in the past.

The discussion of issues approached in the performance seemed to derive from this special state, as if the emotional called forth the intellectual. Nineteen people were present during the post-performance discussion and each of them signed a consent form that confirmed their acceptance of being videotaped and, by consequence, implicated in this research project. Their participation added another perspective and nourished this reflection process. In hearing their feed-back and their own experiences, it was really nourishing for me, intellectually. It was also interesting to hear about some experiences that were focused on the same theme but on a more personal level. And, as I realized during this exploration's process, personal and professional experiences are interrelated, and, by consequence, one has an influence on the other.

## **CONCLUSION**

### **Return to the methodology**

The use of self-revelatory performance for the methodology has been perceived as a good choice and as a helpful tool for the exploration. The choice of the methodology was oriented to self-revelatory performance because the subject of inquiry necessitated a self-reflection provided by this frame. And this introspective

process implied an art-based research in which art became the bearer of findings. In that sense, the performance process was an opportunity to explore an experience and analyze its meaning at rational and emotional levels. The public, by its responses, represented in this case, by a post-performance discussion, brought another perspective to the researcher's outcome and embodied the role of exterior eye and witness, which had been previously played by the director.

So, if I review the goal of this research, which was to use the frame of self-revelatory performance as a methodology to explore how my cross-cultural drama therapy experience of five months in a rehabilitation project with children at risk in Honduras has affected my development as a drama therapist, I would say that this methodology was the right choice to make and helped me to reach it. Insights that had been provided by the performance process and from the post-performance discussion were complementary and enhanced the findings. A creative process, by itself, would not permit me to put my experience into perspective. This was made possible only during the post-performance discussion, through hearing others who had lived similar ones. And, using creativity responded well to my strengths that were developed from an artistic background. So, I felt more comfortable in using art to find meanings as opposed to a quantitative methodology emerging more from science, for example. Also, it encouraged me to continue to integrate other self-reflections into my work when I would feel the need to do it; to not regard the way I work as stagnant but more as in constant movement, always maintaining the position of learner.

## Insights

To explain how this cross-cultural drama therapy experience has affected my development as a drama therapist, I will focus on insights that emerged firstly during the process and, later, during the discussion that followed the performance.

Firstly, the three roles, i.e. the Peaceful Warrior, the Butterfly and the Intuition were related to the three internal roles that helped me during this experience.

The role of the Peaceful Warrior represented the “internal fighter” that I needed: to be grounded and involved in a cause, the situation of children. The characteristic “Peaceful” was important to qualify this fight. This role changed during my experience: being naïve at the beginning, it gained greater awareness at the end. This change was necessary due to political, social and economic reasons, as well as the notion of time and the difference of language. And, I would say that the difference of language was, for me, the biggest challenge. I realized how language management is important in order to go deeply into the therapeutic process even if a weakness at this level could open doors to other forms of communication, such as body language and universal emotional expressions, and helps to facilitate the integration of elements from the host culture as tools to be adapted. So, the role of the Peaceful Warrior represented a constant learning process.

The counter-role, the Butterfly, represented the sensitivity. It had been perceived at the beginning as a weakness in my work but, during this experience, it acted as a facilitator for empathy and authenticity, taking into consideration the cross-cultural context. In fact, it became a necessary source of personal transformation

helping me to undertake a state of decentralization. Concerning my personal transformation, I would say that this decentralization permitted further integration of some components from my own culture, in thinking about values, for example. As I said previously, it permitted me to see cultural identity as a core in movement that could be reconstructed, depending on what one would like to integrate in or remove from it. And in the work, it permitted me to see the therapeutic process as a cycle where not only the clients but also the therapist will undertake a transformational process. Because of the richness provided by this kind of experience, I also would like to be identified as a cross-cultural drama therapist and continue to undertake similar projects.

The Intuition represented the guide and qualified the way I worked and took decisions: it was Intuition that helped me to make the choice to leave my country and to be immersed in this cross-cultural project. It represented also the flexibility concerning the techniques that I used in the work, especially in being receptive to what the clients brought during the therapeutic process. Specifically, as I said previously, it helped me to be open to the different elements from the culture that could be integrated into the therapeutic process. This integration could facilitate, at the same time, a decrease of resistance. Instead of being rigid, by using exclusively our own tools, we must let the clients use their own: their authentic culture heritage.

The post-performance discussion confirmed the meaning of the interaction between those roles and opened up the opportunity for others to share similar experiences. For example, one person's reflection from the public confirmed that the roles of the Peaceful Warrior and the Butterfly were complementary in symbolizing

together “being strong and grounded” and, at the same time, “of letting go”: the two states that have been proclaimed as essential to be immersed and to do something really significant in a cross-cultural experience. Social barriers were considered in this discussion in regards to how resistance of the clients and workers in the host culture might consider a “stranger” to be unable to help due to the cultural differences.

Another thing that was brought up during the discussion was the notion of humility, which the “stranger” has to adopt to be well received by the workers and, at the same time, to help maintain the dignity of the clients.

The importance of sustainability had been discussed as well in regards to thinking of possible ways of penetrating the barriers of the cultural context and allowing the continuation of the drama therapy process after the drama therapist has gone “home”. I think that this continuation could happen through the sharing of knowledge with the professionals present in the host culture. And, this step put in perspective, then, the importance of the integration of this knowledge by the drama therapist, before this transmission is possible. Personally, I felt during this experience that even if the challenge of the difference of language was a major obstacle in the use of certain techniques, it also permitted me to realize that I needed to review them, in going to some workshops, a little like going to the gym, in order to feel that I could use them with assurance and transmit them to people of another culture.

At a more personal level, the culture shock and the shock of return were perceived as transitions in which one’s identity could be decentralized and recentralized, and where different aspects could change, be removed or integrated.

## **Limitations**

These findings represent, firstly, a subjective point of view that resulted from an introspective exploration, and, secondly, from a public's subjective response after the performance which included around 25 audience members. By consequence, the perspective of these results is limited; in addition to the fact that they represent subjective points of views, they also represent a very small sample. These aspects have to be taken into consideration when the reader is reviewing this kind of research. I think these results should be viewed as a catalyst for reflection about the issue of being immersed in another culture in the field. Therefore, this is not a research that pretends to give one way to live this kind of experience, but, more so, a way to envision some points that could be interesting to consider in approaching this kind of work.

However, I would say that, even though the amount of participation was limited, the selection of the public helped to enrich this reflection as responses mainly come from people who had lived similar experiences. So, the participants in the post-performance discussion and their various perspectives helped to enrich a reflection on the issue of what it is to immerse oneself in another culture.

## **Discussion about the benefits of the study to the field**

As I said previously, this research could encourage other students or professionals of the field to undertake similar experiences, and to question themselves on the way such experiences can be nourishing for their work.

It could also stimulate a reflection about the issue of being immersed in another culture as a drama therapist. In this way, this kind of reflection could facilitate further

development of the approach of the therapeutic process with clients from a different culture and issues related to it, as well as influence the way of working. By consequence, it could open up perspectives on multicultural work. It could expand reflections and integrative thinking that would tend to enlarge the possibilities of cross-cultural work and help to facilitate the necessary preparation for the therapists interested to this area.

It could also push institutions to integrate cross-cultural internships to help drama therapists to be more prepared to undertake multicultural work, face the issues related to it and pay attention to the skills that have to be developed to be effective in the work.

Personally, this research permitted me to be receptive to the need that I had during this period of transition, corresponding to my return to Canada when I knew I needed to undertake this necessary self-reflection about how this significant working experience had affected my development as a drama therapist. I think that it was representative of the way I want to continue my work, alternating practice and self-reflection in order to feel that it is constantly being refreshed.

And, I think that doubts and questioning about the work are very useful in that they make us reflect more deeply and help us to establish goals to readjust our approach in significant ways. For example, I would say that this reflection will now permit me to be more sensitive to the possibilities of integrating elements from the culture of the client in the therapeutic process, so as to decrease their resistance and to empower them in their therapeutic experience.

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**Consent Form for research project**

**Authorization for photography, video recordings and audio recordings  
Autorisation pour photographies, enregistrements vidéos et sonores**

I, the undersigned \_\_\_\_\_  
Je, soussigné (e) \_\_\_\_\_

Authorize \_\_\_\_\_  
Autorise \_\_\_\_\_

To take any :  
À prendre/utiliser :

	YES	NO
Video recording/enregistrement video (Applicable) (During the discussion after the performance)	_____	_____
Photographs/photographies (N/A)	_____	_____
Audio recordings/enregistrements sonores (N/A)	_____	_____

That the researcher deem appropriate, and to use and publish them for educational purposes.  
Que le/la chercheur(se) jugera opportun à utiliser et publier pour des fins éducatives.

## ***Open the eyes:*** A drama therapist's experience in Honduras

This self-revelatory performance explores my cross-cultural drama therapy experience of five months in a rehabilitation project with kids at risk in Honduras. At my return in Canada, I felt a need of introspection to get deeper understanding of this experience. To make this self-reflection, I had been immersed other five months in another traveling experience, a creative process, to find answers in using poetry, embodiment, roles play, a journal... And, in parallel to this creative process, little by little, in assembling the pieces, was build a performance. And, this is this outcome that I would like to present you tonight. Three roles immerged and are presented in this theatrical piece: the Intuition, the Peaceful Warrior and the Butterfly. The performance integrates English, Spanish and French languages. A discussion is proposed after the performance for public response and to open a door on the meaning of being immersed in a different culture in the work and the different issues. All feed-back are welcomed (sharing about feelings, thoughts, similar experiences...) and will bring another perspective to this reflection process. I would like to say special thanks to Louise Rinfret and Nisha Sajnani who helped me during my preparation for this cross-cultural experience; to all professionals on the sites in Honduras from whom I have learned so much and to all the children for whom I have such great admiration for their capacity for resiliency; to Stephen Snow, my research advisor, for his help in all the moments where I was lost; to Tomas Sierra, my director, who helped me to assemble the pieces during the rehearsal process; to Marie-Claude Charlebois , Marie-Ève Pageau and Leah Manasseh for their technical supports; to Monica Sweeney for her support; to all of you for your presence...

And to all those people who contributed to open my eyes...      THANK YOU!

Patricia Roy