

WHERE IS THE BALANCE? AN AUTETHNOGRAPHY EXPLORING MY ROLES OF
STUDENT, THERAPIST, AND ARTIST.

KRISTINA GAUDET

A Research Paper
in
The Department
of
Creative Arts Therapies

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of Master of Arts
Concordia University
Montreal, Quebec, Canada

August 1, 2015

CONCORDIA UNIVERSITY

School of Graduate Studies

This research paper prepared

By: Kristina Gaudet

Entitled: WHERE IS THE BALANCE? AN AUTETHNOGRAPHY EXPLORING MY
ROLES OF STUDENT, THERAPIST, AND ARTIST.

and submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts (Creative Arts Therapies; Drama Therapy Option)

complies with the regulations of the University and meets the accepted standards with respect to originality and quality as approved by the research advisor.

Research Advisor:

Stephen Snow, PhD, RDT-BCT

Department Chair:

Stephen Snow, PhD, RDT-BCT

September, 2015

© KRISTINA GAUDET 2015

ABSTRACT

WHERE IS THE BALANCE? AN AUTOETHNOGRAPHY EXPLORING MY ROLES OF
STUDENT, THERAPIST, AND ARTIST.

KRISTINA GAUDET

This research paper summarizes the personal process the researcher carried out over several months while exploring the question: what is the lived experience of a drama therapy student struggling between her student, therapist, and artist roles? The paper includes a reflection on the process of the autoethnographic method, and explores how the performative component was a valuable element in presenting the findings and catalyzing a useful discussion around the question of how does the creative arts therapist find balance between their therapist and artist roles. Through this research process, the researcher has discovered that this question of finding balance is personal and subjective, therefore there will be no one definitive way to ensure the creative arts therapists can obtain the balance between these roles. Furthermore, it was found that many individuals in the creative arts therapies community believe that it is hardest to make space for both artist and therapist roles during the training program. The overall goal of this research was to create a space where the creative arts therapies community can come together and discuss this question, share their personal process and give support to their colleagues and cohort members. In the future, further research could be done with more participants involved.

Table of Contents

List of tables.....	iv
Chapter 1. Introduction.....	1
Chapter 2. Literature Review.....	2
Chapter 3. Methodology.....	7
Chapter 4. Findings and Discussion.....	10
References.....	18
Appendix.....	21

Chapter 1: Introduction

This paper presents my personal process of exploring the roles of student, therapist, and artist. This came out of my need to find how to establish balance between these three critical roles. This research began after having explored another research question that focused more on how I could process my experience in a difficult practicum setting through the use of art making. The further I explored this topic, I realized there was a more important question I was asking myself: how can I fit my artist role into my busy academic and clinical life? How can these three roles co-exist for me? This personal research question derived from the struggle I experienced during the drama therapy program where I had come to find my artistic side had taken a back seat. Over the course of the two years of training, I noticed other colleagues in the field express similar difficulties. From this illumination I understood that this was the authentic question I wished to explore for my research project. From there I understood that it would be appropriate to use an arts-based method to present my exploration. The methodology chosen was initially a heuristic method; however over time it was clear that the method best suited for this project would be an autoethnography. The autoethnographic method allowed me to explore the personal phenomenology of my experience as a drama therapy student and use my lived experience as data to explore how this question of balancing roles such as student, therapist, and artist manifested during the creative arts therapies training program. My aim was to use my personal experience, portrayed in arts-based data, to present my material to the community through a performative medium and open a space for the audience to explore and share their personal experiences with this question as well. Furthermore, with this performative aspect a sub-question emerged in my research: will the performance help my personal process regarding this research question, and will it catalyze a valuable discussion amongst the creative arts therapies community?

Chapter 2: Literature Review

The following is a review of academic works that has helped shape my research question. The literature I reviewed during this entire process was scanned from articles on creative arts therapy practices for children and adolescents, including, several on creative arts intervention techniques. Most importantly, and what will be summarized in this review, are the articles exploring art responses created by the therapist, as well as the relationship between the roles of artist versus therapist. The diverse material allowed me to look for clues in others' research about how they handle the dance between therapist and artist. Furthermore, it allowed me to continue to ask questions around this theme of balancing roles as I continued to review past research.

A main theme that emerged during my reading was the use of roles; be it as a tool for clients or a discussion on how a therapist takes on many roles and responsibilities. Doyle (1998) shows how exploring roles help the client express affect. Roles can represent the individual's selfobjects that help them build and integrate new roles in their lives. In this context, the term 'selfobject' comes from the self psychology theory where objects outside of the self represent the self. For example, a child may have a favourite toy that becomes a selfobject of that represents their self. Another example is how a "particular meal that reminds you of your mother" but is not your mother, simply an idealized selfobject that functions as a mirror of your mother (Doyle, 1998, p. 5). The therapist may even become one of these idealized selfobjects as the client explores and creates their own healthy role repertoire. As a creative arts therapist these transferences from clients can be played within the sessions in the safety of metaphor and fantasy. Countertransference is another aspect that can inform us about their past narratives. Lewis suggests that this is the advantage of the creative arts therapies, as we have the "vessels" available to us to use transference and countertransference in the therapeutic process (1992, p. 2). The vessels she suggests the creative arts therapist have are (1) the creative arts media, (2) the therapist's body through somatic countertransference, and (3) the "bipersonal sphere" or the shared space between the client and the therapist (Lewis, 1992, p. 2). The overarching theme of these studies is the suggestion that the creative arts therapies are able to model secure attachment, mirror our clients through the art medium and enable us to communicate non-verbally with them resulting in effective attunement and affect containment and expression. In all of these studies, the therapist is a container as well as the provider of the art medium for the client to use. Upon reading these articles a question emerged related to my own research: is there

a way the therapist provides the art medium for himself or herself, whether it is in session with their client or during their own personal process?

As the creative arts therapist goes through training they begin to establish a professional identity. Irwin encourages the therapist to practice self-awareness, empathy, and have a general “capacity to invest in others” as well as have theory you gain from training (1986, p.192). Federman (2010) investigates kinaesthetic ability and openness to experiences among dance therapy graduate students, showing a positive correlation between both aspects. Federman suggests that these characteristics are favorable to have as a creative arts therapist. Overall, these articles focus on creating the identity of a clinician rather than a more unique and perhaps more favorable identity of ‘creative arts therapist.’

Other studies show how post-session art making can help the therapist work through questions that may arise with a client. Kielo (2013) shows how art responses helped art therapists understand countertransference as well as to facilitate the therapeutic process. A case study by Miller (2011) showed how post-session response art helped with countertransference and to become a better witness and container for the client. Studies on post-session art responses have explored countertransference. I believe the following step is to see how post-session responses can be used for other aspects such as creating insight into interventions for the clients, as well as insights for the therapist and their personal process.

These studies above show us that art making is an important process for our client’s healing and personal process in therapy. It also suggests how the therapist is the vessel that brings that creative opportunity to the client. As creative arts therapists we know how powerful the arts are. So why don’t we do it for ourselves more often?

Some studies have explored the struggle between the creative arts therapist’s role as artist and clinician. Orkibi (2012) explored students and their relationship with their art form as it changed during training. Results showed how students had less time to make art as self-care and would only create art in training. On the other hand, the students began to appreciate the healing power and the process of art making. As creative arts therapists students begin to establish themselves in the professional role, there seems to be a risk of “clinification syndrome” (Allen, 1992). During training our clinical skills increase and in turn our art practice seems to decrease. Allen (1992) suggests trying to stay involved in art making even during client sessions. Brown’s study (2008) showed how continuation of art making helped therapist’s wellbeing as well as

affectivity in their practice. A drama therapy technique that can be used as an intervention or post-session response is “dramatic resonances” (Pendzik, 2008). The initial idea in this technique is to have one perform another’s story as they witness. As a post-session response the therapist can balance both roles. Overall, post-session responses seem to give the therapist the ability to increase empathy for their clients, and continue with effective therapeutic processing. I suggest this technique can be used for personal exploration for a therapist to allow them to embody and play out questions or struggles they may have regarding clinical training, or artistic roles within themselves.

Cashell and Miner explain that perhaps the creative arts therapies community still find conflict in roles due to our still “nascent position” in the mental health field (1983, p. 93). We are still trying to find our role in regards to other mental health professionals. Casher and Miner have surveyed this discussion and results show that there is still role ambiguity amongst creative arts therapists. Psychiatrists and psychologists have traditionally dominated the field of mental health, and as creative arts therapists we must bridge this gap between them and us. Levick (1995) suggests that creative arts therapists and other mental health professionals share similar aspects in how we identify ourselves as ethical practitioners. This similarity in the roles and responsibilities we assume should be a way for us to connect with each other. In most cases our supervisors will be from other fields; it is here we can start sharing our knowledge of how the creative arts therapies is just as valid as other therapies and begin to receive the recognition and validation we need to continue emerging from our budding status as a genuine therapeutic practice. I believe that part of this ‘clinification syndrome’ we experience in the field is due to the fact that we have yet to be validated and recognized as equals amongst other professionals. If this is a lack of confidence in the ‘creative arts’ part of our practice, then perhaps this is why we not only begin to stop using these techniques with our clients but also stop valuing art making as a personal initiative for self-growth and self-care.

Arthur Robbins is a sculptor and art therapist who wrote about his struggle to find the “theoretical position that integrates...” these two roles (1982, p. 1). He continues to explain how he had been exploring the “intimate interplay between [his] own personal inner development and his professional growth as an art therapist (Robbins, 1982, p. 1). At the beginning of Robbins’ career his sculptor and his art therapist roles were separate, however over time he was able to find the framework that allowed both to co-exist. However this “struggle for meaning” and

harmony of roles is, what I believe Robbins is portraying, a part of a developmental journey a creative arts therapist will experience not just during their training program but also as they grow as a professional.

Creative arts therapists bring art and creativity back to its healing core. It is a “natural human expression of transcendence”, and as creative arts therapists, especially in drama therapy techniques, we allow our clients to explore a ‘not-me’ experience that helps them appreciate and understand themselves (Landy, 1998, p. 300). Many creative arts therapists tend to separate their artist and their creative arts therapist roles; therefore Landy proposes to create a model where the two can dialogue. Landy suggests that this is possible due to the five commonalities between the two roles: creative expression, catharsis, imagination, beauty, and transcendence (1998, p. 301-302). Our modern system has us separating all disciplines and as a result we are left choosing one versus another - art or science, and as science has become more valued art will always seem to come last. As creative arts therapists we not only need to use art in its healing value with clients but promote art making as an essential part of living a healthy life. I propose we start within our community first and support each other in our journey of finding harmony between our artist and our creative arts therapist.

Everyday creativity is essential for everyone, however the arts are something that has become underappreciated in our modern society. Richards (2007) explains how art is a part of everyday life and how we process information, and is essential for us to fully experience life and maintain health and wellbeing. Everyday creativity often goes unrecognized and these oversights can have serious consequences such as loss of “personal awareness, identity, mental health” amongst other concerns (Richards, 2007, p. 502). From a humanistic perspective this means not having the ability to move towards self-actualization (Richards, 2007). This concept should not only be viewed as something we hope to see in our clients but within ourselves as well. What greater way to model a way of life and wellbeing for our clients than following it ourselves.

From reviewing the literature, I understand that this question of how we can negotiate our needs as artists and as therapists is a common debate. Although there is an acknowledgment that the arts are an important aspect to keep up not only in practice with clients but for the Self and for personal health in general, there does not seem to be any great movement towards creating a space to do so. We do not seem to have space in the creative arts therapies community to

dialogue about this situation or to find support as we struggle through finding our identities and balancing these roles throughout our training program and beyond.

Chapter 3: Methodology

The research question I explored for this research paper was “what is the lived experience of a drama therapy student struggling between her student, therapist, and artist roles?” To explore this question I used a qualitative approach, the autoethnographic method. The autoethnographic method explores, through critical self-reflection, the lived experience of the researcher in a particular phenomenon that has been chosen as the subject of research. Furthermore, data collected are arts-based material created by the researcher. This method was chosen, as the subject of my research was my own personal experiences, process, and struggles in regards to the phenomenon of trying to balance the roles of student, therapist, and artist during the drama therapy program at Concordia University. I believe this method is unique as it allows the researcher to use their “self as a window into a society” (Chang, Ngunjiri, & Hernandez, 2013, p. 21). It gives a perspective where personal thoughts and experiences of the researcher are valued and are the main source of insight, where no other method of inquiry can give us this vantage point. Autoethnography is a form of storytelling, and “stories are the way humans make sense of their worlds” (Ellis, 2004, p. 32). The autoethnography allows the researcher to “better understand who we are in relation to others in culture” as well as to make a connection between the self and the other (Spry, 2011, p. 51). The aim for performing the autoethnography was to further integrate the transformative process I hoped to receive from this research. Furthermore, I believe that it allowed me to have an extra step in forming insights within this research question as well as giving me an opportunity to receive valuable data on how this topic resonates with the drama therapy community by performing it to a live audience. Performing made my research accessible to others through sharing my personal experiences authentically in an artistic medium. I hoped that this performance would plant a seed into the community to allow future research to occur concerning this topic. In the future perhaps this question can be researched more broadly, with more participants, and through other methods of inquiry.

I neither used, and therefore there was no risk of harming, other parties or used other individuals’ materials, as I was the sole subject of research. One ethical concern that I kept in mind was: what motivation was driving the process of the project, research or artistic? Even as the autoethnography allows both to coexist, there is still a risk that I could lose the balance that makes a good autoethnographic piece. It could have either become a very self-indulgent performance or an uninspired presentation of the data I collected. Neither of these instances

would benefit the community or myself. The beauty and irony in this is that even within this research process I was left with the challenge of balancing roles: the researcher versus the artist. This research project not only allowed me to critically self-reflect on how I struggled with balancing my roles of student, therapist, and artist throughout the program, but also on how I struggled with these roles even as I carried out the research.

Data

The procedure I undertook for this research was an adaptation of a data collection process from Chang et al., (2013), as well as processes of performative autoethnography writing techniques adapted from Tamy Spry (2011) and Carolin Ellis' (2004) works. First I started with data collection which were creations from my own works including visual art pieces, journal entries amongst other written pieces, movement-based creations, as well as monologues and dialogues. After this process was completed, I reviewed the collected data and extracted common themes and images that helped organize and select the data I used to contribute to the script writing process. The next stage of this research process consisted of creating the final script, rehearsals, and the performance itself. On the day of the performance I planned to invite the audience for a casual group discussion reflecting on the performance they had just witnessed. I wished to hear feedback about the themes that resonated with them as well as reflect and discuss the research question itself. With permission from the audience I wrote down some thoughts that came up during the group discussion. The aim was to find if the performance aided in developing some insights into my research process, as well as to answer the sub-question: "will it catalyze a valuable discussion amongst the drama therapist community?" Finally, once these stages were completed I reflected on the overall experience and began to write this discussion about the process.

Validity, Reliability, Limitations, Ethics

As this research method focused on myself as the subject and I utilized my own art creations as data I aimed to be aware of my biases, my strengths and weaknesses as an artist, and be transparent about this throughout my process. McNiff (2008) states that the researcher's personal skill is a variable that needs to be noted in the process. Having said that, I am aware that I created art in the modalities that I feel most comfortable in, and believe I have some skill in, so as to maintain an aesthetic dimension in my products. Another way to assess validity of this research is to claim that my data is authentic, to triangulate data by creating art in multiple

modalities (such as journaling, images, and movement pieces), as well as ensuring that I have continued to dialogue with my supervisor throughout the process as to allow for challenges of perspective and “habits of thinking” (Kapitan, 2010, p. 19). I believe I have been true to these steps, creating and using only my own original creations in all the modalities mentioned previously, as well as being as truthful as possible during the self-reflective process. I dialogued with professors and my supervisor about this process receiving feedback and questions about the process, which helped me reflect on the motives of my process and ensure it stayed true to the research question.

This research follows the arts-based post-positivist view where the notion of “knowable truth, which can be discovered, measured and controlled via objective means” would not be relevant (Leavy, 2009, p. 5). This framework ensured that validity and reliability of the research would be maintained, as well as ensuring my biases and motivations were being made transparent throughout the process. I have only sought truth as it occurred to my own personal experience in regards to this phenomenon and in this time frame. My aim was to “describe, explore, [and] discover”, as well as to promote a dialogue amongst the target audience who were invited to my performance (Leavy, 2009, p. 12-13).

Overall, for this research to be valuable using a performative autoethnography as its method of inquiry, critical self-reflection was the key. The challenge was showing vulnerability and trusting the process. As a drama therapist, I understand the power of storytelling and performance, being witnessed in performance, as well as meaning making through creative processes. Autoethnography has these elements within its research method, and therefore I believe it was the best fit for this research project.

Chapter 4: Findings and Discussion

This research was a personal challenge as it asked me to be open and truthful in my process. As I continued the project I had to continuously ensure that I was doing all I could to be critically reflective which resulted in many vulnerable moments. I understand that all these elements are necessary for an autoethnography to be authentic and valuable, for the researcher as well as the community. Looking back at this journey, I see the beginnings of a transformative process; my personal transformative process in finding balance between the roles I play, namely between artist and therapist.

Since the beginning of the rehearsal period up until I performed this piece for the audience, I felt the transformative process begin. Not only was the research coming to life, I began to see my artist self regain the space it needed to thrive. As this internal shift began, I started to see glimpses of how important it was to have such a balance between artist and therapist. Mentally, I was surprised to experience less anxiety about the research. I began to trust in the process more as the rehearsal period continued. Perhaps this was due to the experience of having space for my two roles once more. The night of the performance was an exciting moment, where I felt impatient to start the show rather than being nervous *before* the show. I was finally able share the hard work I had put into creating this autoethnographic piece of art as well as present a research question that is so important to me. The research process allowed me to not only give space to explore and reflect my student, therapist, and artist roles, it gave me the opportunity to honor them and understand how this was a part of the bigger exploration of self-identity.

Since the early stages of this process, I understood how keeping in touch with your artist self is important for a creative arts therapist. Throughout my reviews of previous research as well as dialoguing with colleagues in the program, a general agreement and awareness of this aspect was present, however there did not seem to be any action towards finding how the creative arts therapy community could ensure a real dialogue on this theme. This was especially true for those individuals who were in the midst of the training program. Through my personal exploration there was some illumination as to why this may be the case. Many of us in the program, including myself, come from artistic backgrounds, and therefore coming into this training program the challenge is learning and integrating the clinical knowledge and practices. The major themes that arose while exploring this phenomenon, in my personal exploration as

well as dialoguing with colleagues, were: (1) struggling with time, (2) having a lack of negotiation within the department, and (3) vulnerability. These three themes not only appeared during my personal research but also were mirrored by the audience. Due to the strenuous load during the training program many of us leave behind our artistic passions. The clinical training becomes the main focus in our personal process as emerging creative arts therapists as well as within the process of the cohort we train with. This phenomenon resembles what Patricia Allen (1992) suggested, where a ‘clinification syndrome’ occurs during the training program as we focus more on developing clinical skills over nurturing our artistic skills. This leaves no time or space for any dialogue and negotiations to be made with our colleagues or faculty to help the community find ways to move towards ensuring our artistic selves are not left to the side. I believe the issue of vulnerability is a major aspect to why many of us leave behind the artist role and this ties into the other aspects of no time or space to do so. As reflected in the performance where I converse with my artist self, she asks me “What do you need to find that space again?” (Gaudet, 2015, p. 8). Finally my answer is, “I need time” as well as realizing a major reason my creativity is blocked is due to the vulnerability we can experience when being openly creative (Gaudet, 2015, p. 8). These references are direct quotes from my script and can be referred to in the appendix of this paper. The reason being vulnerable may be even more anxiety provoking for someone during the creative arts therapies training program is due to the fact that there is no real time for vulnerability when we have many clinical and academic demands to be present for:

“I don’t have time to be vulnerable. To show my insides and then have to put them away again in a hurry to move on, to be present for clients, to be present for school... I can’t risk to show too much, I’m afraid I won’t be able to put myself back together in time.

Time.... It seems to always come down to time.” (Gaudet, 2015, p. 8)

During the post-performance discussion some audience members voiced that they felt as if there was no solution to finding a balance in their role as artist and therapist, especially during the training program. Others reflected that there seems to be a separation that occurs between the artist and the therapist self. The question that arose from this was how could we put ourselves back together, to reintegrate our roles? Instead of finding this we begin to mourn the loss of our artist self. How do we allow it freedom to thrive? Richards speaks about how creativity needs

freedom and “spare time... free from distractions and other obligations” (2007, p. 510). During such a demanding training it is vital for us to give time for self-care including giving freedom for our artistic self to live. The struggle remains, how does one do this? During this research process I came to understand that this does not necessarily mean finding a time to create masterpieces or continue to be a part of a full-time theatre ensemble. Finding time to honor your artist self in more simple everyday creativity could be manageable even during the clinical training. This will mean different things for every individual; as for myself, it means going back to the core of what art making means for me. I discovered that art is a part of self-care; it can be small actions that allow me to go back to my somatic experiencing, my imagination, and allow creativity to open. For my own process these can be journaling, free-writing, creating images, and free-movement. The data collection process during this research helped me find space to engage in these activities. It also meant finding time to carry out my personal art therapy process on a regular basis as it allowed me to find yet another space where creativity could thrive and even aid in my personal process as a client.

Another reflection that came from the post-performance discussion came from audience members who did not come into the program with a heavy artistic background. These individuals spoke about how the training program helped them discover their artist self and are grateful for the experiential aspects of many of our seminars and workshops. This point of view shows how this question of negotiating balance between artist and therapist is *personal* and the process will be different for each individual. For some of us the experiential aspects of the training program will be enough, however for others this space may not be enough to satisfy their artist roles. Furthermore, this suggests that a healthy balance between the roles is not necessarily a 50/50 divide. Some creative arts therapists find they don't need so much space for their artist whereas others do.

The very nature of this question is subjective. No matter, many audience members asked the question: how can we negotiate this phenomenon in the department? How can we introduce this to the students at the very beginning of their training? The suggestion to bring this question to the students in their very first year may encourage them to carry it throughout their training. Perhaps this will help open a space for them to explore how to create balance and freely dialogue with their cohort about the subject. Overall, I believe the discussion that arose during the post-

performance dialogue indicates that the goal to encourage others to ask this question for themselves has been taken on.

Limitations of this Study

The performance only received a small number of audience members, and therefore only a fraction of the drama therapy program was present. It can be speculated that the timing of this performance was not ideal; it was during the summer season long after the regular academic semester was over; therefore many members of the community were not present or available. The audience present was a combination of the drama therapy faculty and second-year students who were all in the process of writing their thesis projects as well. Unfortunately, no first-year students were present. Another limitation of this study is that there is no procedure to follow up with the audience members about their experience. Furthermore there is no way to evaluate if the post-performance discussion was effective for them and if it had allowed them to take this question into their own practice as a therapist and as an artist. Therefore, I am unable to know how effectively the dialogue encouraged movement towards finding space for individuals in the community to carry out their own process regarding this question. Having said that, if I were to perform my research again I would create a follow up survey. I would aim to find a venue that allows me to present to a wider audience so I could invite more of the creative arts therapy department: art, dance, and music therapists, to be included.

Although the small audience was a disappointing factor, I believe my performance was an encouraging first step towards bringing the question into the community. The valuable dialogue that arose amongst this small group of drama therapists gave me hope that the message is possible to spread to the rest of the community and to all individuals in the creative arts therapies field, not only to drama therapists. It also encourages me to continue to explore and present the question in future research, as it has been a great value to my personal process.

The Power of Performance in Research

Tamy Spry described her performances as “narrative authority offering [her] the power to reclaim and rename [her] voice and body privately in rehearsal and then publicly in performance” (2011, p. 43). Furthermore she describes performative autoethnography as an “enabling” experience where the “audience response was deeply transformational” (Spry, 2011, pp. 47-49). This completely resonated with my process when reviewing her work after having performed my own autoethnography. The process of creating a script with the motivation of it

becoming a performance shown to a live audience allowed me to give my exploration a wider space to create a meaning making process. It allowed me to give the roles I was reflecting on an authentic space to be deconstructed. It allowed me to use my “embodied knowledge” rather than restricting the process in a written form (Spry, 2011, p.63). With the performative aspect I was able to display my reflective process to others allowing myself to validate my observations with hearing and receiving the observations of others. It allowed the artist role to have a real space to be the artist, as well as allowing my therapist and student/researcher role to find how they fit along with it. I understand and am aware that there is a bias in making the decision to write and perform a play for the dissemination of my research. I understand this may be due to reality that my artist role as a theatrical actress has been present with me longer than my therapist role. I am also aware that this process allowed me to see how the therapist fits along with the artist rather than the other way around. I do not believe this means I value the artist role over the therapist or visa versa, simply I am an emerging drama therapist making space for this new role into my already existing role repertoire which includes the artist.

The decision to perform my research in a theatrical medium was to allow my research process to be accessible to the creative arts therapies community, namely the drama therapists. As a drama therapist, I understand how a method such as creative process and performance allows an individual to further integrate their process. Furthermore, it was a personal opportunity to go back to my roots as an artist and integrate that role into my drama therapy training and this research. As the target audience was specifically the drama therapy community within the creative arts department, I believed there would be a collective appreciation and understanding of the power of performance. The goal was to disseminate my research in an accessible manner. Richards suggests that art can “shape the message in a much broader way through a more universal expression that can help many others” (2007, p. 518). The aim was to catalyze a discussion amongst the audience around the research question, after the performance. Sharing ideas, thoughts, and the process itself allowed me to continue to integrate what I was experiencing during the creation of the script and the rehearsal period. I also found that it allowed me to come up with more insight into the research question as well as into what themes and messages the script was holding for me unconsciously. I believe this occurred due to the audience members witnessing and mirroring back the themes they took from the performance.

Overall, the performance aspect of this project seemed to help give closure to this part of my ongoing transformational my process in exploring how I will balance my roles.

Reflecting on the Performance Piece

Looking back at the final written script (see Appendix) of the performance, there are several prominent images that stand out. An audience member reflected that this performance seemed to be a window into my personal exploration of this universal topic, struggling between the identity of artist and therapist. The story it portrays shows elements of my self that contribute to this struggle and how it is unique to my own lived experience. The show opens with a fairytale-like story about a young innocent fox about to enter a big world in the hopes of learning to become a helper. The metaphor is clear that it is the story of how I entered into the drama therapy training program, however the projective technique allowed the audience to relate and perhaps recall their own memories of how it was like to enter into the creative arts therapies community. Throughout the piece we see glimpses of characters that represent aspects of my self. There is the clinician who is academic and precise while presenting a case study that is perfectly rehearsed. We see the client who is exploring which therapeutic process fits her best; talk therapy seems too restricting and art therapy seems to allow her to feel liberated. The perfectionist appears in a recited poem and seems to influence all my roles, causing anxiety and restricting my everyday creativity. Finally there is the artist who is never truly embodied but appears as voiceovers, abstract images projected on the screen, and objects that I carry on stage. The artist is never truly embodied, however it is always present as if this performance allowed this role to reclaim her valued space within my role repertoire. The performance ends in a ritualistic scene inspired by a closure exercise adapted from Rene Emunah. Here, the roles of student, therapist, and artist, are honored and this allowed the piece to end on a hopeful note, indicating that this story has only begun and will continue on.

I recall an awakening moment of catharsis during the final scene where I speak to a doll I created by hand and which represented the artist role in that moment. The experience of catharsis was imminent during the live performance as I was finally truly exposing my artist self, showing the doll to the audience, validating and accepting my vulnerability and showing a part of my self that had been put to the side for a long time. In that moment -my artist self- was the centre of attention and the courage in being vulnerable in the artist role was experienced. I believe part of

the catharsis was experiencing that vulnerability and learning that I was able to follow through to receive positive feedback rather than negative consequences for showing that vulnerability. This rings true to for entire performance itself, feeling vulnerable and exposed once the performance ended and the house lights were switched back on and receiving valuable and positive feedback from the audience.

Final Reflections

Carrying out this research allowed me to open up an opportunity to begin a transformative process, exploring how I will carry out balancing my roles namely artist and therapist. The question of how can I as a creative arts therapist balance my roles of artist and therapist is by no means answered, however I have been able to explore what my recent personal experience has been in regards to this challenge. Furthermore, through this research I have created a better understanding of how I can continue to work on finding the balance that best suits my personal needs. I have also learnt how others in the community negotiate this question and how this is a very individual process. During the post-performance dialogue there was some encouraging feedback in regards to how this exploration becomes easier to negotiate over time. Many of the faculty members shared how the longer they were in the creative arts therapies field the more the artist self emerged and informed their practice. This shows how the therapist and the artist roles can not only exist together, but can also inform each other and be present simultaneously when practicing.

I believe the major discovery I made during this research is coming to a more integrated understanding and an acceptance that the very nature of this question will never have a solid finite answer. The research process allowed me to see how this question of balancing roles will be a constant negotiation where I will always see transformation and change. In one moment in my career as a drama therapist I will have my roles balanced in one manner, and in another moment that balance may look completely different. This idea that nothing is static resonates with Moreno's idea of how spontaneity and creativity allow an individual to constantly find healthier more adaptive solutions in our experiences (Blatner, 2000). I believe this idea can be transferred to how a constant evolution is necessary for our roles to continue to be in a healthy balance. This idea may also be associated with Richards' (2007) suggestion that being creative in our daily life allows our conscious and unconscious to transcend in a natural and healthy manner. This occurs as the anxiety and vulnerability an art making process creates allows the

transcendent process to catalyze (Richards 2007). In other words an active and transformative process is a healthy process: a “recovery through activity” (Levick, 1995, p. 283).

As I continue to transform and shift as a creative arts therapist, so will the nature in how I balance my roles. This is a constantly engaging and evolving process therefore I expect to be asking myself this question -- how do I balance my artist and therapist role? -- throughout my career. I understand that patience is necessary, as well as simply trusting the process. This is the advice we learn as we train; trust in the ‘drama therapy’ process, and I believe it is suitable to say this is the same for our process as emerging creative arts therapists.

References

- Allen, P. B. (1992). Artist-in-residence: An alternative to “clinification” for art therapists. *Art Therapy: Journal of the American Art Therapy Association*, 9(1), 22-29.
doi:10.1080/07421656.1992.10758933
- Blatner, A. (2000). *Foundations of psychodrama: History, theory, and practice* (4th ed.).
Broadway, NY: Springer Publishing Company.
- Brown, C. (2008). The importance of making art for the creative arts therapist: An artistic inquiry. *The Arts in Psychotherapy*, 35(3), 201-208. doi:10.1016/j.aip.2008.04.002
- Cashell, L., Miner, A. (1983). Role conflict and role ambiguity among creative arts therapists. *The Arts in Psychotherapy*, 10(2), 93-98. doi: 10.1016/0197-4556(83)90035-7
- Chang, H., Ngunjiri, F. W., Hernandez, K. C. (2013). *Collaborative autoethnography*. Walnut Creek, CA: Left Coast Press Inc.
- Doyle, C. (1998) A self psychology theory of role in drama therapy. *The Arts in Psychotherapy*, 25(4), 223-235. doi: 10.1016/S0197-4556(98)00018-5
- Ellis, C. (2004). *The ethnographic i: A methodological novel about autoethnography*. Walnut Creek, CA: Altamira Press.
- Federman, D. J. (2010). The co-joint change in kinaesthetic ability and openness to experience in the professional development of DMT trainees. *The Arts in Psychotherapy*, 37(1), 27-34.
doi:10.1016/j.aip.2009.11.001
- Irwin, E. C. (1986). On being and becoming a therapist. *The Arts in Psychotherapy*, 13(3), 191-195. doi: 10.1016/0197-4556(86)90044-4
- Kapitan, L. (2010). *An introduction to art therapy research*. New York, NY: Routledge.

- Kielo, J. B. (2013). Art therapists' countertransference and post-session therapy imagery. *Art Therapy: Journal of the American Art Therapy Association*, 8(2), 14-19.
doi:10.1080/07421656.1991.10758923
- Landy, R. J. (1998). Establishing a model of communication between artists and creative arts therapists. *The Arts in Psychotherapy*, 25(5), 299-302. doi: 10.1016/S0197-4556(98)00041-0
- Leavy, P. (2009). *Method meets art: Arts-based research practice*. New York, NY: Guilford Press.
- Levick, M. F. (1995). The identity of the creative arts therapist: Guided by ethics. *The Arts in Psychotherapy*, 22(4), 283-295. doi: 10.1016/0197-4556(95)00042-4
- Lewis, P. P. (1992). The creative arts in transference/countertransference relationships. *The Arts in Psychotherapy*, 19(5), 317-323. doi:10.1016/0197-4556(92)90027-L
- Mcniff, S. (2008). Arts-based research. In G Knowles & A. Cole (Eds.), *Handbook for the arts in qualitative research* (pp. 29-53). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Miller, R. B. (2011). The role of response art in the case of an adolescent survivor of developmental trauma. *Art Therapy: Journal of the American Art Therapy Association*, 24(4), 184-190. doi:10.1080/07421656.2007.10129470
- Orkibi, H. (2012). Students' artistic experience before and during graduate training. *The Arts in Psychotherapy*, 39(5), 428-435. doi: 10.1016/j.aip.2012.06.007
- Pendzik, S. (2008). Resonances: A technique of intervention in drama therapy, supervision, and training. *The Arts in Psychotherapy*, 35(3), 217-223. doi: 10.1016/j.aip.2008.02.004
- Richards, R. (2007). Everyday creativity and the arts. *World Futures: The Journal of New Paradigm Research*, 63(7), 500-525. doi: 10.1080/02604020701572707

Robbins, A. (1982). Integrating the personal and theoretical splits in the struggle towards an identity as art therapist. *The Arts in Psychotherapy*, 9(1), 1-9. doi: 10.1016/0197-4556(82)90021-1

Spry, T. (2011). *Body, paper, stage: Writing and performing autoethnography*. Walnut Creek, CA: Left Coast Press Inc.

Appendix

Final script written and performed to the drama therapy community as part of the autoethnography research.

Where is the Balance?

An Autoethnography Representing the Lived Experience of a Drama Therapy Student Struggling Between her Artist, Student, and Therapist Role.

By: Kristina Gaudet

Preshow

(Lights)

Projector shows the title of the show, then slowly transitions to the research question then a flash of three images of Kristina in the roles of Student, Therapist, and Artist.

Pre-show announcements...

House Music playlist is played for the whole 20 minute pre-show duration.

(Lights)

Scene: The Helping Fox

(Lights/Music/Audio)

Narrator: Once upon a time, there was a little fox. She loved to play, dance and sing. She had a wildly active imagination, and in that imaginary world she felt safe. As she grew older she began to share her joy of play and creativity with other foxes. She even had chances to shine in the spotlight. Years past by and she continued to play and create.

As she got older she learnt that she loved to help other foxes and wanted to learn about how she could help those foxes in need. She found she had a spark for understanding how other foxes felt and easily connected to them.

One day a letter came to her den, it told her all about this magical land where other foxes like her go to learn how to become Helping Foxes. Soon after, she ran from the safety of her den to seek out this land to learn how to become a better Helping Fox. With her she brought a few belongings; her love and her heart, her joy for play, her creativity, and her art. She felt prepared and very scared.

Over the two years in this magical land, she learnt many things and practiced being a Helping Fox. She learnt how the joy of creating and playing can help other foxes heal. As she continued to grow into a Helping Fox, she started to realize that some of the things she brought with her to this magical land had started to collect some dust. She forgets to play and create for herself... she's too busy helping others play and create.

Fox: Phew! I am tired! I don't have time for this... I must fix my burrow and sleep before I get back to helping and learning.

Narrator: Over time, she began to feel sad. She had been so busy learning and helping, she had forgotten to make time to help herself.

Fox: I feel... empty. I'm so anxious! I just want to sleep...

Narrator: What is the poor Helping Fox to do?

(Lights/Music/Audio)

Scene: The Presenting Problem

(Lights)

(Kristina enters as "Student/Therapist" and gives a Case Study presentations to Supervision group on client; Kristina.)

Kristina: Good afternoon colleagues, I am pleased to be here today to present to you a Case Study on a client I have been working with for several years. Kristina is a 24 year-old Caucasian female from a privileged socio-economic background. She has two nationalities, Canadian and Hungarian, and at times this confuses her. She has a few strengths; She is fairly smart, tends to be resilient in stressful circumstances despite her anxious manner. She loves the arts, likes to travel, and enjoys animals and nature. Her presenting problem; 'Unable to integrate and balance her roles, namely Student, Therapist, and Artist.' Robert Landy's Role Theory encourages you to see all the roles the client play as neither positive nor negative, simply as a part of their whole and in a need for balancing. This is the approach I wish to use with Kristina.

My Working Hypothesis is; Due to the stressful and overwhelming demands of clinical and academic training, general anxiety about life, lack of self-confidence, and a loss of resources, Kristina is unable to balance and make space for her academic and creative life. My aim is to help her find the tools and resources to work towards creating that harmony once more.

My treatment plan? Well... I am a little stuck.

(Lights)

Scene: The Colour of My Body

(Lights/Music)

Kristina: A whirl of colour that melt together so that no shade stands out. The colours flow and dance around the centre of my body where the energy of all my Selves grows. I hold them there. At times you may see glimpses of blue, orange, green, purple, red... these are the parts of me that make me whole. I entered this new world with bright colours pulsing, but over time they began to fall asleep. Other colours appear and take over that space. All the colours of my body are fighting for space. Fighting to be seen. To breathe. I can't seem to find the dance that let them all exist... in peace.

So here I am... Tripping, and stumbling. Trying to find my dance. To show all the colours of my body.

(Lights/Music)

Scene: Some Kind of Therapy

(Lights/Music)

Kristina: Talk therapy (*bring out ropes/materials*)... Something doesn't work. (*Begins to tie herself down*) Something is missing (*Continuing to tie and tangle herself*)... (*Shakes and tries to break free*) I am about to burst!

Kristina stands facing audience as if to begin a drama therapy group session. She is still tied down and has very little freedom of movement

Kristina: Hello group! Let's be creative! Just let's go... and relax! (*Aside*) THIS IS WRONG SOMETHING IS MISSING!

(Pause)

(Kristina brings out several materials and art works and sets up the stage to represent her personal art therapy session environment. She then enters the space as if entering her personal session, continuing to mime the sequence to show how her typical art therapy process may carry out. She begins to silently work on an art piece...)

Kristina: Art therapy... Is self-care. Self-exploration (*Begins to work with an art piece she is creating in her personal art therapy session*) Beginning to let my creativity flow once more. Slowly, but surely. (*Continues to make art*) I am finding my true self again. (*Kristina begins to slowly untangle herself from the ropes*)

(Lights/Music)

Scene: Who Is Blocking Me: A Poem

(Lights/Music)

Kristina: Perfectionist.

Holds you back, and makes you scared
Hesitating, overcompensating
Stuck, Stiff, Suffocate.

Perfectionist.
Can't let go
No creative juices flow
Stuck, Stiff, Suffocate.

Perfectionist?
Look at me!
Love me!?
Like me?
Stuck, Stiff, Suffocate.

(Lights/Music)

Scene: Nightmare

(Lights/Music)

(Kristina begins to display 3 sets of costumes on the stage. The remainder of the scene is movement-based and improvised lines)

(Kristina puts on "Student" costume in a hurry then poses; removes "Student" costume and changes into "Therapist" costume in a hurry then poses. Repeat 3 times then move to "Artist" costume and only put on half way before taking "Student" and "Therapist" costume and attempt to put all three on at once. Sequence ends where actor is tangled in the costumes and looking exasperated and helpless at the audience.)

(Kristina stands in the space as if to begin a presentation to her cohort. She is not prepared. Furthermore, she has lost her voice, doesn't know where she is, and sees distorted images of her roles on the screen behind her. The scene follows as a silent movement piece where Kristina embodies the panic she experiences as she tries to stumble through stressed and humiliated. The scene ends as if she is being pulled out of the nightmare in 'rewind' taking off the three costumes and leaving the stage with the clothing in her hand.)

(Light/Music)

Scene: The Artist as Therapist

(Lights)

Kristina: I always liked the idea of actors wearing blacks on stage. It's a way to symbolize neutrality, and to allow the audience to freely project and imagine whatever the actor and their bodies are transforming into and representing. The lights and gobos shine onto the black box, onto the bare stage, onto the actors... a tabula rasa, a mirror. Kind of like how therapy works. The therapist, like the actor wearing blacks, acts like a blank slate or a mirror allowing the client to project and see themselves. The lighting in the theatre shines onto the actor, like the projections of the client shining onto the therapist. The movements the actor or therapist portray represent what the audience or client needs... what they want to work with... to catalyze a journey, a self-exploration, a creative process.

(Lights)

Scene: Struggle of Roles

(Lights/Audio)

(Image on the projector splitting actor in half; one side blue, the other side red.)

Kristina: I feel torn/pulled in two directions/I have a headache/I'm so tired/What do I do!
(Repeat lines in any order for the duration of slide projection. As lines are spoken Kristina is motioning as if she is being pulled in many directions... after several minutes she stops to catch her breath)

(Lights/Audio/Music)

Kristina: I only make art if it's serious!

Artist: Don't you do it for fun?

Kristina: (defensively) Of course I do! I have fun when I'm the Artist... but it's serious business. One cannot simply make art all... willy nilly.

Artist: Oh? Can't you just let go and let your creative energy channel through!?

Kristina: I.....pfff, sure.... Just *(Waves arms in attempt to 'let go')* Just a minute *(Attempts again)* I can channel my creativity I swear! Just.... Wait I know what's wrong – I am thinking too much. I need to warm up! *(Pauses as if to warm up)* OK... *(Attempts for the third time and fails)* IT'S NOT WORKING WHY!!!!

Artist: What do you need to find that space again?

Kristina: I don't know...I need time...

(Pause)

Kristina: (to audience) Why is it so hard to show my creativity?

(Pause)

Kristina: Vulnerability

(Pause)

Kristina: My Artist Self is a very vulnerable part of me... "But being vulnerable is courage" (Quote from Brené Brown, Ted talks). I don't have time to be vulnerable. To show my insides and then have to put them away again in a hurry to move on, to be present for clients, to be present for school... I can't risk to show too much, I'm afraid I won't be able to put myself back together in time.
Time.... It seems to always come down to time.

(Light/Audio/Music)

Scene: The Helping Fox Finds Balance

(Lights/Music/Audio)

Narrator: It is now near the end of little Helping Fox's adventure in magical land. She is about to leave on another journey, in the hopes that she will strengthen the tools she needs to balance. It is time for her to find her joy in creativity once more. She will take with her the new skills she learnt in this magical land, and the ones she had before; heart, joy for play, creativity, helping, holding, and presence.

Fox: Wow, I have lots to carry!

Narrator: Yes little fox. And soon enough you'll know how to use them all together and to their highest potential.

Fox: Oh! Do you think I'm ready?

Narrator: Yes. Now show the world what a lovely Helping Fox you are!

(Lights/Music/Audio)

Scene: The First Steps

(Lights/Music)

(Bare stage. Kristina enters with the box or backpack – with “Artist” inside - and approaches audiences members.)

Kristina: This is my creativity. I want to show it to you. I think it’s really great *(Holds box out to audience member, then re-thinks and pulls away)*. But wait, it’s probably safer to hide it from you... keep it safe. I don’t want you to judge me, or criticize. Anyway, it’s not important. What’s important is that I am OK to carry on with helping others show their creations. I don’t have time to show mine.

(whispers) I don’t have time.

But... I want to! It would feel so lovely to share what’s in this box. But I am afraid I’ll ruin the experience somehow.

I didn’t have time to make it really pretty...

(Aside) JUST GO FOR IT!

Kristina: I don’t know... can I do this?

(Aside) Yes, you know you want to!!!

Kristina: Yeah, I do. It’s important for me to show this. It’s a big part of what makes me, me.

(Aside) It’s OK.

Kristina: OK... *(Reaches into box slowly and pulls out doll. Holds it up for the audience to see)* Wow, this feels really wonderful. *(To audience)* Do you see it? Wow, I’m doing it! I’m showing her to the audience ...she is coming back to life. What a beautiful sight!

(Brings doll DS, sits on floor and begins to speak to her)

Kristina: Hello. It’s so good to see you here. I’ve missed you.

Scene: A Ritual

(Lights) (Music is a continuation of the track from previous scene)

(Kristina sits on stage with the doll representing her 'Artist' self. She begins to reconnect with the doll)

Kristina: I've missed you so much. I've left you behind lately haven't I? We used to be so close. We had a really special relationship. But since this program our relationship has changed...Yeah, that's right, it hasn't been lost, it just changed. It's time for us to find how we fit together now. I know I am ready to do that now.

(Kristina stands with the doll, cherishes it for a moment and then goes to prepare the stage for her ritualistic honoring of her three roles. Once space is prepared, she silently continues into the ritual in silence, allowing the audience to see her honoring and thanking her roles. The shrine represents a visual of how she is finding balance between the three roles. Once this is complete, she stands and bows to each sculpture, turns to the audience and bows to them)

(Lights/Music)

(Kristina then walks off stage in the darkness. She returns for curtain call once the house lights are turned on)

(House Lights/House Music)

-Fin-