ARTS WORK:

A TYPOLOGY OF SKILLS FOR ARTS-BASED GROUP WORKERS

by

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ABSTRACT

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The arts are utilized in groups across the applied humanities and social sciences with a wide range of populations to address a multitude of individual, group, and community needs. Despite literature suggesting challenges to the implementation of mutual aid based groups in social work, a body of empirical evidence exists on the use and benefits of the arts in working with groups across social science disciplines, including social work. In groups that utilize purposeful activity, balance of group process and task completion is integral to the development of the group as a system of mutual aid.

Through interviews with a sample of expressive arts group practitioners, this study sought to identify the skills expressive artists used and to determine whether those skills had a significant impact on group dynamics. This study explored expressive artists' rationale for the intervention skills they used. It also explored whether their work with groups suggested additional skills beyond those articulated in the social work literature to promote group dynamics including development of a system in mutual aid and the balance of group process and creative task completion. The researcher developed a performance-based typology of skills in response to how expressive artists described the skills and tools they used in activity-based group work. This typology reflected a focus

on performance-rooted traits, facilitative skills, and interventions that resembled aspects of the interactional or mutual aid approach to group work but moved beyond that model to address the unique aspect of creative arts in groups.

The typology of skills presented in this study suggest an expanded and highly engaged role for the worker; it supports a fluid, cyclical quality in the use of skills and interventions that moves beyond the approach provided in traditional models of social group work. Most significantly, it suggests that arts-based group worker's primary and essential task lies in the consistent balance of group process and creative task completion. Engagement around both process and task promote the transmission of voice to group members, a significant aspect of this study that has implications for anti-oppression work across the field of social work.

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This is for Sally and Tim who had, I think, many dreams but did not voice them.

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INTRODUCTION

Finding a Voice

On the Tuesday after Labor Day, September 1967, I attended my first day of school as a kindergarten student. My kindergarten colleagues and I sat shiny faced and squirming on our alphabet tiles in the middle of the newly waxed floor. I felt ready for anything in my new "first day of school" mini-dress as I waited with great excitement for my turn to answer our new teacher's question, "What do you want to be when you grow up?" The excitement built as countless future astronauts, doctors, nurses, mommies, and firemen piped up. Then it was finally my turn. I knew, without a doubt, what I wanted to do with my life. I had somehow known without naming it to myself consciously ever before. In a clear, strong voice, I announced that I was planning to be an *actor*. Mostly silence followed, as well as some "huh's?" and a few snickers, because it sounded like I had just uttered a dirty word. In fact, I had uttered a dirty word, if the look on my teacher's face was any sort of proof of the matter. She recovered, smiled weakly, and responded with something along the lines of "that's cute, honey, but what do you *really* want to be?" I responded that I was sure I would be an actor, but somehow I didn't feel quite as certain of myself as I had a few moments before.

At lunch-time when my mother came to retrieve me, my teacher pulled her aside to share her concern over my "rich fantasy life" and to offer some professional advice about talking some sense into me before I developed any more bad habits. This was my first conscious experience with silencing a creative voice. There would be more experiences over the course of my childhood, adolescence, and teen years and even more during my young adult years as a "starving theatre artist." A common theme was, "That's

a nice hobby but when are you actually going to *do* something with your life?" Some forty-odd years later, I am still finding my voice, but now that work of exploring, developing, and expanding creative voice is my life's work. My kindergarten teacher might be surprised, and I hope pleased to learn that I have grown up to become a theatre artist, social worker, teacher, *and* mom. I believe one common and essential task in all these roles is to assist others in exploring, developing, and celebrating their creative voices.

The expressive artists interviewed for this study told their own stories about their creative and professional journeys to discover and promote creative expression. This is a story about what it means to give voice, what it means to help others discover their voices, and how arts workers do that every day with groups.

Chapter I: INTRODUCTION TO THE PROBLEM FORMULATION

Introduction

The arts are utilized in groups across the applied humanities and social sciences with a wide range of populations to address a multitude of individual, group, and community needs. Throughout history the arts have been identified as healing (Dutton, 2001; Kivnick & Erikson, 1983; Milliken, 2002; Rohd, 1998), a means for community building (Jennings, 1973; McGuire, 2007), and as a tool for enhancement of interpersonal communication skills and increased capacity for relatedness (Atkins & Williams, 2007). They are potent agents for bridging differences (Atkins & Williams, 2007), a lens through which to identify and reveal social oppression (Bitel, 1999; Kaminsky, 1985), and facilitate social change (Rapoport, 1968; Wilson & Ryland, 1949). The arts help build self-esteem and reduce isolation (McGarry & Prince, 1998); they are a vehicle for personal "catharsis and insight" (Kaminsky, 1985a, p. 22).

The term "arts" has many definitions and in work with groups encompasses an almost limitless range of activities. For the purpose of this study, the term refers to the performing and visual arts, and focuses on the use of drama and movement with groups. Related areas of practice with art forms exist across a wide spectrum, from arts-based therapies to use of purposeful activity and program in social work, psychology, and arts education. Arts-based therapies include drama therapy, psychodrama, dance movement therapy, music therapy, art therapy and creative writing therapy. This study explores drama therapy and dance movement therapy in detail. The terms *expressive arts therapy* and *creative arts therapy* are two of many terms that describe the purposeful integration of expressive art forms for therapeutic purposes. Community arts-based work and applied

arts are other areas of practice utilizing art forms to address a wide range of community-level needs, including work in schools and community centers.

Social workers employ the arts in their work with groups and integrate them in practice as purposeful use of program or activity. The integration of early social work practice with the recreation (Gentry, 1984) and settlement house (Kaplan, 2001) movements of the early twentieth century provided the foundation for using program and activity in social work with groups (Dutton, 2001; Getzel, 1983). Currently, workers employ them across a broad spectrum of social group work practice (Brandler & Roman, 1999).

Program and activity in social work with groups enhance the potential to establish the group as a system for promoting mutual aid. Involvement in communal, purposeful activity demands cooperation for mastery and completion of the chosen activity (Brandler & Roman, 1999; Wright, 1999); it encourages the demand for work among members, encouraging greater commitment to the group process and the task-at-hand. The arts offer the opportunity for constructive exploration of individual problems in a group setting (Bitel, 1999; Brandler & Roman, 1999; Dutton, 2001; Kaplan, 2001; Middleman, 1968; Wright, 1999). They act as a conduit for the identification of common experiences, needs and feelings among group members (Kaminsky, 1985a), creating the possibility for empathy among members, an essential element in establishing mutual aid.

Other human service providers report similar mutual aid dynamics when they utilize the creative, performing, fine, and visual arts with groups. These include the development of group cohesion across disciplines (Erfer & Ziv, 2006; McGarry & Prince, 1998; Ritter & Low, 1996; von Rossberg-Gempton, Dickinson, & Poole, 1999),

identification with others experiencing the same issues, addressing unmet needs (Berger, 1969), and modeling and developing empathy among individuals involved in a wide range of creative group tasks. Group practitioners who utilize drama therapy (Moore, 1997; Rogers, 1999; Snow, D'Amico, & Tanguay, 2003), collective drama (*Community Education Team, Wilfrid Laurier University, 1999*), and dance therapy (Loman, 2005; Meekums, 2006) report these effects. Arts therapists and community arts workers suggest creative activities promote arenas for individual problem solving within the container of a group task (Johnston, Healey, & Tracey-Magid, 1985; Marsiglia, 1997; McGuire, 2007; Wright, John, Alaggia, & Sheel, 2006). The concepts of role definition (Camilleri, 2007) and role rehearsal (Johnston et al., 1985; Landy, 1994) appear across arts-based therapies; social work theorists and practitioners echo this definition in the concept of the group as arena for rehearsal of new ways of being, doing, and thinking (Brandler & Roman, 1999; Gitterman & Shulman, 1994; Steinberg, 1997).

The mutual aid approach to working with groups is appropriate in many group settings and populations both within and outside the field of social work. The development of the group as a mutual aid system is a core component of group work practice in all models of social group work (Gitterman, 2004). However, mutual aid is most central to the reciprocal or interactional model of group work theory introduced by William Schwartz (1961, 1971) and the later work of social work theorists including Lawrence Shulman (1999, 2006), Alex Gitterman (2004), Gitterman and Shulman (1994), and Dominique Moyse Steinberg (1997, 2004). Processes of mutual aid are its foundational concepts (Gitterman & Shulman, 1994). Workers achieve mutual aid through a series of practice skills that correspond to different stages of group

development and help promote empathy, group cohesion, and problem solving in the group; these are hallmarks of the mutual aid approach.

In groups that utilize purposeful activity, balance of group process and task completion is integral to the development of the group as a system of mutual aid (Halperin, 2001; Kaplan, 2001). Process in social group work literature is the interaction that takes place in the group between members and between members and facilitators (Shulman, 2004). Others describe process as the manifest and latent material of a group's interactions and the words and behaviors the group exhibits (Kaplan, 2001). Anderson (1997) argues a difference between *group process*, which he suggests means the stages of group development and *process in groups*, a term he borrows from Irvin Yalom (1995). Yalom's description of process as cited by Anderson is that of "patterns in interpersonal relationships…between and among members" (p. 80).

In contrast, task in the group work literature refers to "action" in the group. Reid and Epstein (1972) suggest "task represents both an immediate goal the client is to pursue and the means of achieving the larger goal of problem alleviation" (p. 21). Group work literature describes workers "balancing" group process and task (Kaplan, 2001, Middleman, 1968, 1979; Shulman, 2004).

There is a dual focus for practitioners with task-oriented groups; the first involves completion of tasks, and the second fulfillment of the group's socio-emotional purpose for formation. The balance of group process with task completion is particularly important in groups that utilize arts-based activity towards a culminating performance or creative project. Expressive arts workers interviewed for this study described an equal emphasis on group process and creative task completion as they facilitated arts-based

groups; this indicated a conscious effort to balance process and task in groups. They described addressing this theme as a central element in their practice.

Throughout history, the arts have provided an arena for collectivity, catharsis, insight, and change on individual and community levels. Mutual aid-based group work, primarily articulated in the interactional model of social work with groups, provides similar opportunities for individuals who seek both personal insight and connection with others. Despite literature suggesting challenges to the implementation of mutual aid based groups in social work, a body of empirical evidence exists on the use and benefits of the arts in working with groups across social science disciplines, including social work.

The literature cites challenges to mutual aid based group work in contemporary practice. These include the increased use of groups with pre-determined curriculum (Galinsky, Terzian, & Fraser, 2006) for purposes of program efficiency (Garvin, 1987; Goodman & Munoz, 2004; Kurland & Malekoff, 1998, 2001; Kurland & Salmon, 2002; Martsch, 2005; Middleman & Wood, 1995; Rose & Tolman, 1994). Increased interest in evidence-based practice is another challenge (Galinsky, Terzian, & Fraser, 2006; Goodman & Munoz, 2004; Howard, McMillen, & Pollio, 2003; Pollio, 2002, 2006). Social group work practitioners and writers also note the increased facilitation of groups by professionals other than social group workers (Garland & Wayne, 1990; Goodman & Munoz, 2004; Hartford, 1978; Kurland & Malekoff, 1997; Kurland & Salmon, 2002; Newmann, 2000; Parry, 1995; Steinberg, 1993). Others highlight the steady rise in generalist education and practice since the late 1960s (Birnbaum & Auerbach, 1994; Lazar, 2007; Middleman & Wood, 1990a; Tropp, 1976) and the lack of social workers specifically trained in the skills of social work with groups (Bergart & Simon, 2004;

Goldberg & Lamont, 1992; Kurland & Salmon, 2002, 2003; Lewis, 1991; Sullivan, as cited in Kurland & Salmon, 2003).

Although the social group work literature discusses the effect of these issues on implementation of mutual aid based group work, it does not indicate what role the arts may play in facilitating mutual aid within curriculum-based or curriculum-driven groups. It does not address whether or not arts-based groups employ "best" practices or measure the effectiveness of the arts to help shape best practices and encourage mutual aid. Finally, it does not address the role expressive arts may play in promoting individual growth or community change through group involvement.

Most critical to this dissertation, the social group work literature is silent on the effectiveness of non-social group workers as facilitators who utilize the arts in groups. In addition, little literature explores the importance of a process and task balance in activity-based groups and the potential effect of such balance on the promotion of mutual aid in groups. In short, existing social group work literature, which cites challenges to group work practice utilizing the mutual aid approach, does not take into account the ability of group practitioners outside the field of social work to utilize the arts toward mutual aid; it does not consider the focus on balancing group process and creative tasks in the context of practice challenges.

Questions for Research

This study examined aspects of group work practice in response to the issues in mutual aid based group work cited in the social work literature. However, the study did not focus on social group work practitioners and their specific practice issues. Rather, the informants for this study were group work practitioners outside the field of social work

who utilized expressive arts: the purpose was to explore the ways in which these workers understood and utilized performance-based activities in groups. The study explored whether or not those outside of social work experienced the same problems nurturing mutual aid as a component of group development and to what degree the use of purposeful creative activity affected the development of the group as a system in mutual aid. A number of other questions immediately surfaced: Did expressive artists recognize and develop mutual aid in their work with groups? Did they consider mutual aid an important component of group development?

The study also examined expressive artists' understanding of the balance of group process and task in the arts-based group work. It explored the degree to which expressive artists recognized and incorporated both aspects of arts-based groups, and to what degree the balance of group process and task affected the promotion of mutual aid in the group. This study explored the work of expressive artists outside of social work to address the following questions: Were there aspects of group work practiced by those who utilize the arts in groups that could benefit the field of social work with groups? Could those outside of social work provide insight into mutual aid based work using expressive activity? More specifically, what role did process and task balance play in the promotion of mutual aid in the group?

Purpose of the Study

The focus of this study was on expressive artists' use of theatre and movement based activities in a variety of practice settings with a range of group populations. Review of the social work and expressive arts literature indicated that expressive arts were a potent means for addressing a wide range of needs at both ends of the age

spectrum, from children and adolescents to seniors. Pressing issues for group members included search for self-esteem and competency, development of identity, conflict management and resolution, and the need to develop strong relational bonds with peers. Through interviews with a sample of expressive arts group practitioners, this study sought to identify the skills expressive artists used and to determine whether those skills had a significant impact on group dynamics. This study explored expressive artists' rationale for the intervention skills they used. It also explored whether their work with groups suggested additional skills beyond those articulated in the social work literature to promote group dynamics including development of a system in mutual aid and the balance of group process and creative task completion. Ultimately, I developed a performance-based typology of skills in response to how expressive artists described the skills and tools they used in activity-based group work.

The following chapter provides a theoretical foundation for the mutual aid approach to social work with groups. The chapter introduces the interactional model of social group work, considered by many social group work theorists and practitioners as the practice model that most closely represents the mutual aid approach to working with groups. The model presents facilitator skills utilized in the interactional model and described in group stage-specific manner.

The chapter also includes a brief discussion of group process and task balance in relation to the mutual aid approach to working with groups. This discussion is important because of its relative fit with purposeful use of creative activity in social work groups, the role activity may play in elevating process in these groups, and its leverage in offering a space for the development of mutual aid among members.

Chapter II: THE THEORETICAL UNDERPINNINGS OF ARTS-BASED GROUP WORK

Introduction

For the purpose of this study, the examination of arts-based group work practice developed out of sensitizing concepts drawn from social group work theory and expressive arts therapies. Each approach carries a sound theoretical framework for actualizing activity in groups. The history of social group work includes development of a rich and full theory base drawn from a number of social science disciplines over the past one hundred and twenty-five years. As a result, social group work theory provides a solid framework for examining facilitator skills used in groups. Although considered a recent addition to therapeutic group work, the various fields of expressive arts therapies continue to develop and expand their theories for practice. Like social work, expressive arts therapies draw on a number of social science disciplines to inform theory development and practice. As with social group work, expressive therapies encompass a number of varied, overlapping approaches, techniques, skills, and facilitator tools for practice. Practice contexts, including practice environment, group composition and needs, facilitator area of expertise and knowledge, and group purpose for interventions determine the choice of a specific approach within a chosen field of practice.

A major question this study sought to answer was to what extent both social group work approaches and expressive arts therapies appeared in the actual practice experiences of expressive arts workers. Theory provided a framing device for differential use of skills and tools in practice. Social group work theory served as a construct for exploring work by arts-based group workers outside the field of social work. This study sought to elicit

the specific practice actions of expressive artists. It raised questions about how theory informed the skills each discipline used, and how the skills and tools from each field were similar and how they differed. In short, this study posed a series of theory-to-practice related questions: did expressive arts workers use skills and theories explicated in social group work theory intuitively? Were these skills and tools adaptable to the theory and practice of expressive arts therapies? How might these two possibly distinct and possibly similar ways of using creative activity in groups inform each other?

Foundational Social Group Work Theory

This study drew from a rich history of social group work theory to inform a methodology of practice skills and tools. Social work theory grew out of other social science disciplines (Alissi, 1980; Gitterman, 1986, 2004; Roberts & Northen, 1976; Schopler & Galinsky, 1995; Schwartz, 1971). Small group theory from sociology shaped the mutual aid approach to working with groups. As such, there is a historical relevance to the development of mutual aid based groups.

The core concept of the group as a system in mutual aid appeared in early social science theory and informed theory and practice of social group work. Studies conducted in the early twentieth century by the sociologist Charles Horton Cooley (1909, 1922) suggested a number of important concepts for social group work theory and practice. These included cohesion, or the affiliation of individuals in primary groups, offering the possibility for mutual identification and resulting in the “we-ness” of the group.

Problem solving is another core concept of the mutual aid approach to working with groups. It is partially rooted in the theories of social psychologist Robert Bales (1950). Bales extended the work of the progressive educator, philosopher, and functional

psychologist, John Dewey (1910) whose problem solving theories influenced mutual aid based group work theory and practice (Steinberg, 1997, 2004). Bales argued that when group members actively participated in problem solving they were attending to that task while simultaneously maintaining overall functioning of the group. Further, his study of problem solving revealed that groups undergo phases or stages of the problem solving process (Northen, 1988). Bales provided an early understanding of group stages of development, particularly in relation to the group's ability to organize, cohere, and problem solve.

Concepts from field theory (Kurt Lewin; 1935, 1951) also influenced social group work theory and practice, among them roles and norms for behavior in the group; power, or the degree to which members maintain influence over each other; cohesion; consensus; and valence, or the importance of goals within the group's life space (Toseland & Rivas, 2001). Cohesion is an important concept within field theory; it represents the forces that bring members together and work to maintain and bind them as a group (Balgopal & Vassil, 1983; Douglas, 1979; Marrow, 1969; Shepherd, 1964; Toseland & Rivas, 2001).

The systems perspective provided early theoretical understanding of individuals' systems and the small group. George Homans (1950) focused his study of small groups on a dual systems perspective; he conceived of a system of personal interactions within the group and the group's external system in relation to the larger social context within which it functioned. Social workers drew heavily on Homans' interaction theory, which discussed the interdependence of inter-group activity and relationships in addition to and the relationship of the group as a whole to its external environment (Alissi, 1980;

Northen, 1988). The dual perspective of the group as a collective of individuals and a fully functioning system is at the core of mutual aid group work (Steinberg, 1997).

Interactional Model of Group Work

The interactional model of group work owes much to these early theorists. Their work was central to the development of mutual aid as a core concept in social group work. Wilbur Newstetter first described the "interactional" aspect of groups at the 1935 National Conference of Social Work. In his speech before the conference, he told attendees, "it is this reciprocal procedure…that we may call the group-work process" (Newstetter, 1935, p. 292). Later, Schwartz (1961) and Shulman (Schopler & Galinksy, 1995) developed a reciprocal model of practice based on Newstetter and others' understanding of the reciprocal process within groups. This model has other labels including the mediating model (Douglas, 1979; Middleman & Wood, 1990a; Schwartz, 1976), because of the worker's role as a mediator between the group, the members, and larger systems. Others called this approach the interactionist model (Cohen & Graybeal, 2007; Reid, 1981; Schwartz, 1977; Toseland & Rivas, 2001), because of the interactions that take place between the members and external systems. The process model (Lang, 1974) and the mutual aid model (Cohen & Graybeal, 2007; Gitterman, 2004) are two other names applied to the approach. Middleman and Wood (1990) note that the name change from *reciprocal* to *mediating* and finally to *interactional* is a result of a shift in emphasis from focus on the philosophical aspects of the model, to that of worker's role, and ultimately to that of group process.

The interactional model draws heavily on social systems theory (Douglas, 1979; Gitterman, 2004; Papell & Rothman, 1980a; Reid, 1981; Schopler & Galinsky, 1995;

Toseland & Rivas, 2001; Whittaker, 1980), field theory (Alissi, 1980; Douglas, 1979; Papell & Rothman, 1980a; Schopler & Galinsky, 1995; Whittaker, 1980), and humanistic psychology (Balgopal & Vassil, 1983). This model was the first to make use of mutual aid and contracting in the group (Middleman and Wood, 1990a; Papell and Rothman, 1980; Tropp, 1971); it emphasizes the group as the locus for the development of mutual aid and the power of mutual support to move the group toward individual and collective growth. Gitterman (2004) suggests that the history of group work is also the history of the mutual aid model.

Schwartz's model draws heavily on systems theory and the social goals model (Gitterman, 2004). The worker functions as a mediator (Garvin, 1997; Reid, 1981) between group members and society. The workers task is to assist members meet society's expectations (Alissi, 1980; Middleman & Wood, 1990a; Papell, 1997; Reid, 1981; Toseland & Rivas, 2001). Schwartz (1971) refers to the worker's dual responsibility of assisting the individual with negotiating his or her systems while maintaining the agency's role in meeting the needs of the client. By doing so, the members and the agency fulfill their roles in the community. In the helping relationship, the worker supports the right of each member for self-fulfillment (Goroff, 1980). This occurs in a democratic environment in which members exercise self-determination and the "development of [their] fullest capacity" (p. 298). Klein describes the fluid nature of the interactional approach to practice when he argues that the worker's focus is more an "art" than a "science" and "more 'happening' than goal facilitation" (1970, p. 32).

In the interactional model, members both influence and are influenced by their environment. This model locates individual members' problems in their environment; the

worker's task to make members' social environments more responsive to their needs (Toseland & Rivas, 2001). With the interactional model, Schwartz (1971) provides direct links between the needs of individuals, the group, the integral role of systems theory, and the group as a system of mutual aid. He describes the group as "an enterprise in mutual aid, focused on the specific problems about which the members have agreed to meet, and set within a larger system – the agency – whose function it is to provide help with just such problems" (p. 1258).

Role of the Worker in Mutual Aid-Based Groups

The primary focus of this study was the role of the worker in arts-based groups. A significant question of the study was the nature of the expressive artist's role in building mutual aid using purposeful creative activity. In social group work theory, particularly in the concepts and theories of the interactional model of group work, the facilitator plays an active role in establishing an environment conducive to individual growth and mutual support. The development of the group as a system in mutual aid remains an essential component in social group workers' repertoire of tasks. Social group work literature details the tasks required and skills needed to help actualize mutual aid in groups. Whether or not expressive artists attend to these tasks or use the tools remained a question.

In social group work, the facilitator's role is vital in the mutual aid process. The worker strives to facilitate the development of "potentially helpful relationships so that they become actual helpful relationships" bringing "knowledge and skill to help actualize the potentials" (Goroff, 1980, p. 296). The worker's primary role is to guide the group toward becoming a system of mutual aid (Middleman & Wood, 1990a; Shulman, 1999).

This role requires a number of specific tasks. These include supporting a mutual aid system; encouraging members early in the group life cycle to direct their interactions to and with each other; and linking interactions into significant themes and modeling and guiding norms. Gitterman refers to these activities as “behavioral guidelines” (2004, p. 100); workers utilize group activities so the members can experience individual as well as collective effort and success. Similarly, Shulman (1999) asserts that while the potential for mutual aid is present in groups, its development is not a given. The worker must be willing to examine her own response to past group experiences and stereotypes about others and her professional “use of self” to further the process of establishing mutual aid influences the actual development of mutual aid among members.

For the purpose of this study, I utilized a framework for describing stage specific intervention skills drawn primarily from the work of social group work theorist, William Schwartz (1971a; 1976). These stages included the preliminary phase, the contracting stage, the work phase and the termination or transition phase. For each phase, Schwartz describes a series of concrete facilitator skills. A number of social work theorists elaborated on these skills (Gitterman & Shulman, 1994; Middleman & Wood, 1990; Steinberg, 1997) in their discussions of the small group as a system of mutual aid. The framework is a linear model that parallels a series of discrete skills throughout the stages of group development. In this study, questions remained regarding both the linear nature of the model and how expressive artists “fit” with such a structure. Group theorists suggest that while skills are sequential in relation to group stage, they often overlap and reappear in later stages of group development as the needs of members and purpose for group or facilitator involvement shift (Shulman, 1994). I speculated this aspect of the

model might provide a better fit with the “fluid” facilitative approaches favored by expressive artists.

Following is a brief overview of the skills associated with each stage of group development as articulated by social group work theorists who promote the interactional group work model. This overview is important to the discussion of facilitator skills for a number of reasons. The reciprocal model provided a strong framework for looking at skill set in an organized, comprehensive manner. Group workers commonly use skills that translate across a broad spectrum approaches in their work with groups. The framework offered a clear picture of how facilitators use specific skills in the development of mutual aid. It provided a model to compare and contrast expressive artists’ skills and tools.

Facilitator Skills and Stages of Group Development in Social Work Groups

Beginning Stage Practitioner Skills

The primary role of the worker during the early stage of group work is as mediator between members and agency to contract the conditions for work (Schwartz, 1971a). The facilitator accomplishes this by building connections between individual member needs and the “agency’s reason for offering help and hospitality” (p. 15). Fundamental worker tasks during the beginning phase of group work include *identifying and acknowledging to the group its purpose* according to both members and agency. Authors cite the worker’s tasks of *articulating mutual need, mutual obligation, and expectations* among and between members and *identifying and acknowledging common ground* between these potentially disparate purposes and individual members’ needs. Additional tasks in the beginning phase include *clarifying the facilitator’s role* and *purposeful use of self to model empathy and inclusion* (Germain & Gitterman, 1996;

Gitterman, 1986, 1997, 2004; Kurland & Salmon, 1998; Shulman, 1994, Toseland & Rivas, 2001). The tasks of *fostering cohesiveness and building on commonalities*, or helping the group develop a sense of "we-ness" (Steinberg, 1997, p. 27) utilizes the skills of *tuning-in*, visual scanning of members to assess levels of interaction and connection, *inviting full participation* in group activities and discussion, and *reaching for information links*. Additional skills in the beginning phase include the *facilitator's guidance in creation of a group contract, referral to group purpose* and *verbalization of group norms*, *careful selection of communication patterns* and *actively listening*. Another skill is *tuning-in with whole body* to both verbal and non-verbal cues from members.

Practitioner Skills of Group's Middle or Work Phase

During the work phase of group development, the facilitator acts as a mediator among members and focuses on tasks related to actively building a mutual aid system (Shulman, 1994). During this stage and directly related to the mediating role the facilitator also *makes a demand for work* among and between members (Shulman, 1994; Steinberg, 1997). An integral part of the mediating process involves *helping members to explore and manage inter-group conflict*. Group work theorists see conflict as an integral part of the mutual aid process because it allows group members to attain new ways of thinking and acting (Northen & Kurland, 2001; Steinberg, 1993), and conflict is a component of the middle stage of groups. The group facilitator addresses conflict during the work phase of group development through a problem solving process first explicated by John Dewey (1910) and later developed by social group work theorists (Kurland & Salmon, 1998; Northen & Kurland, 2001).

Brown (1991) suggests that the problem solving process within mutual aid builds cohesion and help members in decision-making. The problem solving process is an essential component of social group work (Somers, 1976; Wilson & Ryland, 1949) and takes place during the work phase of group development. Facilitator tasks involved in the work phase include assisting members in connecting to the group for individual support and helping members in their efforts to provide mutual aid to each other (Schwartz, 1971a). The skill set utilized in these three broad facilitator tasks include *reaching for opposites and ambiguities, recognizing, observing and reinforcing the different ways members help one another, and partializing large problems into smaller, more manageable issues for group exploration* (Schwartz, 1971a).

A number of facilitator skills are associated with assisting groups utilize the problem solving process (Steinberg, 1997). Middleman and Wood (1990) describe skills associated with facilitating the work of the group in solving conflict. As described by Schwartz's stages of group development (1971a; 1976) and Gitterman and Shulman's skill set for those stages (1994), the problem solving process is established through preliminary group phase skills and become manifest as the group moves into its work phase. Social group work theorists describe the skill of *reaching for information links* in order to assist the members in understanding that the facilitator is not the expert on issues of importance to the group. *Encouraging the expression of ideas and feelings* helps members to differentiate their experiences and to participate in exploration of problems and issues in the group with support and assurance that their contributions are heard. *Confronting situations* allows the facilitator to observe openly, simply and without judgment issues that may be affecting group process. *Turning issues back to the group* is

a process of helping the group to take responsibility for its own progress toward resolving issues. *Acknowledging and reaching for differences* among members assists in helping them to look at issues and situations from a number of viewpoints. The culminating skill in the facilitator's problem solving process is *reaching for consensus* on how the group is managing the problem solving process.

Development of Empathy as a Skill in Group Facilitation

Facilitator tasks during the work phase include a number of skills for establishing and building empathy in the group. These include *reaching for and acknowledging members' feelings* (Shulman, 1994; Steinberg, 2004) and *reaching for feelings links* in order to help members fully articulate those feelings in the group and find commonalities in their feelings. The facilitator *reaches for empathic connections* and may utilize the skill of *reporting (her) own feelings* to model the appropriateness of expressing feelings in the group setting.

Facilitator Skills in the Termination Stage

A vital task in the final stage of group development is the facilitator's ability to help group members process their time in the group in order to move on to new experiences (Schwartz, 1971). Group work theorists suggest that it is critical for the facilitator to articulate her own feelings about endings and reach for the variety of feelings members have about group endings (Kurland & Salmon, 1998; Northen & Kurland, 2001; Shulman, 1994). Helping members to *partialize their feelings about endings* allows them to divide the multitude of feelings into smaller, more manageable parts for exploration. Helping members to *reflect on and summarize their work together, voice group achievements* and *make plans for the future* assist individual members

through the transition phase. Appendix 11 depicts tables drawn from social group work literature that provide a condensed format of social group work skills detailed in this chapter.

Summary

This chapter provided an overview of the theoretical underpinnings of social work with groups. The chapter focused on the interactional model of group work because according to many social work theorists, it most directly represents the mutual aid approach to working with groups. This approach and the concept of the group as a system of mutual aid provide a conceptual and skill-related "fit" with the purposeful use of activity in groups. However, this study raised questions about the centrality of mutual aid in the task repertoire of expressive arts workers. Many of the skills presented in the framework for mutual aid based group work appeared to "fit" in the skill sets of expressive artists who use creative activity. However, questions remain about the degree to which expressive artists consciously use those skills to develop mutual aid, or whether mutual aid is in fact an objective they articulate as a part of their group work.

The following chapter reviews the literature on expressive activity in social work with groups, including an historical overview and examples of practice settings for expressive activity in group work; it identifies attributes of the creative social worker. Creativity and creative group facilitation are at the heart of this study. The discussion of expressive activity in social work and qualities of creative social workers frames the discussion regarding the traits and characteristics of expressive artists who work with groups.

Chapter III: THE EXPRESSIVE ARTS IN SOCIAL WORK GROUPS

Historical Overview

The history of social group work and activity are inextricable. Purposeful activity in groups parallels the development of the field of social work with groups (Delgado, 2000; Dutton, 2001; Northen & Kurland, 2001). The histories of the settlement house, recreation, camp, and education movements include the use of activity for a number of purposes. These include socialization, acculturation of immigrants, vocational training, education, and recreation (Brandler & Roman, 1991; Getzel, 1983; Kaplan, 2001; Kurland & Salmon, 1998; Middleman, 1968; Northen & Kurland, 2001). Utilization of the arts by early social group work practitioners provided a sense of legitimacy and definition for the profession during the early settlement years (Bitel, 1999; Getzel, 1983). The fine and performing arts were integral components of group and community-level activities (Getzel, 1983). Some examples of early creative group work in settlement houses include folk art, music, and the dramatic arts (Getzel, 1983). As Getzel (1983) notes, the purposeful use of creative activities in the early settlement house

> …were believed to be intrinsically enhancing to the individual who was denied an outlet for self-realization. Moreover, the arts provided a basis for group acceptance and socialization, and had the potential of contributing to social solidarity. The arts, in short, where seen as a broad means to personal and social ends (p. 67).

Much debate exists about the use of program or activity in group work, a debate that parallels the development of the method and its place in the field of social work (Middleman, 1968; Northen & Kurland, 2001). This discussion focuses on the balance of process and task in groups. Review of the literature on the subject suggests there has been a similar historical divide in social group work regarding the relative importance of group

process and task completion. The role of activity in groups and the use of creative activity as task accentuate that discussion.

The debate is an old one; group work's close association with the settlement house, recreation, and camp movements of the early twentieth century identified it early on as an approach to practice closely aligned with recreation and socialization (Gentry, 1984; Middleman, 1968). Early group workers' lack of clarity regarding group work's place in the social services contributed to early group workers' ambivalence about the role groups could play in the social service provision (Wilson, 1976). Throughout the course of the twentieth century, the role and value of activity in groups became clearer as the method developed a robust theoretical base and specific approaches to practice.

Group Process and Task Completion in Social Work Groups

Social work theorists distinguish between treatment and task-oriented groups (Fatout & Rose, 1995; Toseland & Rivas, 2001). Those differences include communication patterns, levels of self-disclosure, content type and structure, and processes for and degree of evaluation for individual member goal achievement. The literature defines treatment groups as those that focus on meeting members' socio-emotional needs (Northen, 1988; Toseland & Rivas, 2001). Task groups have specific goals not necessarily related to the needs of individual members (Northen, 1988; Toseland & Rivas, 2001). Theorists describe the goals of task groups in terms of changes that occur outside the group (Fatout & Rose, 1995). Also referred to as working groups, task groups are supposed to create a product or complete a project that is external to the group itself (Ephross & Vassil, 2004). Some theorists suggest task groups are an appropriate context for problem-solving (Hartford, 1971; Northen, 1988). This relates to

the concept of the task-centered approach to social work practice as described by a number of social work theorists (Garvin, 1974; Garvin, Reid, & Epstein, 1976). In social work groups, the task-centered approach is brief, time-limited, addresses specific problems, and uses tasks and problem-solving approaches to alleviate problems of individual group members. It is the worker's role in task-centered groups to use the members to help each other, a form of mutual aid.

Structural and theoretical differences between task and treatment groups do not preclude the possibility for the development of mutual aid in task-oriented group work. Steinberg (2004) draws the potential for development of mutual aid in task-oriented groups:

> Although the overall purpose for task-oriented groups is not to help members work on individual problems, per se, the very impetus for their formation in the first place is still a belief that whatever the task is to be, it is more likely to be achieved by a task *group* than by a number of task-oriented individuals. That is, they are formed precisely because they can provide individuals with access to the thinking, help, and support of others (p. 140).

Others describe an attempt to balance group process and task completion in group facilitation (Anderson, 1997; Shulman, 2004) and suggest a dual focus for practitioners with task-oriented groups; the first involves completion of tasks, and the second fulfillment of the group's socio-emotional purpose for formation. Some social work theorists suggest that group workers should strive for connections between the two aspects of group, enhancing and deepening the meaning of each aspect of the group experience for its members (Kaplan, 2001; Middleman, 1968; Shulman 2004). Middleman (1968) proposes the necessary marriage of group process with task in her description of program content:

> Program is *what* is being done and *how* it is done, and, viewing it from the worker's point of view as he helps set it in motion, it includes the *why* of what is done. The program content, the worker's use of his relationship with the group members, and his effect upon their interactional process combine to become the social group work process itself-that precious entity through which the aims of the individual members, the group, the worker and the sponsoring agency come to life (pp. 66-67).

This places the discussion of a process and task balance in the context of purposeful use of activity. Middleman proposes two broad purposes for the use of activity in social work groups. The first includes "activities which aim at encouraging socialization, fun and relaxation, pleasurable group experiences, creative use of leisure, democratic group processes, increased social responsibility, and actions geared toward the overall social good" (p. 89). The second purpose for non-verbal content is "aimed at the growth and development of the individual, the rehabilitation of those who suffer from social, emotional, and physical ills as well as intellectual lacks" (p. 90). These observations suggest group workers use activity purposefully to meet the needs of both task-oriented and treatment-oriented groups. Purposeful use of activity provides a mechanism for balancing process and task, thus allowing a place for both to exist in the same group.

Creative activity in social work groups spans a broad spectrum from the selection of a single activity for one group session to a chosen activity utilized as purposeful content throughout the group's stages of development (Wright, 1999). The arts in social work groups are "categories of *instrumental* activities" (Getzel, 1983, p. 67, author's original emphasis) rather than ends in themselves; this suggests that although task and process weave together, the focus of purposeful use of activity in social work groups rests squarely on process over product (Kaplan, 2001; Wilson & Ryland, 1949, Wright, 1999).

This concept has significant impact on the facilitator's understanding and actualization of process and task balance in groups.

In summary, existing social work theory suggests that task serves process. An alternative approach would be to discard an either-or perspective and promote complete integration of process and task. Middleman suggests this when she asserts that the "what and how are inextricably meshed" (1979, p. 7). Questions remain as to whether this approach is possible; practice contexts may influence the degree to which process and task find true balance in groups. These questions are examined in a later chapter. In the discussion of a balance between group process and task, group work theorists suggest that groups shift between a task-oriented purpose and treatment-focused work. They describe this phenomenon as a dual purpose for the group's work (Fatout & Rose, 1995; Wright, 1999). This suggests groups are either one type or the other and have a distinct treatment or task orientation. Discussions with expressive artists interviewed for this study indicated the potential for more fluid interaction and balanced use of treatment and task in arts-based group work through the consistent use of purposeful creative activity. For expressive artists content served as task while supporting process in the group. Process helped group members accomplish a creative task through both individual accomplishment and group effort.

Leading figures in the development of activity in groups throughout the middle and late 20th century include Gertrude Wilson and Gladys Ryland (1949) who established the first written confirmation of the values of activities or "program" in groups. Grace Coyle, in her seminal speech on group work in social work practice, set the stage for an ongoing discussion about the relative roles of process and task in group work. In her

speech Coyle described the valuable role program plays in groups, “Program and relationship are inextricably intertwined. Social work method developed as we began to see that the understanding and use of human relations involved were as important as the understanding and use of various types of program” (1946). A discussion that began in the twentieth century continues into the current one and forms a core issue of this study.

The Role of Activity in Social Work Groups

The use of activity in groups serves a number of purposes, including the potential for expressive arts to reach people unable to express their feelings and needs in words (Brandler & Roman, 1991, 1999; Cusicanqui & Salmon, 2004; Leahy, 2004; Malekoff, 1997; Wright, 1999). Theorists suggest that activity can serve as a conduit for the increased ability to express feelings verbally (McFerran-Skewes, 2004; Middleman, 1968; Northen, 1988; Northen & Kurland, 2001; VanderVen, in Whittaker, 1976; Wright, 1999). Activities allow members to build positive relationships, which, in turn, can help move the group into discussions of taboo areas or feelings too difficult to verbalize initially within the group (Shulman, 1971; 1999; 2006). Activity in social work groups acts as a distancing mechanism and provides a tangible, safe container for expressing feelings and needs that might otherwise be socially unacceptable (Brandler & Roman, 1991, 1999).

Another value of activity in groups is the development or enhancement of relationships (Northen, 1988; Northen & Kurland, 2001). Whittaker suggests activity is opportunity “to try out newly acquired peer relating skills” (1985, p. 238), as is the enhancement of group cohesion (Leahy, 2004; McFerran-Skewes, 2004). Increased sense of competency occurs through a common creative task (Northern & Kurland, 2001;

Wilder, 2004; Zayas & Lewis, 1986). Activity is a useful tool for teaching coping skills (Brandler & Roman, 1991, 1999; Cusiquani & Salmon, 2004; Northen & Kurland, 2001); finding commonalties and accepting differences among members (Halperin 2001); and building a sense of competency and mastery over tasks specific to a particular creative medium (Brandler & Roman, 1991, 1999; Coyle, 1955; Cusiquani & Salmon, 2004; Getzel, 1983; Malekoff, 2004; Northen, 1988; Whittaker, 1985). Creative activity helps members to take risks (Halperin, 2001) and provides the means for trying on new roles (Brandler & Roman, 1991, 1999; Shulman, 1971, 1999, 2006; Whittaker, 1976, 1985).

Practice Settings for the Use of Expressive Arts Activities in Social Work Groups

Creative activity appears in a wide range of social group work settings, including hospitals, community centers, schools, mental health in-and out-patient facilities (Leahy, 2004; Potocky, 1993), senior services, correctional facilities, and shelters (Brandler & Roman, 1999). The arts in social work with groups run across a broad spectrum of client populations. Group workers use expressive arts activities in work with children and adolescents (Dutton, 2001; Johnston, et al., 1985; Kaplan, 2001; Malekoff, 2004; Marsiglia, 1997; Waite, 1993; Whittaker, 1976; Wright, 1999, 2002). Schnekenburger (1995) writes about the therapeutic value of poetry writing with a group of mentally ill adults. Mazza and Price (1985) describe facilitator experiences in using poetry and music for short-term treatment with depressed college students. Lyons (2000) gives example of a music group for mothers and babies in an early intervention program. Campbell (2004) and others (Cusiquanqui & Salmon, 2004; Getzel, 1983; Halperin, 2001; Kaminsky, 1974, 1984, 1985; Perlstein, 1984) note the specific value of purposeful use of arts

activities with the elderly, the expressive arts bring talents to life that may not have found expression in earlier years (Campbell, 2004).

Aspects of the Creative Social Worker

As noted earlier, the discussion of expressive activity in social work and identified qualities of creative social workers helps understand traits and characteristics of expressive arts workers in their work with groups. The qualities of creative social workers as described by social work theorists are a framing device in combination with the sensitizing concepts of the interactional model described in an earlier chapter. These discriminate between the qualities and skills in expressive artists' work from those that are unique to arts-based group work.

Creativity in social work practice has a number of definitions. In the first instance, social work has been defined as an art and creativity is a prominent component in practice (Bitel, 1999; Siporin, 1988). Creativity in social work is the ability to generate new ideas (Weissman, 1990). Koestler (1964, in Amabile, 1983) defines creativity as a "biosociative process," or linking two previously unrelated ways of thinking to provide new "insight or invention" (p. 18). Creativity links to the concept of innovation in social work practice (Messner, 2004); it is the ability to innovate thoughts and actions, which may lead to new approaches to therapy, the development of theory, or advances in social service delivery (Rapoport, 1968).

The term "innovation" appears repeatedly in literature on creative problem solving in social work practice (Davidson, 1990; Gelfand, 1982; Messner, 2004; Rapoport, 1968; Siporin, 1988; Weissman, 1990) or the "introduction of something novel" (Thomas, in Messner, 2004, p. 104). Innovation does not have to involve creation

of a new product; it can mean the ability to initiate a range of changes in practice or action, including invention of a new tool, adaptation of an existing tool, and novel application of an existing tool for different purposes (Thomas, 1987). Thomas's description of innovation is important to the exploration of how social group workers creatively adapt their practice towards innovative group work. Group workers interviewed for an earlier pilot study cited a number of practice experiences where adaptation of practice approach and novel application of existing group work tools and processes related to agency demands played a significant role in successful facilitation of mutual aid group work (Bitel, 2006). This pilot study informed the current study's focus on aspects of creativity in arts-based group work.

A number of writers identify the characteristics of the creative social work practitioner. Brandler and Roman (1991) write about the creative use of activity in groups and the qualities in workers that allow for successful implementation of program in social work groups. They note, "In order to be creative, the worker must remain open to intellectual, emotional, and cultural enrichment in her own life. Her openness to new experiences can give permission to her clients to expand themselves" (p. 150). Originality, expressiveness, and imagination are qualities associated with creativity (Compton & Galaway, 1994). The creative social worker has the ability to persevere (Gelfand, 1982; Weissman, 1990); willingness to be challenged by complexity (Amabile, 1983; Compton & Galaway, 1994; McMullan, 1976; Weissman, 1990); capacity for autonomous action; an ability to employ systems thinking (Heus & Pincus, 1986); and a tolerance for ambiguity (Siporin, 1988; Weissman, 1990). Creative social work practice requires space to raise doubts and challenge assumptions; this demands an ability to

admit uncertainty and be ready to rethink accepted practice (Davidson, 1990). Creative workers accept rather than avoid conflict; they are able to rethink a problem or situation in a different light (Boehm, 1961; Gelfand, 1982). Others echo the important component of lateral or divergent thinking in aspects of the creative problem solver (Compton & Galaway, 1994; McMullan, 1976; Siporin, 1988) and the ability to remain open-minded regarding problem solving (McMullan, 1976). Mutual aid group work relies on the worker's ability to use the group as a source for alternative ways of looking at problems and issues in the group and with individual members.

A number of parallels exist between aspects of the creative social group worker and components of mutual aid based group work. In order to practice creative social work, a practitioner must give up time pressures to play with ideas and allow for their fruition in effective practice (Weissman, 1990). This supports the argument that time is a vital component to the development of mutual aid systems (Steinberg, 1997). Willingness to remain with the problem solving process is consistent with the mutual aid concepts of *exploring taboo subjects* and *helping with specific problems.* The creative worker's willing acceptance of conflict is helpful in making *mutual demands* in the group, the process by which members are encouraged to confront and work through conflicts together (Shulman, 1986; Steinberg, 1997).

Although creativity on the part of the individual social worker is vital to advances in social group work, practice settings control the degree to which workers are able to realize their creative aspirations (Weissman, 1990). Some support the concept that the creative individual and the environment in which they function cannot be separated (Amabile, 1983; Coler and McGhee, 1963). The role of practice setting in relation to

actualization of creative group work resonates in both social group work and expressive arts work in community settings. This discussion appears in a later chapter on the role and impact of various practice contexts on the work of expressive artists in a variety of practice settings.

The qualities of creative social workers provide a compelling framework for examining the unique traits and characteristics expressive arts workers bring to arts-based group work. However, questions remain whether the qualities described by social work theorists are similar to those found in expressive arts workers. These qualities may themselves affect the facilitator's focus on the balance of process and task in groups and whether creativity influences mutual aid in groups.

A review of the literature on expressive arts therapies appears in the following chapter. Included are conceptual definitions of drama therapies and dance movement therapy, which are the focus of expressive activity for the study. The chapter includes an overview of expressive arts therapies practice settings, balance of group process and creative task in expressive arts-based groups, and aspects of mutual aid in expressive arts therapies.

Chapter IV: EXPRESSIVE ARTS THERAPIES

Expressive Arts Therapies Defined

Across the centuries, the arts have sustained people in times of deprivation and war, providing means for expression of reason and hope in a chaotic world. Art in its many forms has provided the impetus for fighting oppression, provoked thought and debate, and offered inspiration. In addition, the arts appear in a number of mediums including drama, music, fine art, and dance. Each has made a significant contribution to the development of cultures and societies over the millennia. The arts appear in a range of therapeutic milieus for diverse populations (Camilleri, 2007); the nature and form of the expressive therapy depends on its practice setting, practitioner expertise, client needs, and therapeutic objectives (Malchiodi, 2005; Williams & Wood, 1977).

The arts are a vehicle for *communitas* (Johnson, 1999; Atkins & Williams, 2007). David Read Johnson, a leading theorist in the field of drama therapy, provides a definition for the concept: "The feeling of belonging to a community, of recognizing the common bonds that link people together in a unit, with shared purpose, may be termed *communitas*" (1999, p. 94) Johnson clarifies the role of the arts in *communitas*:

> The arts are forms of expression or communication, and thus a language…The power of this language to evoke communitas is not based on observable pragmatic actions, nor on external symbols of achievement or communal identity, but on its power to make manifest our inner being, causing us to recognize the profound similarities among us in emotion and thought; that is, our essential humanness (p. 94).

Throughout history, the arts served as means for healing (Karkou & Sanderson, 2006), vehicles for community building (Jennings, 1973; McGuire, 2007) and community action (Gelfand, 1982), enhancement of interpersonal communication skills (Johnson, Lahey, & Shore, 1992), and the capacity for relatedness and bridging differences (Atkins

& Williams, 2007). They are a valuable tool for building individual self-esteem (Grodner, Braff, Janowsky, & Clopton, 1982; Jones, 1978; Mitchell, 1978; Rogers, 1999; Waite, 1993) and fostering the creative process (Johnson, et al., 1992). They are a medium for reducing isolation (McGarry & Prince, 1998) and a vehicle for self-discovery (Malchiodi, 2005; Rogers, 1999) and personal insight (Johnson, 1999; Kaminsky, 1985). The arts are a lens through which to identify and reveal social oppression (Bitel, 1999; Fabricant & Fisher, 2002; Kaminsky, 1985; Kaplan, 2007; Lowe, 2000) and facilitate social change (Rapoport, 1968).

The therapeutic uses of various fine, visual, and performing arts are arts therapies (Karkou & Sanderson, 2006; Payne, 1993), expressive arts therapies (Atkins & Williams, 2007; Brederode, 1999; Feder & Feder, 1981; Halprin, 1999; Levine & Levine, 1999; Mukti, 1989; Odell-Miller, Hughes & Westacott, 2006; Stephenson, 1984), and creative arts therapies (Grodner et al., 1982; Harvey, 1989; Johnson, 1999; Malchiodi, 2005; Wilson, 2003). They are described as intermodel (Atkins & Williams, 2007; Cattanach, 1999; Knill, 2005; Lacy, Michaelson, & van Laar, 2007) or integrative therapies (Malchiodi, 2005) when used purposefully for therapeutic objectives. The practice of art psychotherapy (Karkou & Sanderson, 2006) is a more recent term that describes the work of people trained in both artistic mediums and psychotherapy. However, it emphasizes psychotherapeutic training and practice methods for application of artistic media with individuals and groups. A number of theorists describe the therapeutic use of performing and visual arts as action therapies (Cattanach, 1999; Dayton, 2007; Junge, 2007; Malchiodi, 2005). These interventions promote exploration of feelings, problems, and needs through an art form rather than solely through verbal interaction. This definition

signifies an important aspect of expressive arts in groups. The non-verbal approach to working with individuals and groups through creative processes offers the opportunity for expression of strong feelings by people who cannot communicate their needs directly (Berger, 1969; Ferszt, Heineman, Ferszt, & Romano, 1998; Grodner et al., 1982; Langley, 1987; Levy, 1995; MacDonald, 1992; Malchiodi, 2005; Odell-Miller et al., 2006; Payne, 1992, 1993; Waller, 1993; Wasserman, 2002; Wylie, 2007). This is an aspect of art therapy practice similar to the use of creative program in social work groups. Karkou and Sanderson (2006) provide a definition of arts therapies as:

> the creative use of the artistic media as vehicles for non-verbal and/or symbolic communication, within a holding environment, encouraged by a well-defined client-therapist relationship, in order to achieve personal and/or social therapeutic goals appropriate for the individual (p. 46).

Arts therapies and those who practice them have expertise in an artistic medium and have psychotherapeutic training (Karkou & Sanderson, 2006). The creative arts therapies encompass a range of media used by those trained in a variety of helping fields, including special education, counseling, rehabilitation, and psychotherapy (Johnson, 1999). The aims of creative arts therapies are to "…alleviate distress, increase understanding, improve relationships, and change physiological responses" (Johnson, 1999, p. 126).

A long history connects psychoanalytic theory and art (Case & Dalley, 1992). Psychotherapeutic theory and practice are prevalent in contemporary fields of expressive therapies and influenced the development of modern arts therapies (Feder & Feder, 1981). Similar to theories that shaped approaches to social group work practice, expressive arts therapies developed along a continuum of practice approaches. Some focus on the expression of artistic or creative outlets for social action and socialization,

and others promote creative self-expression as part of a psychotherapeutic process. Although a wide variety of expressive arts therapies appears in practice, drama and movement were the areas of focus for this study. Following are descriptions of drama therapy and dance movement therapy.

Drama Therapy

Historically, drama and its manifestation through the theatrical form served as a lens through which to explore and grapple with social issues (Sweeney, 2007). Drama played a significant role in human development (Jennings, 1973). Agosto Boal (1992, 2000), a leading voice in the Theatre of the Oppressed, asserts that "theatre is a form of knowledge; it should and can also be a means of transforming society" (p. 1992, p. *xxxi*). Theatre is an ancient form of spiritual and physical ritualistic healing (Bailey, 2006; Emunah, 1996; Jennings, 1994; 1987; Naor, 1999). In contemporary usage, drama draws upon its ancient origins as a healing force in its role to improve "impaired physical, mental, emotional, and social functioning" (Laffoon, Bryan, & Sinatra, 1985, p. 43) As an applied art, theatre is an effective teaching tool and presents the means for expanding a sense of self and understanding others (Sweeney, 2007). Drama is a particularly effective medium for building communication skills because it focuses peoples relationship to each other (Arendt, 1958). Guli and colleagues state that dramatic activities "provide the opportunity to develop imagination, encourage independent thinking and cooperation, build social awareness, take others' perspectives, promote a healthy release of emotion, and improve habits of speech" (2008, p. 4). Participation in the theatrical process is therapeutic; both therapy and theatre require creativity within set boundaries, allow for expression of feelings and demand exploration of a specific process (Meldrum, 1999).

Drama therapy utilizes metaphor (Jennings, 1987; Haen, 2007) to explore dramatic engagement among group members. In drama therapy, metaphor may be expressed through role play that provides boundaries described above as a safe container for practicing new behaviors (Waite, 1993). A moving description of the healing properties of theatre comes from leading drama therapist and theatre maker, Sue Jennings:

> If theatre can be understood on the one hand as a separate reality within which we engage and interact with our imaginations, and on the other hand as intimately connected with all of our lives and personal stories, we can begin to reflect on its therapeutic efficacy. The fact that it creates dramatic distance makes it more possible to interact with aspects of one's own life and to understand these aspects which previously were too close to us, for us to see. Therefore dramatherapy is connected with our own lives, because theatre is connected with our lives. Through engagement with theatre we are able to experience a vision of how are or how we might be (1994, pp. 3-4).

The three dominant approaches to drama therapy are psychodrama, role theory/role method, and developmental transformations (Landy, 2008). Psychodrama is one of the oldest forms of drama therapy, developed in the mid-twentieth century by Jacob Levy Moreno. It is "a deep action method…in which people enact scenes from their lives, dreams or fantasies in an effort to express unexpressed feelings, gain new insights and understandings, and practice new and more satisfying behaviors" (Garcia & Buchanan, 2009, p. 393). Robert Landy developed role method as a practical manifestation of role theory (Landy, 2009). In role method, clients create their own stories and roles through which address personal dilemmas and problems (Landy, 2008). David Read Johnson developed a third major approach to drama therapy, Developmental Transformations, which utilizes the concept of free play and emphasizes the transformation of "embodied encounters in the playspace" (Johnson, 2009, p. 89). The therapist-client relationship within the playspace is central to developmental

transformations, as is the physical embodiment of thoughts, emotions, and images through imaginary play (Smith, 2002). Developmental transformations is an action-oriented form of drama therapy. It demands a strong background in theatrical techniques and skills on the part of the therapist (Johnson, Forrester, Dintino, James, & Schnee, 1996), and requires the therapist engage fully in the action of the therapeutic encounter (Porter, 2003).

Dance Movement Therapy

Similar to drama, dance and movement have served for centuries as a reflection of societal trends (Payne, 1992); diverse cultures used dance to help establish "tribal, national, religious and racial identity…a means to hold communities of people together in the face of dire threat" (Halprin, 1999, p. 134). Early dance forms not only served as simple entertainment but also provided means for religious expression (Zimbelmann, 2005), self-expression (Bannerman-Haig, 1999) and a form of ritualistic healing (Payne, 2006; Schmais & White, 1986; Silberstein, 1987; Smallwood, 1978; Zimbelmann, 2005); these processes continue today in cultures throughout the world (Feder & Feder, 1981; Payne, 1992). Similar to drama therapy, dance movement therapy is a type of psychotherapy that addresses a wide range of disorders from the physical to the affective (Smallwood, 1978). This therapeutic process incorporates both emotional balance and spontaneity (Leahy, 2004). When used in purposeful and creative combination, movement, feeling, and image help individuals toward personal insight and development. Another aspect of dance movement is its ability to enhance individual creativity and creative connections with others (Halprin, 1999).

Rhythm is an important component of dance movement therapy. Used

therapeutically, rhythm plays a part in group cohesion (Espenak, 1981; von Rossberg-Gempton, et al., 1999,) enhanced sense of self (Steiner, 1992), and development of leadership (Espenak, 1981) within the group. In dance movement therapy and particularly through use of rhythm in movement, “The material to draw from is inexhaustible; interaction, communication, withdrawal, frustration, sharing, tolerance, acceptance of criticism and, indeed, the total interplay of group dynamics that we recognize in the psychotherapeutic situation are here expressed in movement and movement sensitivity” (Espenak, 1981, pp. 93-94).

Expressive Arts Therapies Practice Settings

Expressive arts therapies take place in such settings as prisons, hospices, residential and day centers for the elderly, psychiatric settings, and schools (Heath, 2005; Johnson, 1999; Mitchell, 1978; Payne, 1993; Smallwood, 1978). According to the National Coalition of Arts Therapists (2004), the arts are used for therapeutic purposes in rehabilitation and educational settings and in community agencies (Camilleri, 2007). Drama therapy takes place in hospitals, mental health settings including in-patient psychiatric facilities, senior centers and nursing home facilities, and programs for developmentally disabled individuals (Anderson-Warren, 1996; Dokter, 1996; Landy, 1996; Mitchell, 1978). Examples of settings for therapeutic use of dance movement therapy include after-school programs (Kierr, 2007), psychiatric settings (Probst, van Coppenolle, & Simons, 1997; Stanton-Jones, 1992; Vervaeke, 1997**),** nursing homes (Droes, 1997), residential care settings for persons with dementia (Kowarzik, 2006), community centers (MacDonald, 1992), and correctional facilities (Dosamantes-Beaudry, 2005; Milliken, 2002; Smallwood, 1978).

The Use of Expressive Activity with Diverse Populations

Expressive Activity on the Age Spectrum: Children and Youth

Practitioners across the expressive arts fields find that creative mediums are particularly helpful tools for working through adolescent developmental challenges (Diamond, 1996; Emunah, 1990; Morrison, 2005). The arts and use of creative activity are avenues for play (Camilleri, 2007), a particularly important component in working with young people. Purposeful use of program with adolescents can promote a sense of competence for young people who may never feel they experience accomplishment; it is a concrete way to change self-image and build self-esteem (Malekoff, 2004, Wasserman, 2002). Activity with young people promotes a sense of belonging, a means for building a bond among members and opening avenues for discussion of shared problems, issues, and feelings (Malekoff, 2004). Activity groups offer adolescents an opportunity to build identity (Brandler & Roman, 1991; Wright, 2006). Among children and youth, creative arts activities offer the means to develop solid problem solving skills and methods for communicating with others (von Rossberg-Gempton, et al., 1999). Activity provides the conduit for alternate means of expression (Malekoff, 2002, 2004) symbolically represented through various creative arts (Camilleri, 2007). It is particularly important for young people who may not be able to articulate their needs and feelings verbally (Austin, 2007; Brandler & Roman, 1991; Camilleri, 2007; Essex, Frosting, & Hertz, 1996; Wasserman, 2002). Expressive activity can access and encourage the development of a young person's creativity (Malekoff, 2002; von Rossberg-Gempton, et al., 1999). Drama is an especially powerful developmental tool, Fenner (2002) notes, "Children can be observed rehearsing for life through dramatic play. But it is also the time when they are

living for the joy of the rehearsal. Creative drama is a process through which children begin to understand human experience" (p.26).

Expressive Activity on the Age Spectrum: The Elderly

The literature on expressive arts forms in therapeutic settings suggests that a variety of creative mediums including drama, music, movement, and visual arts may be beneficial for addressing a host of issues and needs affecting the elderly (Greenberg, 2001; Helm, 2001; Jungels, 2001; Rio, 2002; Sigel, 1985; Smith, 2002; Weisberg & Wilder, 2001). Practitioners note a host of potential benefits to using dance, movement, and exercises with seniors, including increased self-esteem, re-connection to one's creativity and spontaneity, and improved social interaction (Hokkanen, Rantala, Remes, Harkonen, Viramo, & Winblad, 2003; Rio, 2002; Sandel & Hollander, 1995). Dance and movement may also improve memory (Cooper, 1994) and reduce depression (Cooper, 1994; Heath, 2005); they can help older people address physical decline and psychological impairments (Bridges, 2005). For those with memory loss, dance and movement may provide consistency through ritualized physical activity (Sandel & Hollander, 1995). Ritual movement with its repeated and familiar physical contact helps to organize people who have difficulty holding onto reality. Concurrent participation in rhythmic movement contains emotional expression and provides the space for building socialization skills (Sandel & Hollander, 1995)

Review of the literature suggests that dance movement therapy is helpful as a form of non-verbal communication in working with individuals with dementia (Arawaka-Davies, 1997; Bridges, 2005; Hill, 2001; Hirsch, 1990; Shustick & Thompson, 2002). Expressive arts therapies are particularly helpful in working with individuals struggling

with Alzheimer's disease, because these therapies help to support the "eroding source of self" (Johnson, et al., 1992, p. 271).

Practitioners also discuss the role of creative activities that utilize to help cognitively impaired seniors (Johnson et al., 1992; Kaminsky 1978, 1984). Reminiscence helps people struggling with early stage Alzheimer's (Johnson, et al., 1992). Use of reminiscence, life review, and oral history articulated through dramatic or theatrical activity provides a sense of validation, identity, and belonging; telling one's own story offers the possibility for greater understanding of commonalities and unique life experiences (Perlstein, 1984). Drama serves as rehearsal for maintaining social skills and adapting to disability. Dramatic activity can be a useful tool in practicing for and adapting to change, exploring and managing death anxiety (Smith, 2002), as well as ways of expressing and managing the feelings that accompany cognitive changes as one ages (Weisberg & Wilder, 1985).

Aspects of Mutual Aid in Expressive Arts Therapies

Practitioners and group work facilitators have identified a number of mutual aid dynamics when utilizing the creative, performing, fine, and visual arts in human service provision. These include building mutually supportive relationships within the group (Mazza, 2003; Waller, 1993) and developing group cohesion across disciplines utilizing the arts in groups (Erfer & Ziv, 2006; Golden, 1994; Grodner et al., 1982; Mazza, 2003; McGarry & Prince, 1998; Ritter & Low, 1996; von Rossberg-Gempton, et al., 1999). Development of a group dynamic is important in drama therapy (Landy, 1996). Expressive arts therapies support the mutual aid concept of identification with others experiencing the same issues, problems, and unmet needs (Berger, 1969); others identify

modeling and development of empathy among individuals involved in creative group tasks, including drama therapy (Moore, 1997; Snow, et al., 2003), poetry therapy (Golden, 1994), and dance therapy (Loman, 2005; Meekums, 2006; Stockley, 1992). Arts therapists and community arts workers suggest creative activities promote arenas for individual problem solving within the container of a group task (Johnston, et al., 1985; Marsiglia, 1997; McGuire, 2007; Wilson, 2003; Wright, et al., 2006). Drama therapy uses the concepts of role definition (Camilleri, 2007), role rehearsal (Johnson, et al., 1992; Johnston et al., 1985; Landy, 1994; Naor, 1999; Wilson, 2003), and recreation of social roles (Johnson, et al., 1992). This echoes social work theorists and practitioners (Brandler & Roman, 1999; Gitterman & Shulman, 1994; Steinberg, 1997) who propose the concept of the group as arena for rehearsal of new ways of being, doing, and thinking.

Group Process and Task Completion in Expressive Arts Therapies

Expressive arts therapists have written about the important role balance of process and task plays in the development of creativity. Natalie Rogers, an artist and psychotherapist, notes, “Although the product of creative expression supplies important messages to the individual for useful insights, the process of creation itself is profoundly transformative” (1999, p. 130). Integration of group process and task is integral to expressive arts therapies. Cattanach (1999) observes

> Creative arts therapies offer benefit not only from therapeutic and artistic processes, but from the artistic products that are created. Therapeutic growth in areas such as relationship formation and communication occurs in the process of creation with peers or the therapist. At the same time, individual therapeutic growth occurs in the revelation and integration of the content that is expressed through the creative product (pp. 67-68).

Dance therapists urge balancing group purpose between process and performance; they seek to correct the common misperception that the purpose of dance movement therapy is

only to provide an arena for dance performance (Payne, 1992). Dance movement therapy addresses “aims and objectives which rarely include working with clients towards a dance performance in the public arena” (Payne, p. 5).

Drama therapy also employs a process-oriented approach to group work with theatrical or dramatic tools (Emunah, 1996). The degree to which theatre-based exercises promote creation of a culminating creative event rests on a number of factors, including client need, agency context, purpose for drama-based therapy and the specific approach or series of approaches chosen by the drama therapist facilitating the process.

Drama therapy developed out of three branches of psychology: humanism, behaviorism, and psychoanalysis (Emunah, 1996). The facilitation of drama therapy-based group work requires the therapist to balance theatrical tools with psychotherapeutically oriented treatment goals (Emunah, 1996). Drama therapists describe the importance of process and task balance in therapeutic theatre practice (Emunah, 1983; Mitchell, 1994). Mitchell notes (1994) that process and product are equally essential in drama therapy techniques, particularly where performance is concerned, “When the task of the group is to create a piece of theatre, the *product* is important to the *process* and can be therapeutically as important (p. 53) (italics in the original).

This chapter provided an overview of expressive arts therapies, including definitions of and approaches to using drama and movement as purposeful activity in expressive therapy groups. The role of mutual aid and balance of group process and task are significant elements for expressive therapists in the group setting. Review of the drama therapy and dance movement therapy literature suggests that in these fields,

therapists seek a fluid balance of process and task in groups; process supports task and task illuminates group process.

The next chapter provides an analysis of the empirical literature on use of the expressive arts as tools in the development of mutual aid in small groups. The chapter reviews the state of the literature on group process and task balance as a facilitative skill in social group work. The review includes analysis of existing literature regarding the role of process and task balance in the development of mutual aid in groups and highlights gaps in the literature.

Chapter V: REVIEW OF THE EMPIRICAL LITERATURE

Overview

Literature in the field of social work with groups details the history, dynamics, and skills of promoting mutual aid in groups (Garvin, 1997; Middleman & Wood, 1990; Schwartz, 1971a, 1976; Shulman, 1994; Steinberg, 1997). Scholarship focuses on the history and use of activity in group work (Brandler & Roman, 1991; Middleman, 1968; Wilson & Ryland, 1949) and the use of expressive arts therapies and activities with groups (Camilleri, 2007; Espanek, 1981; Malekoff, 2002; Waite, 1993). Expressive arts literature indicates theoretical ties between the processes and skills of mutual aid found in the social work literature; it also supports the promotion of expressive activity in groups. For example, the social work literature details the use of the arts in promoting problem solving, building cohesion, establishing empathy among and between members, and the mutual demand for work that accompanies a communal creative task.

Literature in the varied fields of expressive arts therapies discusses the history and methodology of each form of artistic or creative expression (see, for example, Feder & Feder, 1981; Jennings, 1973; Landy, 2008; MacIntosh, 2002; Mazza, 2003; Naor, 1999; Newham, 1999). A number of mutual aid dynamics appear in writings on therapeutic use of expressive arts with individuals and groups (Erfer & Ziv, 2006; Golden, 1994; Grodner, et al., 1982; Johnston, et al., 1985; Landy, 1996; Marsigiia, 1997; Mazza, 2003; McGarry & Prince, 1998; McGuire, 2007; Ritter & Low, 1996; von Rossberg-Gempton, et al., 1999; Waller, 1993; Wilson, 2003; Wright, et al., 2006). These dynamics are recognizable as elements of mutual aid as described in the social work literature; however, arts therapists and workers do not necessarily identify them as such. It is not

clear from the literature whether expressive arts workers and community-based arts workers make conscious use of their skill sets toward building a system of mutual aid in the group. It is also unclear whether development of mutual aid is the central objective for expressive arts workers.

The Nature of the Empirical and Theoretical Literature

A review of the social work literature on balance of group process and task indicates that social work theorists and practitioners established a theoretical divide between the two aspects of group work. Middleman (1968, 1979) argues for combining process and task in group facilitation. She makes a particularly strong case for integrating non-verbal activity with group process. Wright (1999) revisits the subject of process and task balance on purposeful activity throughout stages of group development, and Kaplan (2001) writes about the purposeful use of performance in groups. Beyond these three specific examples, little in the social group work literature discusses the process and task balance in relation to the purposeful use of activity in social work groups. Many social group workers write about the use of activity; however, they largely focus on the role of activity as task. Others write about the purpose, role, and dimensions of task groups in social work (Fatout & Rose, 1995). At the other end of the process and task continuum, theorists and practitioners discuss aspects of facilitation related to group process. These aspects include problem solving (Northen & Kurland, 2001; Northen, 1988), exploration of conflict and difference between members (Kurland & Salmon, 1998; Northen, 1976), development of relationships among members (Coyle, 1949; Rose, 2004; Steinberg, 2004), and the development of the group as a system in mutual aid (Gitterman, 1971; Goroff, 1980).

The concept of a process and task balance in groups is more prevalent in the expressive arts therapies literature. This seems logical because of the purposeful use of creative media as a therapeutic modality in arts therapies. Drama therapy lends itself to a process and task balanced therapeutic endeavor; it is a process-oriented approach to using the medium of theatre for therapeutic purposes. The drama therapy literature describes several specific approaches to drama therapy (see, for example, Johnson & Emunah, 2009; Johnson & Lewis, 2000; Landy, 2005, 2008). These approaches detail the differential focus on process and task in relation to a number of practice contexts, including client need, agency focus, purpose for drama therapy as a therapeutic modality, and therapist's particular area of expertise.

Generally, the theoretical literature in the use of program in social group work and expressive arts therapeutic groups is robust. However, empirical research in both arenas is less informative. What does exist focuses on the effects of group interventions that use activity or the arts to ameliorate health and mental health conditions. In addition, research studies rarely focus on the methods of group facilitators. In other words, although these disciplines developed elaborate schema to describe their work, few studies exist on the skills and interventions used by group workers in arts based groups.

Electronic Search Process for Relevant Research Studies

I conducted computer assisted database searches to locate relevant research in the areas of expressive arts therapies, social work groups using expressive arts activities, and mutual aid and/or mutual support in groups utilizing facilitator interviews as methods of data collection. I conducted searches on the use of movement and drama in groups for developing mutual aid, without specific criteria for facilitator training or background. I

also conducted searches for studies on group process and task balance in social group work practice and those on process and task balance in the expressive therapies. I sought studies describing the specific activities and skills used by social workers and expressive arts therapists in relation to the balance of process and task in groups. Databases included ProQuest, PsycInfo, Dissertation Abstracts, and the Cochrane Collaboration. Keywords utilized for review of studies included mutual aid and groups, expressive arts and studies and groups, mutual aid and expressive arts therapies, group process and expressive arts therapies, social group work and creative tasks, process and task and groups, process and task and expressive arts. Boolean operations helped expand or delimit the search.

The ProQuest database yielded 159 responses on the keywords “mutual aid” and “groups” and “studies.” However, none of these studies specifically addressed the use of expressive arts in groups as a factor in the development of mutual aid. The database search produced 45 responses on “expressive arts” and “groups” and “studies.” Four of the studies used a qualitative design. Two studies explored the use of expressive arts and ritual in women’s change and growth (Jahner, 2001) and to facilitate individual and collective healing (Henderson, 2003). Both studies used participant observation and group members served as co-researchers in both studies. These studies did not specifically discuss the role of expressive arts facilitators or the skills used by facilitators to actualize the groups’ stated purpose.

In one study of drama therapy with single adults, the researcher (Young, 1995) explored the use of dramatic activities and their potential for building communication skills, boosting self-esteem, and addressing intimacy issues. Data collection involved videotaping of group sessions. The purpose of the study was to develop a model for

teaching communication skills to groups of high-functioning adults. Although this study was useful in its application to design of a teaching method, it did not specifically address the use of expressive activity in relation to the development of mutual aid in groups. It did not directly address process and task balance on the part of the expressive artists as group facilitator. In a study of HIV positive adolescents, the researcher (Saavedra, 2005) explored the role of visual art to build group participation and individual self-esteem. This study detailed the role of the mutual aid group in combination with a specific art form to meet the stated group purpose. Although this study used interviews as a method of data collection, the study subjects were group participants and not group facilitators.

A search of the keywords “expressive arts” and “groups” and “mutual aid” did not produce any results. A search for “expressive arts” and “groups” and “group process” brought three responses; the first was a mixed-method study on the use of expressive arts to address near-death experiences. This study utilized questionnaires and individual and group interviews with members (Rominger, 2004). A second study focused on breast cancer survivors and described their healing process through visual art therapy (Predeger, 1995); data collection consisted of participants as co-researchers reflecting on their work together. A third study focused on arts integration and curricular change (Corn, 1993) and involved interviews with teachers. Although this study did use group facilitators as interview subjects, they were not specifically arts workers or expressive arts therapists serving as facilitators of arts-based groups.

Studies of the Effectiveness of Arts-Based Group Interventions

The Cochrane Database of Systematic Reviews had a number of systematic reviews to determine the effectiveness of expressive arts therapies with specific

populations. Studies on drama therapy with schizophrenia or schizophrenia-like illnesses (Ruddy & Dent-Brown, 2007), art therapy for schizophrenia or schizophrenia-like illnesses (Ruddy & Milnes, 2005), and music therapy for depression (Maratos, Gold, Wang, & Crawford, 2008) were among the reviews.

The systematic review to determine the efficacy of music therapy for depression included five studies based on the reviewer's definition of musical therapy interventions (Maratos, et al., 2008). Three (Hendricks, 1999; Radulovic, Cetkovic, & Pejovic, 1997; Zerhusen, Boyle, & Wilson, 1995) involved group interventions. All studies, whether with groups or individuals, used self-rated scales to measure depression. The studies did not specifically address the issue of mutual aid in relation to music therapy. The systematic review to determine the effectiveness of art therapy for schizophrenia patients included two studies (Ruddy & Milnes, 2005). One evaluated group art therapy to promote self-esteem and positive interactions (Green & Borchers, 1987). The second examined the effectiveness of art therapy on mental health service users (Richardson, 2002). Both of these studies used rating scales to measure the effects of art therapy on patients. Neither examined facilitator skills in relation to art therapy with schizophrenic patients.

Ruddy and Dent-Brown (2007) included five studies in their systematic review on drama therapy for individuals diagnosed with schizophrenia or schizophrenia-like illnesses consistent with the reviewers' definition of drama therapy (Gutride, Goldstein, & Hunter, 1973; Nitsun, Stapleton, & Bender, 1974; Qu, Li & Xiao, 2000; Whetstone, 1986; Zhou, & Tang, 2002). These studies attempted to measure improved self-esteem (Zhou & Tang, 2000); improved mental state (Qu et al., 2000); enhancement of social

interactions (Gutride et al., 1973) and development of social skills (Whetstone, 1986). One study compared group psychotherapy with drama therapy and group movement to measure their effects on clinical, psychological, and social functioning (Nitsun et al., 1974). All studies included in these systematic reviews employed randomization of control and experimental subjects and validated rating scales to measure outcomes. None of the scales specifically measured facilitator interventions.

Research on Mutual Aid and Process in Group Work

A number of studies identified aspects of mutual aid in group work and facilitator-initiated skills for building mutual aid. Those linking facilitator-initiated skills in building mutual aid with use of expressive activity were extremely limited. Out of 59 studies located on aspects of mutual aid and groups, two predominant forms of data collection emerged: participant interview (see, for example, Anderson-Butcher, Khairallah, & Race-Bigelow, 2004; Gingrich & Lightman, 2006; Laudet, Magua, Vogel, & Knight, 2000; Mok Suen, 1999; Saavedra, 2005; Steinberg, 1992; Wituk, Shepherd, Slavich, Warren, & Meissen, 2000) and pre- and post-test measures, including self-administered and facilitator administered scales. For example, Franklin, McNeil, and Wright (1991) conducted multiple social work interventions with high school dropouts including group, individual, and family counseling. Their research measured outcomes of therapeutic interventions through pre- and post-program tests of behavioral and academic functioning. Similarly, Molina (2004) studied divorce mutual aid support groups, utilizing self-administered client satisfaction questionnaire and Webb-Ferebee (2001) utilized a series of measures to determine the effectiveness of expressive arts therapies for improving functioning of bereaved families experiencing the loss of a young child. A

number of widely used scales were used at the beginning and conclusion of a therapeutic weekend camping trip, including the Beck Anxiety Inventory, Beck Depression Inventory, and the Family Environment Scale. Steinberg (1992) conducted a mixed-method study on the impact of group work education on social work practitioners' work with groups that utilized interviews with social workers as the primary source of data. Although Steinberg's study addressed facilitator awareness of mutual aid skills in practice, it did not specifically address the role that purposeful activity plays in the implementation of those specific skills.

A number of measures assess group process (Magen, 2004). Yalom's therapeutic measure is a widely used tool in assessing groups (Magen, 2004). This instrument consists of 60 statements on a self-administered Likert-scale checklist. It measures members' perceptions of the value of each of the therapeutic factors but does not measure whether or not the factors exist in the group itself (Magen, 2004). The Group Environment Scale (GES, 1986; Magen, 2004) measures group conditions constructed of three separate domains: relationship, personal growth, and system maintenance/system change. The GES is most often associated with research on organizational management and innovation (Magen, 2004).

Additional standardized measures include one for group climate (MacKenzie, 1983) and The Group Engagement Measure (GEM), devised by Macgowan (1997), for measuring levels of engagement in each group member. No scales appear to measure any aspects of group facilitation such as stage-based skills described in the interactional model of social group work. Macgowan (2000) discusses seven facilitator strategies for increasing engagement in groups that he derived from the GEM. He emphasizes the need

to move beyond outcome measures and identify strategies for enhancing engagement in groups. His evaluation of the GEM adds to the literature on the facilitator's use of verbal interventions with groups. He does not discuss the use of activity as a tool in enhancing group member engagement. Neither Macgowan nor MacKenzie addresses skills facilitators use to promote group engagement within the body of their research instruments.

In relation to assessing the mutual aid process in self-help groups, Helping Processes Questionnaire (Levy, 1979), is a standardized measure to assess this critical element of social group work. Similarly, Cicchetti recently developed Mutual Aid Processes Scale (MAPS) to measure mutual aid processes in groups of people with substance use disorders (2009). He used this scale in a recent study of a group of substance abusers to measure the presence of 30 processes of mutual aid in groups. Results suggested that the group leader's level of facilitation among other variables was associated with higher levels of mutual aid as measured on his instrument.

Summary

A review of the empirical literature indicates a lack of focus on facilitator-initiated skills in building mutual aid with use of expressive activity. In contrast, in the field of social group work, the literature suggests that purposeful use of program, and specifically the use of expressive arts activities, may promote mutual aid in groups. A review of the research indicates that there are a number of studies available on the broad subject of social work groups and mutual aid; there is an equally substantial store of studies on the expressive arts and groups. These latter studies detail a variety of arts-based activities and therapeutic measures in a wide range of practice settings. A number

of the studies are qualitative in design and exploratory in nature. Of the studies reviewed, a limited number described facilitator interviews as a method of data collection. Most often, the studies were qualitative and employed in depth interviews primarily with group participants rather than group facilitators. Various systematic reviews of the effectiveness of arts therapies to treat depressions, substance abuse disorders, or schizophrenia include randomized controlled trials; the purpose of these reviews is to determine the efficacy of arts interventions, not to explore whether or not arts therapists embrace a mutual aid approach.

Based on the empirical literature it is not clear to what extent, if any, expressive arts therapists and community arts workers apply mutual aid concepts and skills as articulated in social group work theory. Questions also remain regarding the specific skills expressive arts workers use in balancing group process and creative tasks. It is also not known whether or not, or to what degree they do so in an effort to encourage the development of mutual aid in the group. An exhaustive search and review of the social group work and expressive arts group literature indicated these crossover influences of social work and expressive arts approaches to group facilitation are not a part of the knowledge base in either discipline.

Chapter VI: RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

The Research Questions Restated

The purpose of this study was to explore the role expressive arts played in promoting mutual aid in groups and to what extent expressive artists balance of group process and task contributed to the development of mutual aid in groups. I originally intended to explore what skills, if any, expressive arts workers used in building mutual aid in groups using creative activity. Initially, I sought to answer questions related to the work of creative artists in therapeutic group work. Were there aspects of group work practiced by those who utilize the arts in groups that could benefit the field of social work with groups? Could those outside of the field of social work who use expressive activity in groups provide insight into promoting mutual aid? What role did process and task balance play in promoting mutual aid in the group? What skills and tools did expressive artists use in their work with groups? In what ways were those skills similar to or different from those explicated in social group work theory? With these questions in mind, the study was exploratory and descriptive; it was a preliminary investigation of the skills utilized by expressive arts workers in their work with groups and did not seek to generalize findings to social group work practice or expressive arts therapies.

In order to address the multiple purposes for the study, it was important to confirm or disaffirm hunches regarding use of mutual aid based interventions in expressive arts-based group work practice. I anticipated accomplishing this through in-depth interviews with expressive arts practitioners as they applied group work skills in their practice. The interviews proved illuminating on several levels. Primarily, they led to substantial changes in the structure and focus of the study between the initial proposal

and completion of participant interviews. These changes influenced the initial questions posed for the study and shaped further questions that became most essential in interviews with study participants.

Initially, the study was to compare the skills used by social group workers in arts-based group practice and those used by non-MSW expressive arts workers. I proposed to explore the differential use of facilitator skills in relation to a theoretical framework drawn from social group work theory. As the study progressed, it became evident that exploration of facilitative skills used by non-MSW expressive arts workers solely in relation to that framework would prove more fruitful. The more interesting exploration became the specific skills expressive artists brought to group work and how those skills related to the methodology social group work theorists proposed, particularly theorists from the interactional school. Discussion and discoveries about practice moved beyond the concept of the group as a system in mutual aid. Those discoveries came about through changes in the proposed study sample and structure for data collection. Discoveries based on what informants reported about arts-based group work practice shifted the methodological approach to the study. What began as a phenomenological approach broadened to include the grounded theory tradition of qualitative research; it became evident that the informants could provide me with the basis for a unique theory for expressive arts therapy with groups separate from the mutual aid model of social group work.

Rationale for a Qualitative Design

This was a naturalistic inquiry rather than an experimental study for a number of reasons. Qualitative inquiry seeks to interpret and provide meaning to the phenomena

derived from study participants' lived experiences (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003). Qualitative inquiry is a naturalistic approach to the study of a problem or issue; it does not seek to prove theories or test hypotheses but rather to find meaning in the phenomena within a particular context (Powell, 1994).

Quantitative methods of research suggest an epistemology that is objective and value-free, one that is transactional and objective in nature (Guba & Lincoln, 2003). Quantitative research, as exemplified by positivist paradigms, argues that a verifiable truth and reality operates independently of the researcher and according to natural laws (Guba & Lincoln, 1981, 1985, 1989). Researchers working in the quantitative or positivist tradition assume that knowledge may be gathered and quantified context-free and produce generalizable findings.

In contrast, contextual sensitivity, richness and depth of qualitative data, or starting with the details of lived experience, are central to qualitative inquiry (Janesick, 1994)**.** In this study, I understood context as the unique practice setting of each expressive arts worker and anticipated the study would explore and describe the experiences of expressive arts workers as they practiced arts-based group work. However, through the course of in-depth interviews with expressive artists, the concept of "context" expanded greatly. Context emerged as specific to each artist and included early creative development, professional experiences, and past and current practice settings. Context became a sensitizing concept for exploring both the individual situations of each practitioner and an overarching concept for all study participants in relation to group development.

Fixed designs are a hallmark of quantitative study and provide a highly structured, formalized, and detailed plan for research. Adherence to design is essential in the deductive process of verifying or falsifying an established theory primarily through standardized instruments for measurement. Through the process of verification and falsification, hypotheses may be established as true or probable facts. A review of the empirical literature suggests that standardized instruments were used to measure changes in group members as a result of group intervention. These instruments measured specific outcomes for specialized populations, however they did not reflect any aspect of group leadership. Specifically, they did not address the types of skills, characteristics, and interventions expressive arts workers bring to their work with groups. As noted earlier, review of the social work and expressive arts literature indicated an absence of standardized instruments for measuring the phenomenon at the center of this study, primarily the practice of mutual aid group work by expressive artists using specific skill sets and expressive arts mediums.

A qualitative approach was most appropriate for this study because it allowed for fluidity. The study was not constrained by a fixed design, allowing for greater flexibility with emerging questions and participant responses. Qualitative inquiry was also appropriate for this study because I sought to understand the multiple relationships among the dimensions that emerged through interviews rather than prove any prior assumptions or specify any hypothesis about the relationships among defined, operationalized variables (Patton, 2002).

The differential use of inductive and deductive approaches to inquiry was another area for consideration when formulating the questions for this study. Qualitative research

is an inductive process of inquiry signified by in-depth observation of phenomena and efforts to develop themes from the details of lived experiences. Inductive analysis is a two-fold process of identifying patterns and consistencies in the data and making creative leaps that entail moving from the expected to a new way of describing emerging information (Mintzberg, 1983).

I anticipated that the inductive process of dialogue with expressive arts workers would produce patterns or consistencies in their approaches to the use of mutual aid based interventions in the practice of expressive arts therapies; I believed these patterns might or might not support my initial hunches. I also anticipated through an inductive approach, theories could emerge from in-depth dialogue and a willingness to remain flexible to emerging pathways for questions. The use of an inductive process in a particular area of study suggests that a significant, empirically tested store of literature may not yet exist to inform the development of a hypothesis for deductive analysis. This was the case here, since I was unable to locate a body of knowledge that explored the extent to which expressive arts therapists and practitioners utilized mutual aid processes in the formation and implementation of creatively based groups. It was the uniquely personal, lived experiences of the group practitioners themselves as they reported on the negotiation between theories and practice that informed areas for further study.

I made interesting discoveries through the inductive process, and although I originally intended to use both in-depth interviews with expressive arts workers and videotaped observations of their work, I discarded the idea of observation and focused on the semi-structured interview as the sole source of data. Surprising patterns emerged through dialogue with a number of expressive artists. As patterns emerged, the

informants' responses shaped my initial hunches and gave way to an expanded theory of group work practice. New questions arose as I discarded old assumptions, and a typology of facilitator skills for using arts-based activity in groups emerged.

A qualitative approach to inquiry argues that relationships among variables may be too complex for inquiry through a narrow cause and effect relationship. Qualitative study further proposes that there is a wealth of lived experience in the phenomena under study inappropriate for simple cause-effect relationships. Group work theorists support this argument when they observe that the study of small groups lends itself to a naturalistic paradigm, one that supports the small group's ever-changing dynamics (Frey, 1994; Papell & Rothman, 1966).

Group work involves an intricate process of communication and engagement, empathy and mutual aid, problem-solving and individual growth, and development in the group environment. The complexity of the process among group members and between group members and facilitator does not lend itself to simple cause-effect measurement, nor does the spontaneous, fluid, and interactive nature of the group's creative process lend itself to quantitative measurement. The "fit" between the unique, fluid nature of arts-based group work and the qualitative approach to inquiry shaped and drove this study.

Choice of Phenomenological and Grounded Theory Approaches to Inquiry

Phenomenological studies seek to identify and find meaning in the essence of shared experiences (Patton, 2002). The phenomenon under study was the practice of mutual aid group work and its manifestation through expressive arts mediums. I entered into this study with a phenomenological approach to inquiry seeking to find meaning in the lived experiences of expressive arts therapists (Patton, 2002). Through in-depth

interviews, study participants revealed the traits and skills they brought to their work with groups. The phenomenon at the center of this study was the practice of group work using expressive arts mediums to develop mutual support among group members.

However, as the study progressed, in-depth interviews generated a typology of facilitator skills that seemed unique to the practitioners as expressive artists and group workers; this moved the phenomenon under investigation past mutual aid as a sensitizing concept. The phenomenon examined was the way in which expressive artists used skills unique and specific to the performing artist to balance group process and task, and in so doing, amplified group members' voices. The phenomenon that emerged was actually different from social work's focus on mutual aid in groups; this lead to the possibility of developing an alternative theory of practice specific to arts-based work with groups.

This shift suggested a grounded theory approach. Grounded theory seeks to organize qualitative data in a systematic process to find alternative meanings for the phenomenon under study. Grounded theory was an appropriate approach for this study because the approach emphasizes simultaneous balance between systematic analysis and creative conceptual leaps (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Initial coding of raw interview material produced codes that suggested an alternative approach to looking at arts-based group facilitation. I constantly compared and analyzed these concepts through coding procedures (Strauss, 1987; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Interviews with expressive artists revealed a number of important facilitator skills directly related to the work of professional artists in their work with groups. Ultimately, these skills emerged as indigenous concepts that I used to guide later interviews. These concepts reflected a

foundation for the development of a typology of skills beyond those provided in social group work literature.

Research Design

Sampling Strategy and Procedure for Informant Selection

The subjects for this study were experts from the field of expressive arts practice using drama and movement based expressive activity in direct practice. Participants were non-MSW, expressive arts group practitioners specializing in the use of drama and movement with groups. As described earlier, the study initially considered including both social group workers and expressive artists. Originally, the study was to involve two distinct stages. In the first stage, a sample of eight practitioners each from the fields of social group work and drama and movement-based therapies would participate in a ninety-minute, in-depth interview on their approach to practice. The interview would have explored approaches these key informants used in their practice and their objectives in incorporating expressive arts in their work. During the second stage of the study, two expressive arts practitioners would continue the study through direct observation of practice. Group practitioner observations would have required feasibility of digitally videotaping within their agency context and their willingness to be directly observed and digitally videotaped in the facilitation of group work over a series of group sessions.

My original strategy for sample selection was one way to explore the approaches each discipline used to promote mutual aid in their groups. The strategy also fit with the phenomenological approach to inquiry. However, I experienced obstacles to completing the planned strategy. Although I was able to locate professionals willing to participate in all aspects of the study, I encountered a number of logistical obstacles, primarily in the

observational stage of the study. The most prevalent obstacles was gaining entry to groups, obtaining permission to videotape vulnerable populations, and the sheer volume of time needed to build and maintain relationships with host agencies in order to gain access to groups. The nature of the study suggested that a series of visits to each group would be necessary to document facilitator skills and group member responses to them within the framework of the skill set described in social group work theory. Time constraints did not allow for repeated visits throughout the stages of each group's development. Time constraints with review of group work footage in the company of interview subjects, follow-up interviews regarding their observations of their own work, and coding of documentary footage were other factors that I had to take into account. Consequently, I rejected the observational component and decided to limit my data collection to semi-structured interviews with expressive artists who described themselves as working professionals in group settings.

The scope of the study shifted as well. What had initially been conceived of as a comparative study evolved into an exploration of a particular type of arts-based group worker for the express purpose of exploring the creative group work of non-MSW group workers in relation to a straightforward and long documented methodology of practice associated with social group theory and practice. For these reasons, I shifted the focus of sample selection and recruitment for the study.

I recruited study participants, all of whom were expressive arts therapists or arts workers, through three areas of professional group practice. The faculty of New York University's Tisch School of the Arts and Steinhardt School of Education presented options for outreach and recommendations for study participants. Both schools offer

course work and field work in community based arts work with individuals and groups. New York University's Drama Therapy Department is renowned in the field as a leading institution for training and research. The Tisch School of the Arts facilitates an extensive community outreach program that provides opportunities for post-graduate work in community based expressive arts practice. The researcher's twenty-five years of professional experience in the performing arts as teacher, performer and community-based arts worker provided a fourth source for study participants.

I planned to approach Departmental Chairs of academic institutions for recommendations through telephone and email contact; the outreach information appears in Appendix 1. Ultimately, I initiated a less formal outreach process to faculty and former students in New York University's Departments of Drama and Drama Therapy. This approach was appropriate given my role in the University community, my professional relationships with faculty and staff, and the nature of the study I was conducting. This outreach yielded a rich response; a number of potential interview subjects came through informal outreach to these academic departments. I personally approached personal contacts I knew from the performing arts professions informally through telephone, email and direct contact for possible participation in the study. I asked these professional contacts to distribute a recruitment flier to potential subjects; the flyer appears in Appendix 2.

Informal outreach proved extremely fruitful. Inquiries to various academic departments and professional colleagues resulted in thirty-two initial responses from professional expressive artists interested in participating in the study. Potential subjects contacted me via email or telephone in response to recruitment fliers. Then I discussed

their interest in participating in an interview regarding their expertise in expressive arts based group work; copies of email and telephone response forms appear as Appendices 3 and 4, respectively. I explained that the initial interview would last no longer than ninety minutes. From a pool of thirty-two potential interview subjects, twelve artists were unable to participate because of conflicting schedules and logistical obstacles. Only one artist of the twelve declined to participate because of her discomfort with the study itself. In an initial telephone interview, the arts worker expressed concern over the protection of her body of professional work developed over a long career in community-based group work; ultimately, her concerns prevented her participation in the study. The final study sample consisted of twenty expressive artists who worked professionally in community-based groups. Informants and the researcher scheduled interviews for a mutually agreed upon time and place and I sent a letter of confirmation to each subject confirming the interview; a sample of the confirmation letter appears as Appendix 5.

Characteristics of the Sample

The sample in this study was a non-probability, purposive sample of 20 subjects, all of whom were professional artists who described themselves as expressive arts workers, expressive artists, visiting artists, and group workers. I considered all of the study participants professionals because they had facilitated groups as non-interns, non-students for a minimum of one year. Eleven participants were female and nine were male. Three participants self-identified as Latino and one identified as African American. The sixteen remaining participants did not disclose their race or ethnicity; one participant described himself as an immigrant to the U.S. Two participants self-identified as homosexual, eighteen participants did not identify their sexual orientation. Participants

ranged in age from approximately 25 years to 70 years of age. All participants had undergraduate college degrees; six held masters degrees and one participant was in a doctoral program.

Interview subjects worked in a number of practice settings and a majority worked in multiple settings. All twenty participants worked in at least one program in the New York metropolitan area. However, most informants also worked outside of the area. One worked in western Massachusetts, another reported working in central Ohio, and a third worked in Los Angeles, California. Four participants reported working in countries outside the United States, including Africa, South America, Great Britain, and Puerto Rico.

Participants in the study worked in a variety of community practice settings. Three participants reported having worked in prison settings, all in maximum-security facilities. Thirteen participants worked in primary schools and two in university, conservatory training programs. A number of the informants worked in community centers. Of these, nine reported working in community-based centers that offered programs from kindergarten to senior services. In seven cases, participants worked in centers specifically designated as senior centers. Four of those described the senior centers as “residential treatment” and three said that they worked in drop-in centers. Four participants worked in hospitals, three of which were psychiatric in-patient units. Four informants offered group services in the Veterans Administration hospital system. Three participants worked in homeless shelters.

Procedures for Data Collection

Semi-Structured Interviews

Once I decided to eliminate MSW group work informants and an observational component for data, interviews with expressive arts therapists who worked with groups were the sole source for generating narrative data. Semi-structured interviews yielded rich, narrative material from twenty expressive artists over a course of eight months. All participants agreed to engage in a follow-up interview. The majority of participants, approximately fifteen individuals, were re-contacted to clarify initial interview material and to expand on concepts that arose in their initial interviews.

One major advantage to the individual interview was the opportunity to build strong rapport with study participants in focused, one-on-one discussions about the individual respondent's lived experiences. The semi-structured interviews were audio taped and videotaped and were conducted with signed consent of interview subjects; samples of consent forms appear as Appendices 6, 7, and 8. Interviews were initially designed to last ninety minutes utilizing an open-ended interview guide (Appendix 9) to gather information about facilitators' experience in group facilitation and their approach to working with groups using expressive activity. During the interview, open-ended questions helped the researcher develop an understanding of the practitioner's approach to utilizing expressive activity in work with groups. Grand tour questions asked about practitioners' professional background, including their degree of experience facilitating groups; personal and professional relationship to artistic expression; and questions regarding their group populations and practice environments. Questions that were more specific pertained to the lived experiences of participants as they facilitated arts-based

groups. These included what informants hoped to achieve through use of expressive activity in groups; the specific activities they used to achieve the goals they have set for the group; the interventions and skills they used to carry out expressive arts activities; experiences with alternative approaches to group intervention; and purpose for practitioner interventions (e.g., individual, group, or community-level change).

As new themes emerged, the nature of the interviews evolved and core concepts surfaced. Although the format and structure of the interview guide remained the same, core concepts were elevated and explored in detail with study participants. Those concepts included expressive artists' definitions of *voice* in their development as artists and the work they pursued with groups, and their unique understanding of the process and task balance in their creative group work. These concepts proved distinctive characteristics of arts-based group work and were the basis for developing an alternative model of group practice.

Analysis of the Data

Unit of Analysis

The unit of analysis for this study was the expressive arts therapist or arts worker. Specifically, the unit of analysis was the arts worker who was a non-MSW group work practitioner using arts-based activities in groups. All expressive arts workers practiced some degree of arts-based group work in professional practice. The focus of the data collection was on the skills used by expressive arts workers in arts-based group practice.

Process of Analysis

The purpose of this research was not to generalize findings from expressive artists interviewed. Instead, an inductive process raised themes and generated development of

an alternative theory of facilitator skills in arts-based groups. The inductive analytic process included memo writing and coding of interview material.

Memo writing was increasingly important in the process of data collection and analysis. I experienced the analytic process as an ongoing dialogue with experts in the field; more so, through the process of memo writing, I engaged in important and grounding dialogue with myself; memos consisted of a series of thoughts, hunches, and the formation and reformation of codes and categories, conceptual links and questions (Strauss, 2003) Early memos were “operational” in nature and style (Strauss, 2003); they were reminders on the kinds of data to collect and logistical issues with data collection processes. The memos evolved in nature and scope as the study progressed; they shifted from the operational to the analytical and self-reflective. They reflected emerging themes, ideas I had not considered, and new ways of thinking about what I was hearing and reading. Memoing was an essential component in the interview process and ongoing analysis. I made use of informal memos before interview sessions as I tried out new ideas or ways of thinking about interview questions; I also used them within the interviews, to record important and interesting gestures, thoughts, and images. Together with transcriptions, memos became an essential component in developing categories for open codes.

I began data analysis by reading each transcribed interview for overall content and “feel” for the broad themes and metaphors study participants provided; I wanted to read their stories. I used the Atlas.ti qualitative data analysis program to create a coding scheme as I continued to read the material manually. I repeated this throughout the data analysis process. Although the data fit into analytic software, I found that reading the

material through fully as individual stories was helpful for both lifting themes and hearing the voices of the informants as unique individuals.

I utilized the Atlas.ti to assist in data analysis. I reviewed each transcribed interview to open coding, a generally accepted format for data analysis in qualitative research (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994, 2003; Miles & Huberman, 1994; Strauss, 1987, 1993.) Through open coding of transcribed interviews I classified approximately 500 pages of transcribed interview material. This yielded 1,379 open codes in the Atlas.ti program. The process was ongoing; as interviews were transcribed the material was coded using the software program. Each new interview generated more open codes and themes and patterns began to emerge. As new interviews became available, I revisited older interviews, moving back and forth between coded material and its original transcribed version. In this pattern, I continually whittled down open codes even as I created codes for new interview material. I found that the act of reading and re-reading the material in its "original" form helped to organize and raise subcategories out of the larger mass of open codes that appeared more readily in the software-initiated analysis, a "cyclical" process of recursive ruminating (Ely 1997). Through this process, I moved from a broad open coding system to an axial system, reconnecting the data in new ways by making links between categories and subcategories (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). I found this to be the most difficult and time consuming aspect of data analysis. It was also the most rewarding piece of the analytic process as it yielded a core set of categories from which I could draw the "story" of the study.

The next step was selective coding. The broad list of codes I had begun with filtered down through a process of integration and clarification to seven overarching

concepts or subcategories of *challenges*, *impacts*, *key concepts*, *goals*, *tools and skills*, *context*s, and *voice*. From these seven categories I raised a core category and validated it through its relationship to meaningful subcategories (Strauss & Corbin, 1990); a core category that emerged was *voice*. All other material, from the original 1,379 open codes to the axial codes, to selective coding led me to the metaphor of *voice*.

Protection of Human Subjects

The Hunter College Institutional Review Board (HC-IRB) reviewed and approved an application to conduct research for one year on October 17, 2008 as Protocol HC-060811931. It received IRB Registration Numbers IRB00004471 and IRB00000136. The IRB re-approved the research for an additional year on October 8, 2009 as Protocol HC-090923651 and received IRB Registration Numbers IRB00004471 and IRB00000136. Human subject protection concerns were straightforward with expressive arts practitioners interviewed for the study because they were adults and not members of any vulnerable populations. There were no known risks to participation in the study other than those encountered in daily life. There were no known benefits to participation; however, group practitioners may have gained satisfaction in contributing to knowledge about the use of expressive arts in groups. Expressive artists shared informally that they felt satisfied being able to tell their stories about the search for self-expression and the meaning they derived from their group work in communities. Participants were offered a list of professional affiliations and educational referrals for their participation in the study (Appendix 10).

Participation in this study was voluntary, and since the researcher knew the identities of all participants, confidentiality was protected in a number of ways. Only the

researcher and a transcription assistant viewed or heard audio and videotaped interviews. Any information that could identify the interview subject or their employer was eliminated from the transcriptions. The audiotapes and videotapes of interviews were stored in a locked cabinet in the researcher's private office. Digital videotapes were stored on the researcher's personal computer which is password protected. All written materials associated with this study were kept in a locked file cabinet in the researcher's office. They will remain secure for three years, after which the researcher will destroy them. No reports contain the interview subjects' names, the name of their group or group members, or the organization's name. In this dissertation, a participant is identified as an individual; the names that appear here are pseudonyms.

Limitations of the Research Methodology

Limitations to qualitative research designs are noted in the literature (Miles & Huberman, 1984; Patton, 2002). These include the possibilities for researcher bias, issues with sampling as a means of data collection, limitations with generalizability of findings, and issues with credibility (Miles and Huberman, 1994). These limitations were evident in the design for this study. There were limitations in the choice of snowball sampling. The researcher anticipated this approach to sampling would provide information-rich participants (Patton, 2002). Snowball sampling often yields key names from a limited referral source of expert informants. Three areas of referral were used to gather the study sample; two of those areas were specific departments of academic institutions. Although interview participants came to the study with diverse backgrounds and experience, they had similar areas of professional expertise, several had been employed by the same arts organizations and institutions; a number had studied in the same training programs and

graduate schools. These areas of convergence may have limited the ability to generalize study results. In addition, the small number of respondents limited how representative the sample was to the larger population of expressive arts therapists and arts workers practicing in the immediate area.

There are also limitations to qualitative research design. With any research design, single methods of data collection leave the researcher open to errors associated with the particular method (Patton, 2002). In the example of this qualitative study, the single method of in-depth interviews as sole source for data collection left the study open to loaded interview questions and biased responses. As noted earlier, multiple methods of data collection were not feasible. Given the focus on a single method of data collection, I made every attempt to reduce distortions in the interview material through consistently reshaping interview questions as new themes emerged. I also tracked these new thematic threads through follow-up questions to informants.

Qualitative studies using small, non-probability samples as this one, do not lend themselves to generalizability (Patton, 2002). In this instance, the study was exploratory in design and implementation. The researcher did not seek to generalize findings to any larger population but hoped to develop new ways of thinking about arts-based approaches to group facilitation. This study was a critical first step in future research. As such, I anticipated an ongoing exploratory process toward articulation of a typology of facilitator skills for arts-based group workers.

The cyclical nature of working creatively with groups provided the opportunity for a unique typology of group practice where performance played a key role in content and structure. This typology was also a way to examine approaches arts workers took in

balancing group process with task completion. The overarching concept of voice served as an organizing theme from which all other performance-rooted characteristics, skills, and interventions emerged.

Chapter VII: VOICE

Overview

This study begins and ends with the concept of *voice*. The search for voice resonated with expressive artists interviewed for this study, whether that voice was primarily artistic, social, or political. For each informant, the search for voice was a uniquely personal and fluid integration of many of those aspects.

The analytic chapters that follow begin with participants' descriptions of finding and developing their own voices through artistic exploration. In some cases, their search for voice involved considerable struggle. All reported the importance of an alternative community that supported their personal, creative development. The final analytic chapter brackets the findings and comes full circle with a discussion of the significance of transmission of voice for these expressive artists. They made conscious efforts to use their creative capacities to help others define, develop, and raise voice in ways that were meaningful to them through participation in collective creative activity.

From finding their own voice to transmitting voice to others, these expressive artists detailed the contexts within which they practiced group work and how the contexts of practice setting, group population, group purpose, and worker role affected the development of individual and collective voice in their groups.

Artists talked about the performance-rooted traits they brought to their work with groups, the skills they employed in transmitting those traits to others, and the performance-based interventions they used to actualize the development of individual and collective voice. Expressive artists described a fluid integration of traits, skills, and interventions that supported a balance of attention to group process and creative task.

Often expressed through the metaphor of “play,” the traits, skills, and interventions they brought to their work supported the transmission of their own voice to elevate the voices of group members. The following chapters describe study participants’ trajectories from discovery to transmission of voice.

Introduction

Creative or expressive arts therapies promote many verbal and non-verbal approaches to the development and release of self-expression (Camilleri, 2007). The personal creative act, whether represented through music, art, drama, or movement can be enormously empowering for an individual struggling to give voice to thoughts, feelings, and needs. Warren (1984) asserts that “the arts can motivate in a way possibly no other force can, because it is only through the arts experience, through making a mark that no one else could make, that we express the individual spark of our own humanity” (p. 4). Although the arts provide a powerful force for raising up and empowering the individual voice, they also have the capacity to create bridges among people. Freeing individual creative expression builds the capacity for human connection. From individual expression to connection with others, the possibility exists for collective creative effort. It is in this collective, creative realm that verbal and non-verbal approaches to expression lift up the individual and the group, strengthening individual and collective voice.

This chapter provides glimpses into early social, educational, and creative experiences that helped shape the creative and professional voices of those interviewed. The chapter sheds light on how these arts workers began to build a framework for practice that included as foundational cornerstones the amplification of self-expression and balance of group process and application of a creative task.

Pathways to Creative Voice

This study explored the concept of creative *voice* and how the development and nurturing of creative voice was a vehicle for self-knowledge and empowerment in people's lives. Informants talked about the development of their own creative voices and the ways in which they helped group members explore and develop their capacity for self-expression through participation in creative group activity. There are a number of ways to define voice. A commonly understood definition of the term is the actual sound produced by vertebrates (Merriam-Webster, 2009). Another definition of voice provided by Merriam Webster, "an instrument or medium of expression…wish, choice, or opinion openly or formally expressed (and) right of expression" comes closer to expressive artists' explanation for the term. These definitions are helpful in providing a basis for comparison with informants' conception of voice. However, voice as described by informants encompassed far richer meaning; their understanding and use of voice in practice went well beyond conventional definitions of the term.

For example, for Doug, a practitioner of meditation and creative arts therapist in training, voice was *presence*. According to Doug, "voice is about the spirit of the person, something that comes from deep down and emanates out." Alice framed the definition as "artistic voice." For her, the concept of voice and the articulation of voice were one; the creative medium was the conduit for the release of feelings and ideas that required expression. Janet's definition was similar. She said that "by participating with each other and me, and trusting each other enough to be silly, nervous, excited, etc.., the group developed their 'voice'…The group voice was more about working together and listening to each other in each exercise." Alice emphasized that her definition of voice was a

personal reflection of her own training and work as a theatre artist for many years. She was clear about her role as an arts worker, "Much like the mother putting her child first, I do not teach drama, yoga, photography and movie making classes to hone my skills and promote my artistic agenda or voice. Instead I am trying my hardest to allow the students to discover what is meaningful and passionate to them." Daniel, an actor, expressive arts worker, and Vietnam veteran worked with fellow veterans in arts based groups at a large urban VA Hospital. His definition of voice resonated with the work he did among soldiers newly returned from war and those who served many years ago. "I guess one definition of voice might be something like…the unique expression of who a person thinks he or she is, and what is most important to them…Of course, this can apply as well to an entire group." For Rick, voice was multi-layered and reflected the work he did with teenagers; he utilized arts as a teaching tool in urban high school settings. Rick suggested voice was the "ability and inclination to formulate, express, and reflect on your personal unique reaction, whether emotional, intellectual, or visceral, to any sensory or ideological information you encounter." He spoke to the political ramifications of raising voice, a subject he referred to repeatedly in his descriptions of creative group work.

Lisa was new to arts-based community work. She had recently graduated from a conservatory theatre training program at a major urban university and brought a wealth of skills, energy, and enthusiasm to her work with teens in a local community center. She felt that voice was the teens' act of "tell[ing] their story." Cathy worked with teens who struggled with stuttering. She was a staff member in a theatre company that worked with young people to find voice through their common and individual struggles. She described voice in the context of her work with the teens:

> The idea of "creative voice" is actually quite interesting in our organization because it's really embedded in the mission. Our kids so often don't feel like they have a voice at all, because of their stuttering. Sometimes they don't talk at home or at school because of the fear and frustration around the speech interruptions, so when they come to [our organization] they are really free to express themselves in any way they want, because their stutter is fully embraced and accepted. For the past couple of years we've taken the idea of voice one step further, and challenged our kids not only to speak freely without worrying about the impediment, but really giving more consideration to what they want to share with the world.

Polly traveled to many cities as a storyteller, performance artist, and community worker. She worked in communities around the globe; for her, raising voice meant "the same as giving voice or allowing voice, in spite of obstacles. See, my assumption, most of the time, is that the big problem is that we don't listen, or have any space or place where we can be heard." Polly's words resonated with the experiences of other expressive artists. A number of informants interviewed for this study said many of the people they worked with were ignored; informants believed it was important to provide a safe space for the amplification of voices that had been stilled, undeveloped, or ignored.

The group facilitator's awareness and application of skills to address group process and task balance influenced the degree to which they nurtured individual expression as a component of group dynamics and creative task completion. In this context, *voice* encompassed the nurturing of full and free expression of feelings and needs through collective group creative activity. As Marc reflected about his work with inmates in maximum security prisons, "What I'm talking about is giving these men voice…expression." The connection between creative voice and self-expression was manifest through the various terms given the field of arts-related therapies. For example, earlier I noted the descriptive terms *creative arts therapies* and *expressive arts therapies* to give titles to creative approaches to working with individuals and groups.

Informants talked about the importance of helping their group members find expression and they often substituted voice for expression. For example, Alice said that using drama and movement was "like this incredible opportunity to work with yourself, get to know yourself, express yourself." She added that those art forms were "definitely a way into expressing yourself in a positive way, especially for the public school kids." Daniel noted that the Veterans Administration hospital listed his groups "expressive therapy." However, for him "the agenda is free expression of feelings." Polly suggested that her work was about "lifting this need to be heard, this need to be expressed."

Early Struggles for Identity: Shaping a Creative Voice

Alice Miller (1994) recounted a story the sculptor Henry Moore told in his memoirs. The story is prescient because it described an important experience in Miller's life and the impact it had on his creative vision of the world:

> …as a small boy, he [Moore] massaged his mother's back with an oil to soothe her rheumatism. Reading this suddenly threw light for me on Moore's sculptures: the great, reclining women with the tiny heads – I could see now in them the mother through the small boy's eyes, with the head high above, in diminishing perspective, and the back close before him and enormously enlarged. This interpretation may be irrelevant for many art critics, but for me it demonstrates how strongly a child's experiences may endure in his unconscious and what possibilities of expression they may awaken in the adult who is free to give them rein (pp. 30-31).

Miller's observations on the developmental factors in creative achievement touch on a question that has long interested researchers: what are the contexts for the development of creative potential? Perhaps the broadest context for understanding creative development is everyday experiences that generate the beginning of creative imagination (Eckhoff & Urbach, 2008). If that is the case, it follows that all children develop creative potential simply by waking up and moving through their daily lives.

This leads to a second context for understanding creative development, that of environment. It may be true that daily life experiences form the foundation for creative development, but the social and physical environment also affect that development.

Various theorists create sub-categories of the environment, such as the importance of family environment in the development of creativity in children (Runco, 2006). Henry Moore's experience with his mother's illness and his later artistic vision of the human body substantiate this theory. Lubart and Guignard (2004) note that "in addition to family setting, school environment plays a crucial role in the development of creativity, or its lack of development in many cases" (p. 49). The kindergartner told her dreams of an artistic future are not realistic illustrates that theory. Adults, whether parents or educators, play a pivotal role in determining whether or not a child's learning environment supports and values the nurturing of creativity or undermines its value and development (Eckhoff & Urbach, 2008).

Suppression: Voice and Childhood Struggles

The artists interviewed for this study were on a continuum regarding suppression or promotion of early creative tendencies. Their experiences varied in the degree to which they received support for creative expression from family members and from social, religious, and political systems. Some hid self-expression; these artists carried out secret engagements in creative endeavors. Manny experienced adult disapproval. He talked about the painful process of hiding his creativity when he was a child. In his household, art was a shameful thing. "My old man was against art and all that stuff, so I wasn't allowed to be open, so I was kind of in the closet about my art. And I started to hide my artwork and everything from my old man." Cultural context also plays a role in creative

development (Runco, 2006). The artist who hid his creativity from his father felt that the context of his culture also dictated his creative expression; his father believed that the male parent was the only voice tolerated in the home; there was no room for Manny to nurture his creative voice:

> I was also dealing with cultural issues, in respect to the kind of insular environment that my father created at home and the world right outside my window that I was exploring and I was seeing my friends' interactions with their parents you know, they were different from mine, and, cause I grew up in a household where you weren't allowed to speak, which is interesting. Children should be seen, not heard? My father followed that, you know, when my father came in the house we weren't allowed to say a word. So it was interesting that I went into a field where words are important and where you don't only say them, you say them to an audience!

However, Manny had one ally in his home who did not silence his creative aspirations. His mother was a secret supporter to his creative efforts. Some theorists suggest that social interaction and play are pivotal in the development of creativity (Runco, 2006), and that in family environments, the parents often provide the opportunities for children to play and build their imaginations, two aspects that researchers suggest are essential for creative development (Runco, 2006; Shmukler, 1985). Frequently, the mother provides those opportunities (Shmukler, 1985). Manny was a "secret" artist in his home, but he had his mother's support. "I also had a great accomplice at home, which was my mom. She was the one that drove me to rehearsals…and that's when I think I also realized the importance of an adult to back you up and to give you the support that you need. And she was always, oh you're wonderful, you're great, and, you know, she was always encouraging, and she sort of made up for all the other stuff that I didn't get from my old man."

It is the family's role to provide the space and means to practice creative thinking, models for children to follow, and support of their efforts at creativity (Runco, 2006), a proposition supported by Manny's experiences as a child. The artist's mother, herself a skilled craftsperson, was the model for expression of creativity, opportunities for creative outlet, and the appreciation of creative effort. She had a major influence on how Manny ultimately shaped his role as an arts worker with young people. Early experiences with both silencing figures and supportive adults affected his ability to *hear* the voices of the young people in his groups.

Manny developed the capacity to listen with his whole body, to take in and observe behavior, actions, and words as clues to the underlying needs of his young group members. He used his own struggle for expression of creative voice to understand others' struggles. He saw the need in others for a safe and creative place to discover and explore the issues and feelings they wanted to express. His experiences helped him to realize that sometimes a child just needs to know someone hears them:

> …you sense like, like I know which kids don't have fathers just by the way they relate to me. Cause they come up to me and they're, …it's like this need, you know, like you feel it…I give them that time…I'll ask them how they are, I make sure I shake their hand or I put my arm around them…I want them to know that there's an adult who is genuinely interested in them and in their process. And I'm always telling them that, I'm always saying, well you know the adults that are gonna help you out might not be in your house. Not everybody has great parents, you know? And some people don't even have parents. They might have adoptive parents, or they might have foster parents, I said.

Other informants had different formative experiences that lead them to embrace creative arts as children. Several described creative outlets as life-saving mechanisms that provided both solace and strength. For some, creative expression was not a hidden activity; instead, it was a sanctioned means to understand conflicted feelings and personal

struggles in a family environment that did not necessarily support free expression. Creative expression in the safety of an artistic environment allowed them to free hidden or forbidden emotions. For example, when she participated in theatre, Raina experienced a sense of freedom from problems she faced at home:

> When I was young, I was very shy and it came from all of this background in my family, my brothers, issues with drugs and things like that, I was always really withdrawn and, when I started acting, for some reason, discovering other people through a character and living in their situations and living in different ways helped me to somehow swim to the bottom of my own self.

Young people experience tremendous changes as they move through their pre-teen and teen years. It is a time of rapid social, psychological, and physical growth (Malekoff, 2004); it is a time for separating from family and forging healthy sexual identity. Adolescents may struggle with feeling different even as they strive to establish identity and express themselves as unique individuals. Jack grew up in an environment that demanded strict conformity; being different was not acceptable. Although he did not have to hide his creativity from his family and community, he had to hide his sexual identity. For Jack, creative voice was an outlet for finding and exploring emotional, sexual, and physical identity. Theatre provided him with a place to take on a different persona. It allowed him to assume roles where he could be a different person from what his social, cultural, and religious environments demanded:

> I mean theater completely changed my life, it saved me as a kid. I grew up in a very conservative Mormon home, gay, in the closet. You know, it was a place I could actually go and be something else. I could do something different, and I felt that change and that power in my own life, and I, so I think subconsciously I connected to it for a long time and then when I actually started learning more, it made a lot of sense to me.

Involvement in theatre allowed Jack to amplify his voice within the safe container of role play. As a drama therapist, he used his experiences as an adolescent who played different

roles to help others explore their feelings, express their needs, and amplify their voices through the safety of role and metaphor.

As an adolescent, Manny also needed a place to grapple with intensely personal and life altering issues. Theatre was his vehicle for adolescent exploration. “I was totally immersed in the arts for those two years. And it was after school and during school and, you know, it was wonderful. It was a time of experimentation…and it was good and bad because, you know, you learn, you know, you’re a young person. And I was dealing with my issues, with my identity issues, my sexual orientation.”

For some informants, suppression of creative voice came from multiple sources, including family, school, and community. Cesar’s family did not feel that art was for serious people:

> I’m from a family that has no arts in the family so I think that that’s important. I was interested in the theater since I was a kid… as an adolescent I kept doing theater in my community there, the Catholic community, which was sort of, you know, a group setting. But I was forced to abandon it and I had to go to business administration and work in a bank…I say I was forced, you know, it was not coercion, but I think it was, it was very clear to me that art, it was not, you know, it was not for me, it was not for serious people.

In addition, he confronted direct political ramifications for raising voice. Cesar’s country of birth suppressed expression throughout the nation:

> I think one of the aspects that marked me too, now looking retrospectively, is that I grew up under a dictatorship, which I didn’t understand, the whole framework was there for not expressing, for not being able to express…So I always admired the TV stars or the people in [my country] that did that…they were doing it expertly, you know, through satire and, satire was great then, and I was fascinated by this.

Cesar’s search for creative expression began during a childhood spent under a dictatorship and led him to make a dramatic decision. He “worked in a bank for about thirteen years. Yeah, from fifteen to twenty-nine…for thirteen years, acting was a second

choice, sort of something at night." Cesar maintained a dual existence, always dreaming of a different life and breaking completely away from the bank. He talked about the decision to emigrate from his home to the United States to study acting, "And suddenly I felt like OK, this is it or nothing, I know, I'm twenty-nine already, I'm not gonna be a star, this is not gonna happen, but this is my life after all. And so I sold everything I had there and I came here to study and started all over again."

Cesar knew this decision was not because he believed he would "make it" as an actor. Instead, he hoped his life could be about more than what he had been raised to expect. He used experiences with suppression of political, social, and creative voice as a young person as impetus to find and build a career in theatre in a place where he felt free to promote the exploration and expression of his own and others' voices.

Yet another informant struggled to find self-expression as she battled adolescent depression. Miranda internalized her challenges with self-expression. Unlike Manny and Cesar, her home life provided positive support for development of creative self-expression. She remembered family trips to see Broadway shows and full support for her own creative efforts as a child. However, despite loving support and encouragement, Miranda struggled with depression throughout her adolescent and teen years. She said that involvement in school theatre classes provided an anchor in the emotional turbulence of her middle and high school years. Her situation was different from Manny's silent home, Cesar's repressive family and political environments, and Jack's restrictive community. It was closer the experiences Manny, Jack, and Cesar had where theatre provided a safe haven for voicing the emotional turmoil of adolescence:

> When I was in fifth grade, I discovered that I loved the theater... well, my parents always took us, we'd come up to New York a lot and they would take us to see

> everything, you know, *Les Miz*, *Cats*, all of it. And when I was in fifth grade, drama was offered…you could take two to three periods. So I chose that and I loved it and I was, I mean, I just remember loving it and as I went through my like early adolescence, I also became depressed. And when I was in eighth grade I was diagnosed with seasonal affective disorder, initially. I was always someone who really liked to be with people, I had a big group of friends, I went to an all girls school. I started to withdraw, I didn't want to get out of my sweatpants. My mother also suffered from depression so she thought, sent me to a therapist. And I kind of remember going through that and just, it was a very foggy time, it was a very sad time. But I always stayed in my theater classes and I loved it. And obviously I didn't know, you know, I wasn't conscious of it at the time, but being able to look back now, it was, that was my escape, was going into character, was playing a game, was being in my body somehow when otherwise I didn't want to be in my body. I didn't want to eat too much, I didn't want to eat at all.

Although she struggled to stay connected to the world as she battled depression, Miranda eventually found her way through the turmoil of adolescence into young adulthood. She used her experiences with depression to inform her work as a drama therapist. She understood the power of the mind and body to withdraw from the world; she had experienced that. She also understood the power of self-expression to function as a lifeline, in this case through the medium of theatre. Through her early experiences with depression and her continued engagement with theatre, she found a fitting vehicle for her professional work.

Finding Community in Communal Creative Activity

Not all informants reported childhoods marked by trauma and struggle. For some expressive artists, participation in creative and physical group activities was a natural and joyful part of growing up. Early experiences with groups shaped their beliefs in the power of communal creative and physical activity. These early experiences reinforced the belief that community-level groups provided outlets for personal expression and opportunities for making strong, lasting friendships. Doug talked about his love of being on a local soccer team:

> I played soccer from a really early age and I think one of the things that I loved about, what felt so natural to me was that it was a very physical activity and it was extremely group oriented all the time, you know…you're a member of a team, you're always thinking about what the other, in soccer's case, ten people are doing on your team…so it's this group, this moving group dynamic, this dance if you will, that I think just really spoke to me. I loved the competitive nature of it, but I loved the camaraderie and the sense of group-ness that happened playing sports for me.

Teamwork, camaraderie, and community were important to a number of informants. Whether actualized through a sports team or a theatre company, they responded to the comfort and support of the group experience. Margie recounted her joy at participating in a local community theatre company:

> …the children's theater that I grew up in was such a community…such a second home to me. I started there when I was eight…I was in the first production that this company ever did, so I was sort of there at the inception and the formation and through its toddler years and the adolescence of the company and I was with them for ten years and, yeah, I grew up there, it was, it really was my other home. And…I think that the aspect of community…and the way that I felt art work on me as a, you know, looking back on it now, as a child, like the community that I felt a part of, because of the art, the way art making for me became about community making at a very young age. It was the way I found my niche. And so I think because of that I was sort of always, art was always tied into community for me.

Participating in a theatre group or finding community and comfort in the group built through participation in a sports team as an adolescent may or may not have lead to a commitment to creative arts later in life. However, these early experiences and commitment to nurturing one's own creative voice did lead to careers in support of others' explorations of creative self-expression. Many young people develop socially, creatively, emotionally, and physically through creative and athletic activities. They experience solace, support, and reaffirmation through participation in such activities. Given those experiences, some grow up to pursue a professional career in the fine, visual, and performing arts.

Experiences moving from the arts as youthful extra-curricular activity to a profession in the arts varied widely among informants. They often had difficulty pinpointing just when they decided to dedicate a part of their creative life to assist others in building the capacity for creative self-expression. As one budding arts worker commented, “When do you have that moment, of like, ok, I’m going to do this? Yeah, what drew you to it? I mean, you could get philosophical and say, well human beings are not isolated beings, they have a sense of community, it’s innate in all of us and then whoever really connects to it chooses to do it continuously, whether they, in the form of teaching or…But then how does that translate to having that moment of I want to volunteer?”

Practical Motivations: Raising Voice while Pursuing a Performing Arts Career

For study participants such as Cesar, Rick, and Julia, social action and pressing community needs prompted them to move into community-based arts work; professional ambitions and civic or political involvement met in the work. For others such as Daniel and Larry, working with community groups had a clear practical motivation. Although the inclination to use expressive arts as a teaching and healing tool in communities was important, it was also a way to earn a living while waiting for the next big break. As Daniel said, early experiences working with groups in an in-patient psychiatric ward meant the opportunity to do some research for character work. As he began to spend more time in community settings, he remained committed to his own career as a performing artist:

> I mean I was here as an actor and they were very dramatic characters, and very dramatic situations…I mean, they lived on the extremes, so you know, you could never get, just walk into a psych ward and watch psych patients unless you’re doing research for a play or something and then you have to, it’d have to be a

> pretty big play or a movie, and you have all these hoops to go through. I was able to do this on a regular basis, once a week, and make some money doing it, so…And then it just sort of became more and more available, it became, I think there were a lot of things, there was the interest level was raised, but also it was a damn sight easier than auditioning all the time and being rejected and they actually wanted me to do it, you know? They were willing to let me do this stuff; I didn't have to prove myself that way.

Daniel worked for the past twenty years with many different kinds of people in a wide variety of settings. Early on in his professional endeavors, Daniel's creative voice split between that of the actor constantly looking for professional work and the community arts worker developing relationships with organizations and community groups. When pressed for an explanation, Daniel said, "I wasn't very receptive to moving more and more into the therapeutic heart of the work, I resisted that a lot, I'm not a therapist, and I don't want to be a therapist, but something about the group work itself, beyond whatever therapeutically is happening kind of got into my bones a little bit." However, this was not only about "getting hooked" on the power of the group encounter. For this arts worker, a common experience with group members in a specific setting offered a way into a meaningful career in expressive arts-based group work:

> Having been in Vietnam myself, as a reluctant soldier and really against the war, I'm suddenly confronted with, you know, veterans, doing three groups, at the time I was doing more than that two days a week so, doing two days a week, probably about six groups a week, with vets…I had never thought of that before but I think it's as simple as that. I was in a community that I had some deep emotional connection with, because I went to Vietnam a war resister, very judgmental about what was going on over there and the people that were doing the fighting, and came back humbled, in that sense.

Even after many years in community-based creative group work, Larry felt pulled towards professional theatre work and constantly questioned the choices he made:

> I come out of [my groups] very often going, why aren't I on Broadway after all or why haven't all these lucky breaks happened? But then, on the other hand, you know…and when I talk to other people about it, they go, you do what? You get to

> do that? You're not waiting tables and driving a cab and typing and you know, oh I've done a little of all those things, but you gotta be grateful too, to be able to do this.

Ultimately for Daniel and for Larry the creative experiences they had with their groups helped them to balance their need for creative expression. Larry found a way to transform and shape the power of his creative voice to amplify the voices of others:

> I have to say, when I'm doing, I'm lost in it…as an actor I'm getting to ham it up and play the parts and all that, but it's all about communicating and knowing that you're getting through to people, which is true for all these groups, that you know your art, which is all about communication, is it not, it's not totally, you know, doing it for yourself in your little garret somewhere, you know, you're doing it to reach people. That's why we do it in the first place, you do it cause you're cursed with a gift, but you do it cause you want to reach people in these ways of doing these works with people…you try to audition and you want to get that part and you want to get that opportunity so the big wide world can see you…But here. Look at this immediacy that you get, it's even greater immediacy than you get, certainly on a Broadway stage…but look at the immediacy that you can get when you have, well, be it the Shakespeare group or be it an improv group or be it a storytelling, when something happens and that connection happens, not every time, but you kind of gotta walk out of there and go, damn. Mission accomplished here, in a way, you know?

Practicality Meets Transformation: My Art + Your Art = A Mighty Voice

For some informants, the possibility for transformative voice served as impetus to enter into community-based work. A number discovered the power of "my art plus your art equals a mighty voice;" transformative voice was a reciprocal process. The work entailed entering into and engaging others in a collaborative effort that drew on the expressive artist's expertise and joy of collaboration and performance and the rich material that group members had to offer. As expressive artists engaged in work with various community groups, they found inspiration for renewed creative energy.

In some instances, the decision to move from a focus on professional performance work to group work occurred because they felt empty in with the world of professional

theatre and television rather than an articulated need to instigate social change through creative work. These artists were interested in creating art for art's sake, because the transformative experience of working as a group could create something of substance and integrity. Working from this perspective, both Nina and Marc shifted their focus from professional success to helping others find creative potential. In doing so, they helped others amplify voice. Nina explained how she reconciled plans for a professional career with a driving need to make her creative voice really matter in the world:

> That's why I think I never had a professional, a real professional career, because I never had the drive to do commercial work. But I've always impassioned about doing good work. And that kind of took me away from Broadway, you know, or getting an agent. And I'm really glad…and still I did a lot of Off-Off Broadway work and Off-Broadway work…I never got the kick out of it as I did in some of these other places. It never was as much fun to do.

When asked what it was that hooked her into community based creative work Nina said,

> I think it opened up really the whole realm of human potential, of the potential of a person, and that we really are so creative and beautiful and that there's transcendence of spirit and desire to be with other people and to do things that you never thought you could do, all of that, just, it's an incredible thing.
>
> *Interviewer:* Simply for the sake of doing that.
>
> *Nina:* For the doing it. Yeah. That's life. That's it.

Nina discovered the power of collective creativity through her work with incarcerated males, children in high-risk neighborhoods, and young adults in conservatory training programs. Marc had a similar epiphany about the narrow confines of professional directing work; something was missing for him, and he took a leap into a creative unknown to find direction:

> I was working on plays and doing stuff with friends and making theater and I was assistant directing and I was working on a TV show, and I started to feel a little disconnected…I started to feel my world was getting very, very small and I was, you know, trying to figure out what that was all about and I had been thinking a

> lot about working with alternative communities for awhile, because I was trying to make theater, well, like because mostly all of this comes from me wanting to be a director, I was trying to make theater that in some way moved an audience in a different sort of way, so I was exploring working with different communities and working in different settings. So that's how it all kind of started, I was thinking mostly as a director, I was trying to take audiences places, you know…what I found as, as sort of the pinnacle of this community-based work, was working in prisons, because it's a totally different environment, and then it's a group of people who are obviously not actors, and so I became immediately stimulated by the idea, and I think charged to figure out how to do it.

There was a downside to committing himself to working in community-based settings rather than focusing energies on obtaining work in professional theatre and film. Like Larry, Marc found the choices he made came at a personal cost:

> What I've learned is that there's no…I'm sure there are but I haven't found them, there's actually no long-term gain, like, for me. In other words, it changes them. I feel like it completely changes their lives and moment-to-moment it gives me a lot of, it's very exciting to do this work. But the project's done, I can't get anybody to see it, I can't film it, you know, it's not in New York, so it's, there's a part of me that's like, you know, I can't keep doing a project or working in an environment that doesn't pay me back at all. So like, it is charity work at the end of the day and it's artistic charity, all the stuff that I do, and then nothing really comes of it…which is more of a negative tone than I probably had six months ago.

Marc did not reconcile his struggle between professional artistic achievement and working in community settings. He continued to struggle with a "split" voice but searched for ways to reconcile that split and integrate artistic excellence with amplifying the voices of alternative communities. For Marc, the work had to involve artistic integrity for both the expressive arts worker and the group. He would not settle for "bad community theatre" but believed that given the skills, means, and encouragement to raise their voices his group members would also want a more satisfying experience.

Some informants reported successful integration of their professional performance work and community-based endeavors. Polly exemplified the artist who was able to

integrate professional artistry and arts-based work. Polly understood what theorists have noted regarding the effects of the environment on the development of creativity, particularly in young children. She used her passion for creative expression, specifically personal expression through storytelling, to build lines of communication between artist and community. In doing so, she created a working environment that supported both creative development in children and the needs of the larger communities in which she worked, including educational settings and family systems. “I’ve always felt the need to be engaged in something because I thought this need to belong somewhere is real. And when you engage that way with community, you always belong, to somebody, somewhere, and they belong to you. So the belonging is key.”

For artists such as Polly, professional intentions for working in community settings were close, “You start off with the intent of being an artist, being a performer, and that’s what I am. But then…you need being fed, and where does the material come from? And then suddenly you realize that, that this, this is also feeding your work. And that’s cool. It allows you to find characters, voices of people.” Both Polly and Daniel found much more than material for characters in their work with groups, “I need to make human contact, with real people, who laugh and cry and fall apart and also need me and I need them…there’s nothing like that, knowing what you’ve been given is need somewhere and is useful somewhere, and that those things must move forward together. And then what you get there feeds your life.”

Expressive artists amplified the stories of others to enrich their own creative output. However, it was not the material that artists found fruitful because that belonged to the people who told their stories in their groups. Instead, they gained strength and

inspiration from group member's willingness to open up with each other. Polly's own storytelling process became stronger because of her ability to engage others in telling their stories. She continued to perform professionally as she traveled throughout various neighborhoods working with seniors, children, and numerous others. For Polly, working in community settings provided creative and social nourishment and fed her life.

Political Voice: The Power to Promote Social Change and Dialogue

Historically, the arts have provided a lens through which to identify and reveal social oppression (Bitel, 1999; Kaminsky, 1985) and facilitate social change (Rapoport, 1968; Wilson & Ryland, 1949). This frames the broad category of *the arts* as a vehicle for expression of political voice and a tool for raising voice on the community level, particularly for the most marginalized and oppressed people (Fabricant & Fisher, 2002).

Social action was a powerful call for a number of arts workers and it became the path to a career in community based, creative group work. For many, the process began in their formative teen years. Social action meant helping other teens figure out how to manage difficult issues. Julia had managed her own teen issues and helped others to do the same through a traveling theatre company. What she did not realize until many years later was that this was the beginning of a rich career in working with groups:

> It actually started for me in high school. I'm, you know, I'm in my thirties now, so this is a long time ago, and I didn't know that there was a whole career where you could balance those things, but I actually was part of a group called the Mental Health Players where we used drama to talk about issues facing high school students and we had a group that would create these plays and go into high schools and talk to students. And a lot of it was kind of a way for us to work as a group, through theater, talking about issues that we are all facing. And, looking back, I realized that that's actually when it began for me.

She described the structure and content of that high school group experience and her growing understanding of the need for a balance of group process and creative task;

concept became foundational in her approach to creative group practice. Like the expressive artist who talked about his early struggles to build a teen theatre program in a community center, she said that Brazilian theatre maker and social change agent, Agosto Boal, influenced the foundations of her approach to practice:

> We involved them in tasks. I mean we would create the piece that we presented, but then they would talk about, and sometimes it was a little like Boal's forum theater, they would talk about solutions and we would act them out, so there's more simultaneous dramaturgy. And then we'd kind of discuss what the process was like afterwards. Our group was probably more like what you're talking about in terms of, you know, this consistent group that went through the process together for a long period of time, because we would only do kind of maybe an afternoon at different schools or an evening at different schools. But our group together, part of the process was to talk about these issues that we felt were important, you know, that we were all dealing with in high school, through theater, and bringing them to other places.

Early political and religious backgrounds formed the professional lives of a number of the artists interviewed. For these expressive artists, a political voice emerged in their creative group work; they straddled the roles of professional artist and agent for social change. When he was a college student, Manny became involved in political theatre. An an adult, the impetus to use theatre was a response to events in the country of his parents' birth:

> I got mixed up in a theater company in my hometown, we actually started it. And it was part of a theater, of a religious group….And they were very to the left, they were part of the new church, the new Catholic Church, with the Vatican II…So we were really like about evangelizing through social action. And so theater became a vehicle for us to bring that message to the people. And we started out with a small group of like twenty and within a year we were close to fifty.

Manny described his excitement bringing theatre to the people, "We went through all the island, to different towns, and we would do guerilla theatre basically, anywhere, we went…people would invite us to their offices, and we would move desks around and put up these little lights and create theater…We started out as a church group, but

eventually we got a little too political for the church and they threw us out." When he was a child, Manny struggled to find literal voice in his home. As a young adult, he struggled to find political voice through his art form in a repressive political and religious environment. Manny and his colleagues did not allow their religious communities to suppress their creative voice. When faced with eviction by the church, Manny and his friends found other venues for their work.

Others felt the pull of community work during their undergraduate theatre training. They applied what they had learned in their theatre classes to help others find political voice. For Rick, the choice to work with young people began with a college internship at a small local community center. Rick credited the influential work of Brazilian theatre maker, Agosto Boal (1992, 2000), with his development as a community-based arts worker:

> What we basically did was we got together on the weekends and we scraped graffiti off of interstate overpasses and things like that… we really were working off of just no knowledge whatsoever of how to [create a program]. So I read, basically just to bone up on stuff, I happened to read this book by Agosto Boal…*Games for Actors and Non Actors,* and I read *Games for Actors and Non Actors,* I read *Theater of the Oppressed,* I read a book by Keith Johnstone called *Impro*…these are all, as you know, political and ethical views of the role of theater in the world. And so, and then tried to cobble together some idea of making a program out of all this theory, mostly based on Boal. So, I mean, we basically took *Games for Actors and Non Actors* and photocopied a bunch of the pages of it and tried to figure out how I would turn this into a program. So we did, and we ran a program, I mean, it was a great program, the kids got paid to make theater, as part of this program, it was to make theater about issues that they were facing. So oddly in a weird way I felt like I got trained as a director first and foremost through teaching, and broadly defined teaching, through creating work with youth in a community centered program. That was my first actually formal training. What was odd about it was that I sort of still think of myself as having been trained by Augusto Boal.

Rick described his experiences with radical activism; how he unified his theatre work with young people in a Midwestern community center and his activism. Again, Boal's influence was evident in Rick's artistic development:

> …these communities that have been isolated…I had a belief back then, I don't think I quite have that belief anymore, but I had a belief back then that there was gonna be some sort of uprising in one of those corners…And I just had that sense that there was something brewing in America at that time and I felt like part of what I could do, I don't know why exactly theater seemed the right thing. Again, I think Agosto Boal was a big part of this, that what theater could do was help smooth that transition and prevent that from being a violent revolution, but actually give people the tools to articulate that pain and that isolation and thereby create empathy.

Some informants did not experience the same suppression of political, social, or creative voice. For Annie, the path was open to full creative, political, and cultural expression. Her social, educational, and home environments were safe places to take creative risks. Annie carried that concept with her into community-based work, always mindful to establish a safe container for self-expression in her groups. She discovered a link between skill acquisition and group effort:

> I had a truly burning desire to share what I was learning. And I was in this environment that I loved and immersed in my own community that I felt safe in, that I felt I could explore in, that I felt like I was just learning a tremendous amount in this community of artists, and intellectually challenged, and physically challenged. I wanted to be able to reach another population that either couldn't reach it because they don't have the access to it, or because of age, or whatever it is, that prohibits anybody from being able to participate in these kinds of communities, and I wanted to involve more people in this community in whatever way I could.

Annie's motivation to take theatre and movement into community settings led her to Bolivia where she described her work with five other artists of "go[ing] to different communities and do[ing] short workshops with anywhere from a group of soldiers to just some ladies who were sitting in a plaza."

Annie relied on the experiences she had of creative collaboration as a nurturing, positive force to build relationships in far-flung communities. For all of the expressive artists interviewed, theatre seemed the "right" thing; it was the tool that helped them amplify voice. For many, it helped promote social change and dialogue.

Daniel was an example of an informant who straddled worlds, finding his way to the role of social change agent. Daniel began his career as a facilitator of expressive arts based groups in psychiatric in-patient wards, using his observations of patients to deepen his acting skills. The initial desire to find meaningful work while he waited for the next audition took him on a journey where he discovered a deeply personal political significance helping others. Daniel described the discovery of a deeper meaning to amplifying the voices of his group members; he found a way to use more parts of himself in his work, to raise and amplify other parts of his own voice, "These are the people who are, who have had, in some way or another society has turned their back on them, the vets are a bunch of crazies, stick 'em in the hospitals, forget about them. The homeless, forget it. So maybe there's some element of that…of my political life that goes into that. It's a way of serving a group of people that I always thought the rest of society had jerked around a lot."

Summary

This chapter illuminated the early lives of expressive artists who chose to use their creative abilities in service of others. The voices varied; art connected them to community; participation in theatrical activity allowed the space and safety to expand their worlds, to try on different roles, and to be someone else. Others talked about the power of theatre to change their lives; one informant commented that theatre "saved" him

as a youngster. For others, performances in alternative communities provided the means for understanding humanity and provided an opportunity to experience “performance” in an expanded way.

Themes emerged in expressive artists’ stories about finding a means for full self-expression. Regardless of suppression of creative self-expression, each artist found a way to express their needs and feelings and develop identities as artists. Creative activity was a vehicle for amplification of their emerging sense of self; it was the link between creative activity, and voice provided a basic understanding of the conception of “voice” among participants. This definition merged creative expression and voice. Informants’ definitions of voice were not limited to verbal expression alone but encompassed a much broader understanding that involved creative expression.

Informants’ pathways to community-based work varied, but they shared a desire to transfer their creative voices to others. They projected driving need to use their creative abilities in amplifying others’ voices. They talked about their group members’ issues, needs, and struggles with compassion and empathy, because many of the members’ experiences and feelings echoed those in their own lives. They modeled empathy through purposeful creative activity, an aspect of the work examined, in more detail in the following chapter.

Each unique journey toward development of a creative voice and each artist’s direct application of creative talent in community groups helped frame other important practice considerations. For example, how personal creative journeys influenced theories about the balance of group process and task completion in groups; what arts workers believed about the exploration and development of individual and collective voice in the

communal creative process and how they went about doing that given the various contexts in which they practiced. In their stories of creative development, artists did not describe their search as a place to participate in or promote mutual aid. However, aspects of mutual appeared when they described finding avenues for creative expression. The experiences were more individual although the essential ingredient was the context for expression. Every expressive artist interviewed talked about the development of a creative voice in the context of a group setting.

The following chapter moves forward from early personal experiences described above and explores the contexts within which expressive artists played out the balance of group process and creative task completion in creative work with groups. The question remains as to whether or not that balancing process lifted the concept of mutual aid from theory to practice. The next chapter examines how practice contexts, including setting, group type, and degree of facilitator involvement in group planning, affected the expressive artists' purpose for using creative activity with groups. Informants describe how they managed their aspirations for group purpose and use of specific types of creative activity in relation to various agency contexts.

Chapter VIII: CONTEXTS AND TENSIONS IN ARTS-BASED GROUPS

Overview

There is no single answer to the mystery of how creativity develops or what drives a person to build a life around creative expression. The impetus to create may emerge from a person's experiences or the contexts of their social and physical environment. A context of deprivation or great abundance may motivate creative expression. For some, creative expression is a means of political expression or creative expression as political act. Creativity and context are intertwined; individuals do not create in an environment free of contextual forces.

Informants were sensitive to how environmental contexts shaped their experiences as creative group practitioners. They described how their early experiences provided the circumstances that propelled their choices to enter a life in expressive therapies and facilitation of arts based groups. They came to group work out of personal journeys as they developed means for self-expression and made choices about how to use their talents in the world. Early personal experiences provided frameworks for understanding how individual artists built the capacity for self-expression. They framed the issues, needs, and environments that combined to reveal, support, or repress development of a distinctly personal creative voice. Early experiences provided insight into their decisions about how to use their creativity in the world. For those who moved into work in expressive therapy fields, group practice was a way to explore and develop a creative voice in service of others. In the context of group work, development of creative voice took on magnified meaning for the expressive arts therapist or arts worker because the voices developed and elevated were those of group members.

Context, essential to any discussion of creative arts in group work, includes group practitioners' personal experiences and practice considerations that influence formation of theoretical approaches to working with groups. Practice considerations include group setting, agency relationship to activity based group work as the chosen modality of practice, group population, socio-emotional purpose for the group's formation, and the reason for using creative activity as content. Another consideration is that of the expressive artist's role within the agency structure. Informants in this study described juggling a number of roles, from professional artist to arts therapist. They also described different kinds of roles within agency structures, from freelance arts worker to full-time arts therapist.

Group practitioners work within a continuum of practice contexts that either enable group process to dominate the group's work or pushes group task into focus. An alignment of contexts allows for a more even balance of group process and task. It is this balance that group practitioners seek, but may not articulate as such in their descriptions of practice scenarios.

Interplay of Contexts and Tensions: Purpose, Population, Setting, and Role

Practice contexts, like groups, are always shifting, evolving, and changing. For example, agency needs and demands may change because of policy shifts or funding issues; group membership may shift in response to agency changes, and socio-emotional purpose for group implementation may evolve as membership shifts. As contexts shift they in turn support or suppress the expressive artists' efforts to nurture the creative voices of those they serve in arts-based groups. As contexts for group work practice move along the continuum expressive arts workers must consciously play the tensions

between those contexts. They are always searching for an alignment of contextual features that support a balance between group process and task completion; this balance allows for the full expression of creative voice among group members.

Many social work theorists have discussed the role of purpose in planning and implementation of social work groups (see, for example, Kaplan, 2001; Kurland & Salmon, 1998; Northen, 1988; Northen & Kurland, 2001; Papell & Ropthman, 1980; Schopler, Galinsky, & Alicke, 1985; Steinberg, 2004; Wright, 1999). Agency context plays a pivotal role in group planning and implementation as well (Brandler & Roman, 1999; Douglas, 1979; Hasenfeld, 1985; Garvin & Glasser, 1985; Gitterman, 1982, 1986). Agency context includes practice setting and group composition, two factors that have great impact on formulation of a socio-emotional purpose for the group's formation (Hasenfeld, 1985; Moore & Starkes, 1992) and the degree to which purposeful activity is utilized as group content. The group worker adds another element to practice context; the facilitator negotiates purpose with both agency and group members. The group worker's designated role in the agency structure may determine the degree to which group purpose is negotiated, clarified, and actualized in the group.

Interview subjects talked about the interplay between group setting, member composition, their designated role in the practice setting, and purpose for the selection of creative activity. Embedded in these conversations was a sense that each context shaped and in turn was shaped by the others, all playing dynamic and important roles in how expressive artists balanced group process and creative task completion. Ultimately, the degree to which artists managed the contexts in which they worked spoke to the degree of

success they found in raising individual and collective voices through creative expression.

A Contextual Framework for Purpose in Arts-Based Groups

Purposeful use of creative activity in groups adds a dynamic element to the discussion of group purpose. Activity-focused social work groups include a dual purpose that is both growth-oriented and activity-oriented (Wright, 1999). Socio-emotional purpose addresses the group members' question, "why are we here together?" and attempts to establish an overarching goal that the group will attempt to achieve through individual and collective effort. Claire Kaplan (2001) suggests a performance-based purpose is necessary in activity-based groups where a culminating event, project, or product is supposed to take place through the group's collective creative process.

The performance-based purpose addresses the question, "What will we try to achieve together through our creative efforts?" This drive toward a culminating creative product is what differentiates arts-based group work and arts workers from activity-based social work groups as described in social work literature. Kaplan suggests that a third purpose, skill acquisition, is the creative tool mastered through group interaction; skill acquisition is similar to Wright's (1999) description of the group's *activity-oriented purpose*. Skill acquisition supports performance purpose and represents the tangible achievement of the group. The creative group worker consciously plays the contexts of purpose throughout the stages of a group's life, weaving socio-emotional purpose and skill acquisition together in relation to group members' needs and stages of group development. Socio-emotional purpose and skill acquisition support and deepen the impact of the performance-based purpose as members move together toward actualization

of their creative endeavors and termination as a group entity. Identification of a socio-emotional purpose and skill acquisition is the means by which members work toward manifestation of purpose. They are influenced by group population, agency setting, and the role assumed by or assigned to a group work practitioner. Informants grappled with the socio-emotional purpose for the groups they facilitated in the context of the group population, the settings in which they practiced, and their designated role in the practice landscape.

Tension: Ambiguous Group Purpose

Group purpose was a point of tension for a number of expressive artists interviewed in this study. The artist's understanding of the socio-emotional purpose for a group was not always consistent with that of the agency. Another frustration artists raised was the organization's lack of defined purpose for the groups they implemented. At other times, artists described an agency's broadly defined need for a group, for socialization or community building. Expressive artists noted that under these broad conceptualizations activity became a time-filler rather than a purposeful means toward specific ends. In short, lack of a clear socio-emotional purpose influenced the definition of a solid skill acquisition purpose. The contexts of group setting but even more so population affected the degree to which expressive artists focused on the development of a performance-based purpose for the group as opposed to a socio-emotional one.

A number of expressive artists talked about frustrations with their agency's ambiguity of purpose for activity-based group work. They learned in school or from years of practice experience that a clear definition of group purpose and purpose for activity-based content was essential to effective group practice. However, their agencies or host

organizations provided little or no framework for purposeful group work. Nonetheless, ambiguity provided opportunity. Many of the expressive artists interviewed disclosed that agency ambiguity gave them room to build creative practice.

Margie trained as a drama therapist and actress. In her first professional position out of a master's program in drama therapy, she worked in a residential treatment center for seniors with dementia. She described the agency as a "for-profit, large company that has 44 communities in the northeast." As the sole creative therapist on her floor, she was responsible for its entire program structure. When asked what she did with thirty senior residents, Margie replied, "I try to do anything but Bingo, that's my motto, anything but bingo, A.B.B." In her attempts to construct a thoughtful and purposeful group practice in the senior residence, Margie often found that her groups were "a dumping ground…to keep them busy so that they're not gonna bother the CNAs". Margie described this as "a very nursing home mentality, you know?" Margie struggled with ambiguity on a daily basis. The "dumping ground" effect prompted her to engage in creative group planning, to move away from the nursing home mentality and find purpose for groups that satisfied residents' needs for social structure and autonomous action.

Margie worked in the context of senior services where activity based groups had broad definitions and where their purpose was ambiguous. Nonetheless, she carved out a specific and unique context for purposeful use of activity in relation to group members' needs. In Margie's setting, performance-based purpose took on different meaning. She noted that because of the nature of her group members' cognitive limitations, each session became a ritual of repetitive activity, in this case, creating and telling original, group generated stories. "The challenge that I have not, frankly, figured out yet is they

don't remember that story from the end of the group, most of them. I'd say four or five, six at the most do. But from the beginning of that hour, you know, short term is the worst, short-term memory loss. And so they don't remember, so a lot of times we just do it again." This did not mean that performance was off the table. Margie adjusted the performative aspect of the activity to fit the specific contexts of setting and group population. The ritual always led to sharing of stories, even if that meant starting all over again with the same activity and a new story immediately afterwards. Margie saw a purpose in the repetition of activity:

> It's really about creating a new story, and it's amazing to see what comes, you know, what comes out. I love it also, I mean I just love the projective device of story, I think it's such a wonderful way for people to express themselves, and I'm so interested in ways for expression for this population that is so silenced. They're so silenced. And, you know, dementia silences you, they're silenced on so many levels, like societally the elderly are silenced, especially if you have dementia within my community, in many ways they're silenced. We're up on the third floor, on one end, we're not on the first floor, in the hub of the activity. And then, their bodies are silencing them because they can't get their thoughts out all the time. Their families, you know, it's a really multi-level thing, so I love that this gives such voice.

The purpose of the storytelling activity was to find ways to release silenced voices. The simple, repetitive activity led to performance on a level that the members could embrace given their various dementia diagnoses.

A recurring issue for informants was the he challenge to managing the practice setting, group composition, and various players' understanding of use of activity with groups. Janet worked in a community center connected to a historic settlement house in New York City. Like Margie, her group members ranged from 70 to 100 years in age. However, Janet worked in a vastly different setting from Margie's residential care center. Janet's group members, although sometimes medicated, were high functioning and used

the agency as a social gathering spot. Nonetheless, Janet struggled with the similar dilemma of how to articulate a clear socio-emotional purpose for the senior group coupled with the use of purposeful activity to move the group toward achievement of that purpose. She explained the members' need for the group: "For some I'm pretty sure it's, they can't be left in the apartment alone all day, so for some it's like a drop-off facility and their aide is in the next room. But for others I think it's that they are still active but a spouse is working, so where can they go? So I think a lot of times it's local for them." She explained the importance for the seniors of finding community in their lives:

> I think it has a lot to do with age. I think it's life progression, I think a lot of them have lost their initial family, their initial community, so I think it's reaching out to find a new community and that's reaching out to the larger community, finding this group, so they can be a part of, I think essentially they meet for the purpose of finding another family.

Although Janet's group members were clear about the purpose of their participation in the group, the agency's expectations for her as a creative arts worker and the initial purpose for the group were ambiguous. Janet said that when she interviewed as an undergraduate theatre student for the position of volunteer creative arts worker with the agency, the executive director informed her that they "just wanted a volunteer to do a group based activity and it was pretty open. They wanted something artistic, so you could've done poetry, paining, dance, movement, acting. It was really broad." However, over the next few years, Janet shaped a more nuanced and focused purpose for the group. In doing so, she also developed her creative group work practice:

> The very first couple times, it was very much like I have to entertain this group of 12-20 people for an hour. How am I gonna do that? And then it became how are we gonna entertain each other? And then it became theory and how does this really work and then it's like oh that's what I was thinking all along, and that's what this really is, that's what it's called. And then from that understanding, we're

> having a performance together, not, you know, we entertain each other, but now we really have a goal, there's an arc to what we're doing together.

Through these efforts, Janet discovered how to develop her practice, "I could not be who I am as a group facilitator without this three-year process…and…just this idea of developing as a group facilitator but as a person." Janet carved out a performance-based group program that satisfied the members' needs to socialize and share their talents, which also satisfied the group's socio-emotional purpose, skill acquisition purpose, and performance-based purpose as defined by Janet and the members. This satisfied the agency's purpose of providing "something artistic" for the community members. It also provided Janet the opportunity to develop as an expressive arts worker.

Janet discovered a performance-based purpose for her seniors group even if the agency did not articulate one. Although the settlement house did not define the purpose for activity-based groups, Janet discerned that members met to build community. In their efforts to do so, they also discovered that they met for the sheer joy of performing music, movement, and drama together. She drew on the members' needs to both build a caring community and develop their performance skills. She treated each session as preparation for performance, a focus on performance-based purpose that she brought with her from her training in theatre. Janet noted, "Depending on how you view group work, I think, as an artist, you can view each group session as a performance with you and your ensemble, the group that's with you. You think of each session as…you should have a goal for that session. Think of it as a performance, and these are your fellow actors."

Tension: Agency Aspirations for Arts-Based Groups and Conflicting Purposes

In some instances how an artist understood the socio-emotional purpose for the group and reasons for utilizing purposeful activity as group content conflicted with the

agency's understanding of purpose and creative activity. Similarly, the agency's definitions of group purpose were universally less well defined. This could create conflict for the worker in effective use of creativity toward a specific end. In Margie's work with dementia clients, the agency wavered between using groups as "dumping grounds" or as public relations tools to increase funding. Margie noted "when there's a tour coming through, they want to see x, y and z, you know they want to see the residents fully engaged, they want to see big groups."

Her ethical standards for practice created conflicts for Margie, "So this goes against a lot of my therapeutic training and my humanistic frame of work." Margie gave an example of the agency's tendency to lose focus on their "humanistic ideas" in an effort to "get them to the group." For Margie, the purpose of her group work was more client-centered, "The purpose for me is to lessen feelings of isolation, to increase a sense of self-worth, to increase a sense of community and connectedness, because my residents don't know each other's names, but they know each other's faces. And that counts to me, it really does."

Although her agency administrators might agree with Margie's humanistic goals, she noted that their focus split between clients' needs and the need for the senior residential care facility to make a profit. Margie felt pressure to balance values against the very real needs of the agency for visible, positive results with clients, "I do think it's a good company, and I think that they believe in humanistic ideas. But when it comes down to it on the ground, in the site, it's get them to the group, get them to the group, and it loses the 'them' and becomes the 'it', you know, it becomes the relegation of the elderly to the much less human status that I think is so common."

Margie commented that the setting de-humanized the residents, and the culture was one of resident infantilization. Margie suggested that "a lot what exists in that setting is also an anxiety…'oh, what if they get lost'; 'oh what if they wander that way' 'what if I can't see them for one moment, what if they wet themselves, what if…?'" The combination of de-humanization and infantilization of senior residents led Margie to building connections between her group members while supporting the need for autonomy and dignity for seniors with dementia. Margie utilized the existing resources in her agency to support her efforts at breaking down stereotypes and building autonomy. She described creating a weekly ice cream social for her group:

> Talk about agency mentality, they're told when to come cause they need to be changed, they're told when to come cause it's time to eat. There's very much, like I'm trying to fight against, it's not as severe certainly as a learned helplessness, but almost that mentality. And I come at it from the opposite angle as much as possible. And I saw them talking to each other, just having conversations on those little ice cream parlor tables and I thought, wow. This is a great group. And I am sitting off on the sidelines. And it was a lovely feeling. And it's not one I get often at work. And I wasn't running a specific therapeutic group, we were going down for ice cream.

Miranda and Margie trained in the same graduate drama therapy program. Their approach to activity-based group work bore many similarities; they both described the importance of a strong and clear purpose for the use of activity with individuals and groups. Similarly, they both experienced conflicting purpose for activity-based group work with their agencies. Like Margie, Miranda had a number of responsibilities in her role as resident creative arts therapist. They both attempted to balance their responsibilities as full-time employees with the values and practices they carried from their theatre and drama therapy training. Miranda's conflicts with purpose were different from Margie's. Miranda described her weekly schedule as resident creative arts therapist

in a psychiatric hospital. Her list of groups demonstrated broad purposes for the use of creative activity with psychiatric in-patients. Although the hospital's purpose for activity-based groups remained ambiguous, they did support Miranda's efforts at broadening the group options available to patients:

> I usually run two to three groups a day, five days a week…and I have a lot of freedom there to create any groups I want to…I run a straight-up drama therapy group, I run improvisation for life. So considering improvisation, every week it's different but like different kind of improvisational games, depending on where the patients are, with a focus on well how can we apply this to our lives? What's going on in the room now? What's going on in the unit? What's going on in our community? I run a mindfulness and spirituality group, empowerment and hope group, creative arts therapy group, move, movement and music, music jam, building relationships.

Miranda had permission from agency administrators to implement creative arts-based groups in response to her perceptions of client needs, which gave her the freedom to formulate and implement groups. She found this creatively fulfilling because she could use both her theatre background and her training in drama therapy.

However, over time, the agency had to speed up patient discharge. Miranda supported the goal of moving clients toward discharge, but she had not considered it a primary purpose for her creative group work. Although this agency shift did not directly affect her work, she noted a conversation with a colleague where she began to sense conflicting purposes between the expressive arts therapists and the agency for creative arts therapy at the hospital:

> So far that I've been there, I have not had a lot of "we need to base this on outcomes/measurements" talk at all. On my way here I talked to a colleague who works in detox who runs a poetry group, an origami group, an art therapy group and met this morning with our director who said, "those aren't concrete enough, we need to re-title them. They need to be more like skills and outcome based." So now it's poetry and emotion, and origami for, you know, I don't know what she said, like, origami for, you know, relational based skills, that kind of thing, right? So I know there's talk of that, I have no doubt it's going to filter through to us.

> And having worked in substance abuse before I'm not surprised that it's starting in the detox unit because so much of that is like boom, boom, boom.

Tensions in aspirations for arts-based groups were not limited to informants who worked in hospital settings. Marc's work was primarily in maximum-security prisons with male inmates. In his case, tensions existed between the host agency's understanding of theatre, his non-profit organization's use of theatre in community settings, and his own understanding of purpose for collective creative activity.

Marc faced difficulty articulating a purpose for his work to the men in the group, many of whom had never seen a theatre production or participated in a theatrical event. "Theatre in prisons is also really tricky because you kind of are like playing with a great deck of cards, but most of these guys in prison do not know anything about theatre. What they know about are sports, street life, and sort of like community kinds of feelings, their sort of community." The context of Marc's group setting and group population was in direct conflict with his own artistic purpose for collective creative activity:

> There's the facility's expectation about what theater in prison means. And for them it means Shakespeare, you know, sort of turn your nose up, very elevated. And my main issue was that that's not these guys, you know, ninety percent of them are street guys in for street crimes…so they've never been in a theatre and so I started thinking about well what does that mean if I come in as sort of this cultured one? And I thought I'm not gonna do that, you know.

Marc described the host organization's need for positive notoriety; again group purpose had a public relations focus, "The facility loves doing these prison projects, in a funny way, it's a very specific reason. They get fame from it, there's a *caché* to inside those walls men are making theatre…one of the prisons that I've been working with, they want the newspaper article and, you know, rightfully so." Marc described constantly attempting to balance the various needs of the players involved while maintaining a clear

purpose for the group's work. He supported the host organization's need for positive notoriety. At the same time, he addressed the group members' needs to have voice through theatrical activity in ways that they could understand and accept. Simultaneously he needed to address his employer's understanding of how to use theatre.

Marc explained that the not-for-profit he worked for "is based in the idea that the arts change people and it's essentially about taking theatre into prisons as a source of rehabilitation." He described his balancing act of maintaining artistic integrity while carrying out the mandates of his employer. In essence, he attempted to reconcile conflicting purposes for the use of his artistic talents and the conflicting purposes for the group's work in the context of a maximum- security prison:

> I think the organization's expectation is that we're gonna do a sort of community-style production of *Twelve Angry Men*. And I'm actually interested in none of 'em. I don't want to do *Twelve Angry Men*, I don't want to do the elevated Shakespeare, I want to do my thing, which is about the guys. I want them to be the subject of the experience and the event.

The source of the conflict was that the agency's expectations for creative activity were rooted in a traditional concept of theatre that did not reflect the reality of the group members' lives:

> I come from this sort of an artistic sensibility and a very selfish curiosity about working…the people who run the organization are business people, they're not artists, so in that comes another interesting dynamic which is really complicated and it's proving to be really difficult. I think what they expect is somebody to go in there and do, you know, an all-male production of *Twelfth Night*…with a very sort of community theatre feel…the paint, the powdered hair…like sort of bad community theatre.

Tension: Role in Practice Settings

Informants had various roles, including that of the "itinerant" worker, who moves from practice setting to practice setting, often facilitating several groups. Another role

was the “entrepreneurial” worker who may or may not be a freelance worker, but worked at least on a part-time basis for a non-profit organization and served as a bridge between the agency employing the artist to facilitate groups and the host organization that hired the agency to provide services. At the end of the continuum of role types was the full-time arts worker, employed by an organization with formalized duties within the agency structure. A number of informants described role tension in practice settings and how it affected their ability to facilitate arts based groups.

The role of freelance arts worker could be problematic. Julia discovered that although lack of a formalized role could pose a challenge to implementing solid group programs, she had to be clear about creating relationships to clarify her position, build communication, and strengthen group purpose. Speaking specifically of working in educational settings, Julia observed “whether, be it teachers in a room with a school as a community, whether it be family, administration, you need to sit down and make it very clear what it is you’re interested in doing and find out what it is they’re interested in having.”

Building relationships with agency actors to strengthen informal roles and reduce role tension was a common theme among experienced arts workers. Daniel learned valuable lessons during his years as an entrepreneurial arts worker. In his roles he acted as a conduit between the employer and host organization; he learned how to read and respect an agency’s needs for activity-based groups. He understood the value of collective creative activity, and he attempted to bridge the two. One strategy he used was to work “under the radar” to the extent that he built relationships with host organizations and could function with a certain amount of autonomy. He also understood how to give

the agency what it needed. He learned to respect the agenda that the agency dictated for its service users and still maintain a focus on helping his group members build relationships. For Daniel, the work was all about helping group members find their way out of isolation.

For some expressive artists, role tension with agency was more complicated and harder to resolve. As an entrepreneurial worker, Marc worked between two highly structured organizations, each with a clear idea of what he should be focusing on in his work with inmates. His conflict with his organization was rooted in his belief that theatre had a more prominent role in elevating the voices of the participants than his agency allowed. His role as entrepreneurial worker intensified the conflict. This meant that while he had some artistic license as a visiting artist, he could not sway the bureaucracy from its position. Given the situation, Marc could not operate under the radar; instead, he constantly played off the various contexts of employer, host agency, and group composition in a fully transparent manner. Ultimately, he was caught between two imposing forces: his role was formalized to the extent that he had a clear and defined role as provided by his non-profit arts organization. Although the prison recognized he played a role in the institution, as a visiting artist he did not hold the authority of a full-time prison employee.

Nina was also an entrepreneurial worker in the prison system. However, she worked for a smaller non-profit organization; her employer was a pioneer in working with incarcerated groups using creative arts during the 1970s. Nina's experiences as an entrepreneurial worker were different from Marc's; she did not experience such great conflict between her employer and the host organization because that relationship was

more informal. Nina's experiences in the prison system were located in a different time. For Nina, the cultural and social norms of the early 1970s allowed her space for experimentation with theatre-based activity. Many of the exercises and activities she used in her work emerged from the experimental theatre movement of the 1960s and early 1970s. Similarly, those in the relatively new field of creative therapies were experimenting with various techniques and approaches to using creative media with a wide range of group populations. Given the context of the time and the relative newness of creative arts therapies, Nina could function "under the radar" of the host organization.

However, by the time Marc arrived on the scene in the first decade of the twenty-first century, the social, political, and cultural definitions of prison-based group work had changed. The pressures were different for both prison administrators and the artists they invited into the prisons. Increased prison populations, higher rates of recidivism, increased levels of violence within prisons, shifts in the perception of rehabilitation versus incarceration, and struggles for funding all influenced the relationships that developed between non-profit arts organizations and prisons as host organizations. A more formalized relationship in turn influenced the nature of the arts-based group inmates received.

Factors that influenced successful partnerships between artists and institutions included length of time with a given institution, consistency of presence in the setting, and the ability to build strong working relationships with agency actors. For example, Annie established strong working relationships with school administrators, first as an undergraduate intern and later as a freelance arts worker. Annie straddled the divide between itinerant arts worker and organizational employee. She enjoyed a degree of

creative freedom but also accommodated the school's needs. Annie collaborated with middle school personnel to build a group activity around the study of ancient Egypt. Annie and a sixth grade teacher prepared a monologue unit that explored characters in Pharaonic Egypt. The purpose of the activity was to "find those characters and those relationships." Annie and her colleague used theatre as an educational tool; the group's purpose and the purpose for the creative activity included aspects of socialization in addition to elements of middle school history curriculum.

Success with arts-based groups relied heavily on the attitudes of host organizations about the role that visiting artists played. Alice also worked in a school where she used yoga with elementary school boys and girls, grades two through four. She worked as a part-time worker for the yoga organization. She described the purposes for a parent-driven yoga program started by two parents, both yoga teachers, who discovered that "because of overcrowding, gym was not happening, daily" and so they "started going in to their kids' schools and teaching yoga. And then they realized that these kids were hungry for it, hungry for some stillness and some quiet, but also for some really good individual bodywork."

Alice struggled with the conflict between her perspective on the value of the yoga program in local public schools with the reality of maintaining a physically oriented group in a volatile environment. She noted lack of personnel support, something Annie did not encounter in her theatre and movement work with middle school students and faculty. Alice visited different groups each week, providing yoga instruction in the classroom. Although Alice and Annie were both freelance arts workers, Alice had a more difficult time negotiating the role with host organizations. She often encountered physical

limitations to carrying out the skill acquisition purpose for the group. She also dealt with a lack of understanding of the importance of yoga in the classroom:

> In my experience, some schools were much more supportive of the program than others, and there were definitely situations where I'd be in a school and I would go into a class and the teacher would be there and just kind of, totally not interested and would just use the opportunity to just do some of her prep work and, there were definitely some weird vibes that I got, you know.

As an entrepreneurial worker, Alice felt squeezed into the same "bridging' position that Marc had described with his employers and prison officials. In Alice's case, she felt that her non-profit employers lacked the needed relationships with host organizations to establish a strong sense of purpose for the work their employees were doing with children, "I felt like what was lacking was like really good support of us yoga teachers going into all these different schools…It sort of reminds me of temping, you know what I mean? You're always the new girl, you're always an outsider…I mean, even working in an after school program, you sometimes feel like an outsider, you're not a school teacher, you don't work for the Department of Ed, the principal is not your boss."

Alice described the dilemma of entering into an agency with a strong skill set and a clear sense of purpose for creative activity, only to find that the agency was not clear about how to use expressive artists as educators:

> What I wanted was from both to kind of meet in the middle a little bit more, because a lot of times I felt like I was just walking into a situation and if I was lucky the kids knew I was coming and the teachers had told them about it, but if I wasn't, if I wasn't lucky, I was just kind of like, here's the yoga teacher! And luckily, I always did residencies so once I was there once, it was my job to be back for the next fourteen weeks and I, I could establish that, but I felt like I was always working against sort of the school and the system of, to be like, I want to belong here, I want us to, I want us to jive a little bit better.

In contrast, when creative arts therapists had routine contact with an agency, they found ways to negotiate obstacles to implementing their aspirations for their groups. For

artists like Daniel who did not consider himself an arts therapist, this meant building a long-term relationship with both staff and clients. Daniel felt confident in the strength of the relationships to listen to the needs of the agency. However, he had to tailor those needs to fit the routine needs of his long-time group members.

Full-time staff members such as Miranda could navigate the agency's needs and structure by observing and playing within the structure. Her example of the ice cream social group emphasized the importance of understanding and subsequently working within the existing structure. Possibly their consistent presence enabled these informants to alter the context in ways more suited to their work. For those who worked in educational settings, the work was often freelance or part-time. Some, who visited schools part-time like Alice, struggled to build relationships that eased their integration into the culture of the setting. However, a number of artists managed to balance their "outsider" status with strong relationships within the host organization. Again, a more consistent presence seemed to help the host organization accept the arts worker. For example, Annie was a regular visitor to the middle school. She facilitated after school arts-based groups and worked with a number of classroom teachers during the school day. The contexts of setting and worker's designated role in relation to it were fundamental components for the successful achievement of skill acquisition, socio-emotional, and performance-based purposes for these groups.

Therapist or Arts Worker: Negotiating Role in Therapeutic Contexts

Informants balanced their roles as professional artist, arts worker or therapist, and group facilitator. This involved balancing art for art's sake and the therapeutic impact of their work with groups. Most were clear to differentiate between creative activity as

therapy and the therapeutic value of creative activity in a group setting. For example, Alice never considered her school yoga groups as therapy, nor did her non-profit employer or the host agency. However, Alice would described yoga's therapeutic benefits to young people in a hectic, often fractured educational environment. It provided the opportunity for children to process and release stressors in their school setting through ritualized, safely constructed group movement.

Balancing roles and clarifying the purpose for arts-based groups was a dynamic process. For example, Alice originally saw her work as teaching yoga to third graders until one day, a third grader physically attacked another in the middle of a sun salutation. Alice learned quickly that although yoga was not therapy for the children, neither was it simply a physical activity. The group process and collective physical ritual had released something in the children that could not be contained. Polly noted with storytelling that "sometimes the story's just tears, it's just crying, but it's not therapy. It's therapeutic, but it's not therapy." When asked how she maintained the balance of group process and creative task without tipping into therapy, Polly responded that she thought it had to do with clarity of her role in the practice setting.

Polly maintained her role as a professional actor even as she worked with highly personal material in her groups. She was clear that maintaining the balance between therapeutic benefits of storytelling and therapy included a reciprocal stance. "You don't ask anybody to do anything that you're not willing to do yourself. You're not doing a favor. You're getting as much out of this as you're giving. So it's a reciprocal process." Polly spoke to the highly interactive nature of arts-based group work. She was not a

trained drama therapist, social worker, or psychiatrist, although she had experience with aspects of drama therapy in her storytelling work.

Others maintained the role of professional actor while they balanced art and therapy. Nina worked in different agencies over thirty years of practice in the New York area; she was most frequently a freelance, visiting artist. She included a variety of creative approaches in her group work, including street theatre with public school aged children, reminiscence work with seniors in community centers, and self-scripted material with maximum-security inmates. She noted in her work with prisoners that "the reasons we're allowed in is not to make something beautiful, but because it's good for these inmates, for the population."

In Nina's situation, the prison administration did not identify the therapeutic value for theatre-based activity. No one questioned her qualifications to provide therapeutic services, because the agency did not articulate the explicit therapeutic value of theatre-based activity. Her presence as an actor and the assumed benefits of performance-based group work as "good" for the inmates were sufficient reasons for a working contract between Nina and the prison. This left Nina in an interesting position. One the one hand, she did not have a defined role as a therapeutic support for the men's rehabilitation. On the other hand, she was free to work with the inmates in ways she believed to be of both artistic value and could also use to bring voice to their many experiences both inside and outside the prison walls. However, Nina insisted this was not therapy. Nina was clear about the need to focus on creating material rather than the therapeutic aspects of theatre-based group work:

> I think we all knew that it was therapeutic for them. You know that that's happening, but that's not the focus. The focus is to make something beautiful and

> to help them to go through a process, which they've never experienced and where the result is that they are really feeling the best of themselves and that's what I was doing. You know, to me that's the difference. That the focus is really on the making, on the creation and in any art form, with anyone, who has any kind of problem or disability or anything, whether it's emotional or physical, if that person is involved in that process then it will be therapeutic, it's that simple.

When asked whether she thought the prison labeled theatre-based group work as therapeutic, Nina responded, "No, I never heard that from anybody that I worked for, but I think that, and this is an assumption." Nina worked within the structure of the system. She used her own connection to creative expression, a willingness to take creative risks, and an understanding of the inherent therapeutic quality of theatrical expression to *play* within the prison system.

Some expressive artists facilitated arts-based groups in clearly defined psychotherapeutic settings, although they did not have training in therapeutic approaches and did not describe themselves as therapists. For some this was an uncomfortable position. Others, such as Daniel, found a way to balance practice setting and role. Daniel was not a trained drama therapist. He did not approach his work as explicitly therapeutic, even though he worked in a therapeutic milieu. Like Jack, he understood the therapeutic value of theatre for mentally ill individuals in groups:

> With the day hospital…you get to know them, we've known some of these people for 15, 16, 17 years, and you kind of hope that, that they can stretch themselves a little bit, but a lot of them are schizophrenic and that's just part of the disease, that you can't push them to…I think one of the reasons that we probably are necessary for the day hospital and maybe the inpatient unit has to do with the fact that psychotherapy is very often damaging to schizophrenics, its just, it just, especially Freudian, it just, it doesn't work with them for some reason, it's something about that disease that just, it makes it worse, and so, maybe that's what [the founder of his not-for-profit organization] understood, was that the creative, therapeutic part of drama, even if you're not a therapist, is much easier, the mask in front of you is much easier to deal with when it's your own real stuff.

Although he was not a trained drama therapist, Daniel was able to work within a psychotherapeutic environment in his distinctive, creative way. This took place because of his not-for-profit's long-term relationship with the VA Hospital system and his bridging role between creative arts agency and host organization. Daniel's employer straddled drama therapy and therapeutic use of creative activity. The organization worked with a spectrum of arts workers, from drama therapists in training to individuals such as Daniel who considered themselves primarily visual and performing artists. Daniel developed strong working relationships with staff and clients. He was clear about his lack of interest and qualifications in providing therapy. However, he also understood the therapeutic value of theatre-based activity and the role he played in providing that to psychiatric patients. He provided a safe space for free expression of feelings, emotions, and community building.

A number of informants described a formalized role of full-time creative arts therapists with a structured job description; this role had trade-offs. Some reported that a formalized role provided freedom to explore new ways to work creatively with clients. However, with formalized responsibilities came the pressure to create meaningful program that the organization would accept and support and pressure to build programming that fit organizational needs. For example, Miranda was a creative arts therapist in a psychiatric hospital, hired shortly after she completed her master's degree in drama therapy. Nonetheless, the agency saw her arts-based groups as recreational fillers for more clinically specific treatment modalities:

> I think they kind of look at the creative arts therapy groups, which is in the psychiatric rehabilitation department, as like, "Yeah, OMH and J-Code," they really want us to have group activities for the patients, we want to occupy them, and it's good for them to have activities, you know? So they're kind of just like

> the rehab therapist, the activities therapist, you know? Yeah, they need to do that, sure, sure, sure, like, OK, we're gonna satisfy that, you know? "Let them do their thing; it's fine." So I don't know if there's really a true understanding of like the training, the thought, and the importance of we get to see the patients at sort of their most healthy, and we think of them as drawing on their strengths as opposed to so much of like, you know, the pathology.

Despite the clinical staff's assumptions about the role of creative arts therapies in a psychiatric in-patient setting, Miranda was clear about the purpose of her arts-based work with patients. She believed arts therapies helped patients toward discharge, but noted a lack of understanding on the part of agency administrators and an embedded double standard that confused group purpose even more:

> Our work of course we know is completely instrumental to their discharge, you know, the way that they are, well first of all, are they attending group? How are they participating? Are they nonverbal? Are they very much you know verbal, very over the top? How are they presenting, how are they working with others, et cetera, instrumental, without a doubt. But that's more viewed as like, well you guys occupy them while they're here on the unit. I think, my interpretation. You occupy them while they're here on the unit, we record whether or not they're going to groups. If they're not going to groups, that's gonna affect their discharge planning, but we had a patient discharged today who didn't come to one group for two weeks. So it's not like you're not going to be discharged if you don't-

Nonetheless, Miranda had great freedom to create programming. In the formalized role of full-time arts therapist, she felt the pressure to prove a clear therapeutic purpose for creative group work in the hospital setting. This was consistent with Miranda's training; she felt comfortable shaping creative activity to support therapeutic efforts. Managing her colleagues' ambiguity of purpose for groups in the hospital was more difficult.

Some informants approached their work as artists and trained drama therapists simultaneously. They brought a wealth of theatrical experience to their work with mentally ill individuals. Miranda used therapeutic theatre techniques in a psychiatric

hospital. She understood the pain of a silenced voice and the power of theatre to release the feelings, experiences, and needs that had been suppressed or hidden. Her reflections spoke to balance of group process and creative task and the necessity for expression of human needs and feelings through creative mediums:

> Coming from of place of understanding and relating to the arts as a way of expressing myself when I couldn't necessarily all the time, just with words, you know, working in metaphor, what are these patients going through right now? You know? Listening to their case presentation and hearing the broken relationships that exist, the addiction, the lack of power, the lack of hope, and thinking to myself, well one of the kind of key roles I play as a therapist is reminding a patient that like, well there's hope here, there's another side to this, you know? And also meeting them where they are with it, you know, sometimes like, music and movement? They just want to get up and dance and listen to songs they love, you know? And that is gloriously therapeutic and then be able to process it afterwards, you know?

Miranda expanded her professional role and her understanding of purposeful use of activity to meet the context of population and agency setting better:

> On Sundays now I do a movie group and we watch a movie, you know? And so there's a part of me that's like, are we really just gonna watch a movie? But I tried it for the first time two weeks ago, the patients had been requesting and requesting, a few of them on the unit, and I was like, they're asking for this, like, well let me see. And also, I'm a drama therapist, I can think about it in terms of like the acting and whatever. But at the same time, let's not over-think it, you know? And so my supervisor said to me this week, since I started doing the movie groups, she was really appreciative of just kind of the range of groups offered, from the much more specifically, thoughtfully process oriented, more like deep therapy groups, to watching a movie, to jamming out, and for me seeing the value in all of that, right?

Type and degree of training as well as designated role in relation to training appeared to determine the degree to which expressive artists considered their work therapeutic rather than a form of therapy.

Balancing Dual Roles: Artist and Administrator

The most effective position straddled administration and front-line group work. A few of the expressive artists interviewed for this study assumed that dual role and described the value of looking at the work from a managerial and artistic point of view. They talked about the ability to appreciate both sides of the equation in terms of planning purposeful program that would best fit the needs of everyone involved. Rick was a veteran of both in school and after school creative programs having worked in school settings for twenty years. As the executive director and chief financial officer of a successful artists' collaborative working in eight high school settings, Rick was in a strong position to shape programs that fit his colleagues' artistic inclinations and the needs of the high schools with whom they had built sound working relationships. Like Jack's situation with the drop-in center, Rick managed dual roles as employer and expressive arts worker. However, Rick also took on the role entrepreneurial worker for his own non-profit within host settings. He was conscious of the various roles he played, often switching hats multiple times throughout the day depending on practice contexts, including setting and host agency actors, group composition, and socio-emotional and performance-based purposes for a given group. Rick understood his agency's desire to build strong working relationships with host organizations. This meant understanding why the high schools wanted them there in the first place. "One of the things that we're working very hard on is working with the administration, to deal with what they really want us there for, which is right that they should want us there for that, which is not just to build empathy and civic education and ethics and things like that, but also graduation rates."

Rick described the frustrations workers encountered with conflicting purposes for their presence in high schools. His dilemma, and the frustrations his colleagues managed in building relationships with agency actors, involved purpose and role: purpose for placing artists in school settings, using creative activity as teaching tools with high school students, and the roles his part-time artist employees should assume in the host organization. Rick described the importance of understanding and managing agency context in order to clarify the purpose for his organization's participation and the purpose for using theatre and movement in high school curricula:

> It becomes this problem where the artist has trouble getting really, really clear benchmark about what it was that they did that was rigorous and successful and what it was that they tried to do that was rigorous and *unsuccessful*....creating that language so that you could communicate with your partners is very difficult. Organizations that don't work on that find, they make very unhappy employees is what happens…We've gotta make sure that we support any artist that we set in a classroom, we gotta have a very high level of support about this particular problem. We've got to be in the middle of the conversation that they're having with the administration, so that it doesn't get out of control.

Rick's dual roles and experiences as both an administrator and front-line worker determined the degree to which artists in his organization were able to implement their work successfully in the high school. He often served as a bridge between organizations and between artist and employer. This was very different from Alice's isolating experiences with movement work in elementary schools.

Jack, a licensed drama therapist, was the director of a drop-in center serving approximately eighty-five individuals each month. "Anyone who's on the street who needs help, they can come to our place. We also have people who have been there for twenty years. They're housed in the neighborhood, it's their family, it's their home, so they know us." Jack described the mental and physical struggles of his service users, "I

would say maybe sixty, seventy percent of the people there have schizophrenia or something in the realm of schizophrenia. The other forty percent have substance abuse disorders." He estimated that of the roughly eighty-five individuals attending each month, his staff worked with fifty regulars and on any given day, approximately thirty-five people sought services.

Jack described his program as "very much a creative arts therapy approach" with three arts therapists on staff and paraprofessionals with bachelors degrees in psychology or social work. Jack struggled with what to call his work as director of a drop-in center that served mostly schizophrenic individuals. He was clear that his staff provided therapeutic support through arts-based group work. Jack trained as a drama therapist and viewed himself as such, a therapist who used dramatic approaches to working with individuals and groups. However, he received a majority of his funding from city government, which viewed his center as a social club. The city provided little oversight:

> Actually, they don't like the fact that we're doing therapy. We're just supposed to be doing activities because the type of program we are, it's not a day treatment program, we're not supposed to necessarily be doing treatment, we're supposed to be helping with some rehab, emotionally socialization activities. So…I mean, you know… I can see a lot of their point. I mean, I try and balance, I try and see what we can do. So in some respects, some things look a little bit more like educational theater, applied theater than it would as much drama therapy. But what it gets right down to, I mean, people need help and if they're gonna come up with issues and concerns and traumas are gonna pop out then yeah, yeah, we deal with it and we're gonna work with it.

As director of the center, Jack was in the enviable position of dictating the agency's purpose for activity-based groups. He was emphatic about his agency's approach to using creative activity and the purpose for activity as group content

> I think we're very explicit from the beginning that this is therapy. That whatever's gonna come out, that's why we're there…The idea that there's a product gets people to group. They're like, all right, so we're working on something, I need to

> commit, I need to come to this group. But I think that we're very explicit that this is therapy, so if someone, all of a sudden, their character mentions something about suicide, then we're gonna take a few weeks to explore suicide. We're gonna delve into that character as an exploration of suicide and their experience with suicide.

Jack's description of a therapeutic purpose for creative activity included the need to balance group process with creative task. He was explicit about the process-focused nature of the work he did using theatre therapeutically. In this case, the context of agency setting supported the therapeutic nature of creative activity in groups because of the enhanced power of Jack's multiple positions as agency director, facilitator of theatre based group work, and licensed therapist.

Alignment of Agency Aspiration, Facilitator Role, and Purpose

Sometimes the agency context and the potential for raising creative voice were congruent. Polly discovered a deep connection between agency context and degree of group members' ease with raising creative voice. In essence, agency context shaped group purpose and dictated the degree to which members experienced interest in and freedom to express themselves:

> I think the difference is, for instance, you have a university setting, the kids are obliged, the obligation is quite different, they're obliged to be in that class, they have a schedule, they don't get a preference…So with the little kids, the difference is that they are under conditions that are much larger than themselves, they're not obligated through wanting a degree at the end of it and they're not coming because they've had some life crisis…and then suddenly something in them catches fire and it's organic and it becomes something like a food. It's a different relationship to the process, it becomes a need but on a different kind of level.

Polly used storytelling as creative content to amplify voice; practice context determined both group members' reasons for participation and how the agency understood the use of storytelling techniques. For example, with college students in a

conservatory theatre training program, Polly called her work "self-scripting"; the context of university classroom dictated an obligation on the students' part to participate; in other words, full participation meant receiving a satisfactory grade. However, the purpose for Polly was to help young people go beyond the "superficial" and develop genuine voice. "If you're in a senior center, or a women's center, or a shelter, everything that they do is voluntary, so when they show up there's a need…basically it's the same process that you're doing with all these different communities, whether it's in Riker's Island or anywhere."

Polly worked in a number of educational settings, from public school classrooms of Pre-K children to a university theatre conservatory. She also worked in senior centers, women's centers, and maximum security prisons. Although the purpose might shift in relation to setting, she found the process was similar:

> It's the same thing, it's all dialed up, but basically it's the same process that you're doing with all these different communities, whether it's in Riker's Island or anywhere. But the difference is, in an institution it's obligatory most of the time. And women, family situations, and in senior centers, it's voluntary, it's something they come to because they wish to be there, or they need to be there and they know it…So you have these different communities who feel that what you have is part of the whole. Somehow it makes the whole function better.

For Polly, efforts to actualize group members' voices in a consistent and productive group process meant utilizing essential skills of community building on all levels; Polly referred to it as "spend[ing] a lot of time creating an ambiance." She had a clear approach to community building:

> The first thing you have to do is build the trust of the institution. There's like three tiers of trust, you have to build the trust of the institution, you have to build the trust of the community and you have the individual…You have to establish a relationship, some kind of basic sincere relationship with the institution where a mutual respect is happening. So that if you're at a senior center, you get the same room at the same time once a week, so that there's a basic consistency. If you're

> in a school setting and you work with all the classes...so you've done the administrative thing with the director of the school, but also you've gone to each teacher and you've had a conversation that allows you to understand the needs of the community. What does this classroom need from me?

Polly addressed a number of practice contexts simultaneously. She embraced her entrepreneurial role; she represented a number of non-profit organizations in her community work; and developed strong relationships with administrative figures. However, Polly also knew how to manage the freelance role from years of experience promoting herself as an independent arts worker and performer. She integrated the roles fluidly in relation to practice setting. It was through these many experiences that Polly learned how to play contexts of setting and role:

> It's not just about what Polly wants to do in her program, but they hire you because, they might not even know it, but one of the reasons whey they hire you is because you add to the health of the community. And how do you do that? Because you understand where you're filling in, you understand where you're needed. And how you're needed. You understand that the whole community functions better if people feel well in their skin, if they're expressing themselves. So you're not there to just do your thing, you're there to see what's needed. And once you identify what's needed you sort of get a sense of what kind of stories need to be told.

Consistent presence in the host setting could lead to a shift in perception of role by organizational actors. With repetition and experience came trust, similar to the way Polly described her efforts to build bridges of trust in the communities where she worked. Polly and Manny were alike in this manner; Manny loved working with young people. After fifteen years in one particular non-profit, creating cultural identity projects with elementary school children, Manny knew how to play agency context to meet the needs of his group members and to provide the context for achievement of socio-emotional, skill acquisition, and performance-based purposes. "I go to the schools and I meet with the teachers. We usually find something in the curriculum to connect to and then we will

build, we'll either do an art project, visual art, or we'll do theatre based on whatever we're doing."

Manny understood the key to playing agency context; he made contact with key personnel at the beginning of each project and built working relationships with agency players. Rick came to a similar conclusion to the dilemma of artist versus educator and artistic purposes versus agency's purpose for creative group work:

> Unless you start to really build a relationship with a school, this gap is gonna be there, there's not some magical school principal somewhere who's gonna say, "I love you! You're perfect. And all of my teachers love you and we'll just move forward"...it's just never gonna happen, because there are fundamental differences between the people who choose to become public school teachers and the people who choose to become artists.

The lack of understanding between disciplines and the role artists should play in bridging divides between those in host organizations and visiting artists resonated with other artists. In more than thirty years working in community settings, Nina often noticed a breakdown in communication between agency personnel, whether that was school administration, prison guards, or social workers in social service-oriented institutions, and visiting artists, "I think the biggest issue…most artists don't get it that the situation, the environment is so chaotic. They don't understand what the social worker is going through or the administration. And nobody, in all the places that I went to, was ever prepped on that." Her solution was simple. It echoed what Manny worked for; what Annie and Polly knew from their work in schools; and what Rick described as important for the artists in his organization. "If you had fifteen minutes before each session with the social worker, with somebody, and that was built into the agreement, just fifteen minutes." Nina and others knew that roles shifted and trust developed when people stopped to listen to the needs of others.

Summary

Expressive artists described different contexts and tensions for creative group work practice. Most expressive artists viewed purpose as an overarching context that shaped and in turn was shaped by various practice considerations. Expressive artists consciously played practice contexts and tensions to develop and clarify the group's socio-emotional purpose, the purpose for creative activity as group content, and to find a balance between group process and task.

Expressive artists often described how they found freedom "under the radar" in host organizations in an attempt to develop and actualize a group's socio-emotional and performance-based purposes and to balance process and task. However, playing under the radar had its trade-offs. Marc struggled to define his role with the host organization. To be under the radar was helpful to an extent; but he quickly learned there were limitations to creativity in the setting. His role as visiting artist forced Marc to push his agenda with the prison or his employer.

Consistent presence in the host organization influenced the development of important relationships between expressive artists and organizational actors. A number of informants reported that strong relationships were important to building trust. As trust developed between artists and host organizations, artists were more likely to work under the radar and develop creative programming that best suited the needs of the group members. Daniel's work in the VA hospital, and Polly's years of working with the same public schools attested to the positive aspects of long-term working relationships between non-profit entrepreneurial workers and host organizations.

For many, freedom to create group programs resulted from ambiguity about the role of creative group work in the organization. For example, Margie found that she could create programs to fit the specific needs of dementia patients; Miranda discovered the challenges and enjoyment of creating a number of new programs for psychiatric patients. For some artists this was initially a positive situation. However, Margie, Miranda and others soon found that bureaucratic structure combined with ambiguity around the role of creative group work constrained their work. Margie found her large corporate employer sanctioned her humanistic approach to working with seniors and her creative solutions to their needs, as long as she demonstrated positive results measured by consistent group attendance. Miranda found that no matter how creative she was with new groups, she was increasingly bound by the hospital's need to focus on patient discharge.

Ultimately, amplification of group members' voices depended on the dynamic interplay of agency, group composition, and artist's personal and professional experiences with raising voice, designated or assumed worker role, and purpose for use of creative activity as group content. Informants repeatedly stated that the balance was seldom simple or easily maintained. The most successful artists were those that learned how to play all of the contexts of the working situation in which they found themselves.

Social work theorists have noted that agency context plays a role in how social group workers approach their work creatively. The literature suggests that the more knowledgeable a worker was about agency structure and needs, the greater possibility for using creativity in practice. This chapter has explored the concept of the creative group worker from a different perspective. Expressive artists interviewed for this study described an approach to practice rooted in creativity. In other words, the creative

tendencies, qualities, and skills were already in place and a conscious and visible aspect of the worker's repertoire.

Agency contexts did not dictate the presence or development of creative tendencies, as suggested by the social group work literature. However, a common thread was in the way in which group workers creatively managed agency contexts, and particularly the various views on group purpose. Significantly, for expressive artists, understanding the contexts within which they practiced creative group work allowed them to better balance group process and creative task in relation to achievement of group purposes. The next chapter provides a framework for examining a unique typology of arts-based group work through operationalized definitions for the performance-rooted characteristics, skills, and interventions used by expressive artists in practice.

Chapter IX: PERFORMANCE-ROOTED CHARACTERISTICS, SKILLS, AND INTERVENTIONS CONTEXTUALIZED

Overview

The performing artist utilizes a combination of personal characteristics, performance-based skills, and life experiences to build a believable, fully lived out performance. Informants provided examples from arts-based group practice that described skills and interventions rooted in performance language and experiences. They used language drawn from their work as expressive artists. Following are operationalized definitions for the performance-rooted characteristics, skills, and interventions informants used when describing their work with groups.

Performance-Rooted Characteristics of Arts-Based Group Workers

The Art of Listening

In the performing arts, listening is a fully involved process; it entails slowing down, allowing one to be affected by what is received, and responding in turn in order to have one's feelings and needs acknowledged. In both drama and movement, listening is a reciprocal process. Expressive artists listen and respond with the entire body.

The act of listening resembles and draws on elements of empathy. This is similar to the skill of tuning-in, as described in social work literature (see, for example, Northen & Kurland, 2001; Shulman, 2006; Schwartz, 1971; Stempler, 1980), also called preliminary empathy (Peterson & Sturgies, 1971). However, for expressive artists, the art of listening involved their whole selves; expressive artists described listening with their ears, their eyes, and their bodies. They employed a full-sensory approach to listening and tuned-in empathetically with fully energized presence to the vibrations of the group

members and the practice setting. This is a fundamental part of what actors do to create believable characters with given circumstances and in relation to other characters. Dancers understand that in order to work in ensemble; they also listen, receive, and respond with their whole bodies.

Performance Energy

The energy performing artists bring to their creative work utilizes both technical skill and connection to the joy of performing with and for others. Performance energy involves both skill and emotion. The performer's energetic stance exists across cultures in the performing arts (Barba & Savarese, 1991) and represents the fully embodied, emotionally engaged presence of the performer for a given creative task. For example, in Japanese Noh Theatre the performer's energy is known as ki-hai, "the profound accord (hai) of the spirit (ki)…with the body" (p. 91). Many cultures relate performance energy to a specifically physical context; performance energy is the physical manifestation of the performer's muscular and nervous power (Barba & Savarese, 1991).

Some refer to this energy as a *presence* (Chaikin, 1972). Konstantin Stanislavski, considered by many to be the founder of modern, realistic acting, described this energy as charisma or stage magnetism (Stanislavski, 2008). Stanislavski also referred to the theatre artist's *creative state*, which encompasses both the physical and emotional aspects of the performing artist. He described an inner creative state when the actor is mentally ready and an outer creative state when the actors' body is fully activated, energized, focused, and ready for creative expression. When combined, Stanislavski stated, these elements produce an energetically and emotionally present artist.

A Playful Stance

The term *play* is used broadly across the performing arts. It can describe an event or an object, as in *attending a play*, or *reading* or *performing a play*. Play is also an action, for example to *play a scene*. Performing artists use a *playing space* where they carry out creative events.

In describing child's creativity and imagination, it is usually in the context of "play" (Jennings, 1987). The childlike ability to access imagination and creativity is at the core of the expressive artist's ability to maintain a playful stance in arts-based group work. Expressive artists embody the full range of meaning that *play* suggests; they draw from the ancient roots of playing roles and play out the physical and emotional lives of others through movement and storytelling. They draw from a child's delight in the freedom of creative expression through play. Informants emphasized the importance and necessity of a playful stance in their work with groups across a wide spectrum of age, culture, and practice settings.

Empathy

The arts have long been a source for the identification and amplification of common experiences, needs, and feelings (Kaminsky, 1985a); this is a foundation for the development of empathy. In his essay, *Thoughts on the Importance of the Arts to Our Society*, Michael Chabon (2008) said, "Art increases the sense of our common humanity. The imagination of the artist is, therefore, a profoundly moral imagination: the easier it is for you to imagine walking in someone else's shoes, the more difficult it then becomes to do that person harm." Artists recognize the moral implications of tapping into imagination; it is the source for self-discovery and increased capacity to relate to others.

Particularly for actors, empathy involves placing oneself fully inside the experiences of the character (Benedetti, 1976). Through this process, the actor seeks to understand the character within the context of the character's circumstances and story. Actors must take on the feelings, experiences, and circumstances of the character as if they were their own. This process is essential to a fully resonant and believable performance (Bitel, 1999). For the performing artist, empathy relates to the idea of listening with the entire body. Actualizing empathy entails listening on a deeper level; it involves listening with the intellect, the heart, and the gut simultaneously.

Empathy is also a core component of social work practice (Keefe, 1976; Palmer, 2002). It is an important, even essential, skill in the helping relationships in groups (Bitel, 1999; Compton & Galaway, 1994; Edwards & Bess, 1998; Keefe, 1980; Konopka, 1963; Northen, 1988; Shulman, 1999) and vital to the worker's effectiveness (Rogers, 1957, 1980). Empathy is a critical component in the group worker's presentation of self (Tropp 1978; Siporin 1988.) The worker's ability to tap into and model empathy influences the helping relationship and allows for a deeper understanding of what must happen in the group. As with the development of mutual aid in the group, the role of the worker in the empathic process is vital. The worker's consistent modeling of empathy is essential to increase the capacity for empathy among group members (Garvin, 1997). However, in contrast, performance artists have a distinctive route to developing empathy, which is embedded in their experiences developing characters for performance.

Activators: Performance-Rooted Skills for Interventions

Activators, or what social group workers would label, "skills," are rooted in action for expressive artists. A core group of common activators emerged as expressive

artists talked about the art and practice of using creative activity in groups. Listening with the entire body, an empathetic response, use of humor and a playful, energized stance in the work were common among the expressive artists interviewed. Informants used this language to communicate with me, and these artists embodied these characteristics. They made conscious choices about how they translated them into skills to move the group toward a balance of group process and creative task completion. Again, these traits resembled common attributes of expressive artists use in performance.

The skills described had a performance quality to them. Activators included establishing a safe and creative play space, the use of spontaneity and flexibility in practice, and modeling behaviors and actions in the group. These were familiar to performance artists because they used aspects of them in performance. They served a mediating purpose for informants between the personal, performance-rooted characteristics they brought to the group process and their repertoire of interventions. The group's process and creative efforts came to life through those mediating skills and practical, purposeful use of performance-based interventions, such as role play, use of metaphor, ritual, physical activity, and storytelling.

Establishing a Safe, Creative Play Space

The Polish theatre maker, Jerzy Grotowski, wrote about the essential need for a safe space in which to create. His words are equally applicable to expressive arts workers in their work with groups:

> The essential problem is to give the actor the possibility of working "in safety." The work of the actor is in danger, continuously supervised and observed. One must create an atmosphere, a working system, in which the actor feels that he can do anything, and that nothing he does will be mocked, that all will be understood…Often, the moment the actor understands this, he reveals himself (Grotowski, in Wangh, 2000, p. 8).

The concept of a safe space is essential to the performing artist preparing to delve deeply into creative work. The artist must find that space in order to create meaningful work.

The concept of the play space is well known in the worlds of theatre and drama therapy. In the theatre, the physical locations where theatrical events occur are referred to as “playing spaces.” When actors appear to the audience they are “playing in the space”. The field of drama therapy draws on theatre-based definitions to understand use of the play space in therapeutic theatre work. Johnson and Lewis (2000) define play space in both metaphoric and literal terms as “the mutual agreement among all participants that what is occurring is in play, that is, pretend; it functions as the container of the imaginal realm” (p. 459).

This highlights another common term in theatre vocabulary, that of the “container” or the vessel that holds creative acts. The container may be the physical play space as described by drama therapists and theatre performers or the metaphorical creative space where artists develop their work. For the actor, crafting a performance is similar to creating a detailed group plan. Only after detailed and specific crafting is complete can the artist improvise with full confidence. Actors and informants in this study described this process as “building a container” through a diligent process of analysis and reflection. This produces a deeply internalized understanding of the material. Once the container is built, the actor can then “fly within the container,” or improvise on the material that has been so deeply internalized.

Others in the drama therapy field refer to the importance of creating a “container” or demarcated area within the larger organizational setting that allows for “creativity and spontaneity to occur within a set of clearly defined boundaries and rules” (Feldman &

Jones, 2006, p. 333). Importantly, the play space is either a concrete arrangement of furniture, or metaphorically a space determined by the group members collectively.

Modeling in Group Work Practice

The skill of modeling is familiar in social work literature and practice (see, for example, Ephross & Vassil, 2004; Frankel & Glasser, 1974; Garvin & Glasser, 1985; Northen & Kurland, 2001; Payne, 2005; Steinberg, 2004; Sundel & Sundel, 1985). Helping professionals use modeling to assist individuals and groups gain greater insight into their behaviors and actions. Activity-based group work demands a high level of participation on the part of facilitator and group members alike. Informants for this study modeled full participation in the activities asked of group members. They described the importance of stepping into the action using their own commitment to the group to model full participation in collective, creative effort. However, in social group work, practice does not involve such a high level of active participation (Goodman, personal communication, April 26, 2010).

Modeling performance-rooted characteristics and skills is a particularly important aspect of arts-based group work. Modeling itself is a form of performance; it includes performance energy, listening, a sense of play, and empathy for meaningful use as a group work skill. The skill of modeling straddles performance and group facilitation; it is both a skill and an intervention.

Spontaneity and Flexibility

Spontaneity is a key component in the performing artist's repertoire of skills (Bitel, 1999; Seligson, 2004). It asks the performer to step into the unknown and to act instinctively. However, instinct is honed through specific skills and experiences that

inform direction for spontaneous action. Spontaneity in performance work is the result of careful crafting that allows the freedom for moment-to-moment exploration within the safety and clarity of a well-crafted container; that container may be in the form of a play or dance piece.

Spontaneity and flexibility are intertwined in the performance artist's work. The artist's ability to adjust actions and behaviors spontaneously from moment to moment requires a flexibility of thought and action. Flexibility in creative expression requires fluidity with the underlying skills involved in the art form. It also demands trust in one's ability to live with ambiguity. Spontaneity and flexibility require a willingness to leap into the unknown in order to find greater clarity of meaning for the creative task at hand and more resonant creative expression.

Performance-Based Interventions: Ritual, Role Play, Metaphor, Storytelling, Physical Activity, and Improvisation

In ancient cultures, the arts served as tools for embodying rituals and myths. Ritual has an important role in both drama and movement; drama and dance have their origins in religious rituals and rites (Bailey, 2006; Jennings, 1994; Snow, 2009). Ancient religious festivals signify the birthplace of the actor and role playing. At the annual religious festival to honor the Greek god Dionysus, Thespis stepped out of the chorus to speak alone. With the use of masks to differentiate characters, he created the individual actor out of the collective (Bailey, 2006) and invented tragedy. In many parts of the world, drama and movement are still tied to ritual and healing; this process takes many forms across cultures. In this study, informants described the healing nature of theatre and movement in contemporary western cultures. The ancient roots of drama, movement,

storytelling, ritual, and role play continue to provide the same functions: to entertain, inform, educate, and heal. These manifestations of artistic expression are as relevant today as they were in the time of the original actor, Thespis, his chorus, and his audience.

In theatre, preparing and playing a role involves both physical and emotional embodiment of the character (Bailey, 2009; Stanislavksi, 1961). This work is done through a thorough understanding of the character's particular circumstances, their relationship to others in the scene or play, what they are trying to achieve, what those in the theatre describe as objectives for the character. The actor then takes on the physical and ultimately the emotional characteristics of the character. In expressive arts therapies and arts-based group work, role play uses many of the same concepts as the process of creating a role in the theatre. It provides a means for taking on the persona of another to embody feelings, needs, and issues through the safety of a distancing role.

Ritual, metaphor, and storytelling are at the root of drama and movement. Metaphor is a core component of storytelling across performing arts mediums. It allows the artist to look at something as it is but also as something larger than itself; metaphor expands one's understanding of an object or a feeling, and connects it to others in a meaningful context. Expressive artists use metaphor to examine and deepen meaning. William Shakespeare's texts provide beautiful examples of the power of metaphor to expand and deepen the meaning of the human condition. In expressive arts therapies, metaphor has much the same purpose; it is considered a powerful therapeutic tool (Homeyer & Sweeney, 2007).

Verbal and non-verbal ritual activity and improvisation are part of training performing artists to free themselves of habitual patterns of action and behavior. These

approaches help artists to connect to their own emotional responses and enhance the quality and degree of their interactions with others in the creative process; they are helpful tools in building the capacity for spontaneous creative expression and flexibility with artistic forms.

Expressive artists in this study all come from artistic backgrounds where role play, metaphor, storytelling, ritual physical activity, and improvisation were used for training and performance. These performance-rooted activities appear as interventions across the creative arts therapies and in the work of visiting artists in diverse settings. Informants described them in detail as essential interventions in their work with groups.

Summary

A fluid, cyclical process emerged as informants talked about working with groups. They described their work within a framework of group stages. However, they embraced fluidity or a flow of back and forth movement between performance-rooted characteristics of the creative group facilitator, performance-oriented skills, and a repertoire of performance-based interventions towards a balance of process and creative task completion. As artists talked about a beginning, middle, and end process for their group sessions, they also illustrated personal qualities rooted in performance experiences. These included the use of humor, a sense of playfulness, modeling performance energy and empathy, and the joy of performing with and for each other in the group. These qualities contributed to a fluid process even as expressive artists attended to the recognizable stages of group development. They also described a series of skills that balanced the performance-oriented characteristics they brought to creative group work and a repertoire of interventions for arts-based group facilitation; these action-oriented

skills were creation of a safe playing space that supported spontaneity, flexibility, and modeling behaviors and actions for group members.

Common performance-based interventions emerged in their interviews. All of the creative tools described contained elements of play that contributed to the cyclical or fluid nature of interventions. For example, arts workers described the skill of creating a safe playing space through modeling a playful and energized stance; this is rooted in performance experiences and the language of the performing arts. Many described using role play, metaphor, ritual, and storytelling as vehicles for amplifying members' voices. The balance of verbal and non-verbal activity related to group member needs, practice context, and stage of group development. Physical activity played a large role in how facilitators moved the group through stages of development, balanced process and task, and found alternative means for developing the capacity for self-expression.

The sense of play and a playful approach to group facilitation appeared throughout all group stages. In the beginning stage, a playful stance encouraged members to enter into and engage in the group process. Often, physical activity was a precursor for role playing. During the middle stage of the group's life cycle, expressive artists recounted the importance of remaining flexible in the face of conflict. Humor and play helped members manage conflicts, often through role play. Group termination frequently involved a performance-type event. During this stage, role play was one tool that helped members amplify their feelings and needs and to express them creatively in order to address the affective components of endings. The ritual of familiar physical activity helped members balance termination with creative task completion. A playful stance and flexibility with changing needs were important through all stages of group development.

The next chapter describes how workers illustrated their approaches to balancing group process and creative tasks through examples of performance-based practice skills and interventions. A typology of performance-related characteristics, skills, and interventions emerged from these narratives. Expressive artists related a number of common characteristics that they developed through their years of performance and expressive arts work. These characteristics paralleled a fully embodied process of listening and a performance energy that infused their work with groups. Expressive artists used various performance-oriented skills to amplify and model performance-rooted traits in service of group members. These performance-oriented interventions revealed the ways in which group members developed individual voice in the group setting. The following chapter presents a vivid picture of the fluid nature of a performance-based typology of skills for amplifying voice and building collective creative expression.

Chapter X: ACTION AND INTEGRATION: THE FLUID INTERPLAY OF PERFORMANCE-ROOTED TRAITS, SKILLS, AND PRACTICE INTERVENTIONS

Universal Performance-Rooted Characteristics: Listening and Performance Energy

Aspects of listening and performance energy reverberated through all of the practice examples provided by expressive artists. These two performance-rooted traits were the foundational components of practice that informed and enhanced all other performance-based skills and interventions described by informants.

Expressive artists described both performance-rooted characteristics of listening and performance energy as aspects of their performance experiences as well as components of their arts-based group work practice. For example, Cathy trained and worked as a professional actor. For her, receiving information and responding to it was a natural part of both the creative and group process. “A lot of the theater stuff is about listening, so it wasn’t really hard for me understand that concept of like, I’m just here and we’re in a scene and I’m here listening to you and then I’m gonna react to you when you’re done, that’s sort of the whole basis of the group. That’s what we do.” She described her experiences with a theatre company for teens that struggled with stuttering, listening was the key to the members’ abilities to let go of their speech issues. Listening involved more than understanding the particular youth’s speech; she wanted to take the whole person in “because so much of their daily life is, you know, if they’re talking at all, they’re being rushed, or people are finishing their sentences, or they’re in speech therapy, so they’re getting training in how to stop, and it’s just all focusing on their speech. So all we’re supposed to do is let everyone have as much time as they need and that really works. That’s all it takes.” Watching the teens in action on her first day volunteering with

the theatre company, she learned how easy it was *not* to listen to others, "It really kind of, that opened up my eyes, to just kind of how we are in general, in life. Like, so many people talk over each other and rush each other and that was really important to me. But then also, seeing how [they used] theater to express themselves, that was what first hooked me."

Others also felt that people do not really listen. Polly said, "We don't listen…and don't have any space or place where we can be heard." Storytelling enhanced Polly's ability to listen and provided the means for witnessing important life stories so others would hear, acknowledge, and honor them. She modeled listening and hearing with her entire body. Sitting with Polly during the interview felt like sitting with a living, breathing divining rod; she vibrated with focused energy and at the same time radiated a calm, fully receptive stance. For Polly and other expressive artists listening was a creative, full-bodied experience. That ability resonated with everyone interviewed for this study. "To me, it's not even a question. The most important part of the whole doggone thing is listening. It's not just telling a story. It's learning how to listen within so that the story can emerge and it also is learning how to listen without in order to receive."

The physical embodiment of listening resonated with many informants. Expressive artists modeled a stance in their groups that communicated a full presence in the group space; they focused all their senses on the activity and members' interactions. Annie said that listening related to developing "presence" in the group. She learned an important lesson from a respected community artist. It meant making a conscious choice to be present in the room to help others begin to be more present in their interactions with others but also to help them listen to and articulate their needs:

> He was reminding us to pay attention to the moment…this constant attentiveness to presence, to who was present, and every moment, do we know what's going on in our group and in our space. And I think what he does and what I do is make it the responsibility of the group, for the group to be able to make discoveries. And to also be aware and say to the group or take from the group, we aren't listening today, we aren't listening, so what do we need to do to change, do we need to take a break? Do we need to not be here today? Do we need to come back? Do we need to shake it out? Do we need to do something nonverbal? Do we need to yell and scream, do we need to run around, whatever it is, to get ourselves to a level of presence and an energy that demands listening and an awareness, in which we can take responsibility for each other and make that happen.

Others emphasized the importance of a full presence, a complete involvement as facilitator in both the process and the task. Listening was the key skill; without fully listening with the whole body, expressive artists would not know the best choice of creative tool to use to help the members move through what was going on with them in the moment that prevented full connection to the group and its collective work.

The ability to listen connected to how workers helped group members see themselves as a group. Listening also allowed expressive artists to deepen the effectiveness of the activities they chose for their groups. These included role play, use of metaphor, and physical movement. Marc modeled full presence with his artist's love of spontaneous sound and motion to make immediate connections among male inmates. He invited full participation with a warm-up activity that involved creating sound and motion in a circle. He noticed a particularly interesting sound and brought it to the group's attention. He gave an example, "I would always just kind of point my finger at [a member] a little bit…I'd be like did you notice that when [he] made that gesture it opened up this whole world of things that we haven't been discovering…Isn't that interesting how we're making our own language together." Marc listened to the group's "language" and brought it to them for consideration.

For Daniel, listening was the key to finding metaphor, a tool he relied on heavily in his theatre work with veterans in hospitals and homeless individuals in shelters. He explained the importance of listening to his work:

> Because if I can't hear what's going on, beyond words…You asked me before how I find the metaphor, that's how I find the metaphor, I think, cause when you really hear what's going on. I don't know it it's anything more complicated than that, its not easy, I don't know if I'll ever really get it, but I've seen people who do and I just think that if you listen to what's going on and discern what's going on in the groups…

Listening fed the artist and the community arts worker. Expressive artists described how they cultivated the ability to listen to others. Stories, characters, and creative ideas came from listening. For Polly, this was a reciprocal process. As she listened to group members' stories, she was able to intervene through creative activities, draw out, and strengthen the voices of those telling their stories. As members gained greater insight and found more resonant, powerful creative voices, she found her own voice strengthened, enhancing her creative life. Polly talked about the reciprocal nature of her work:

> If I'm listening, I'm fed, on some level, creatively. And a creative person expressing, telling stories, and performing, I'm always inspired. I'm never without material. Because I'm listening my ass off. So people are giving you constantly, affirming what you thought might be true. It doesn't mean that you're taking people's stories but what you're understanding is more and more about how to have confidence in your own humanity. So through listening to others it reaffirms that fact that no, it doesn't matter how much education somebody's had or how many degrees they got, basically we all want the same thing, a kind of personal liberation. A kind of individual liberation, which every child, every elder, we want attention, we want respect; we want to be loved unconditionally by somebody, somewhere.

Performance Energy

Performance energy was a positive, focused, and expanded sense of self. In their descriptions of energy in action, expressive arts workers first commanded then held space

for others to take on those qualities as well. Performance energy involved playing for and with the group through the modeling and actualization of activity.

Informants described a fluid integration of the enjoyment they received in the act of performing and the sharing a joyful experience with their groups. Janet talked about the *need* as an artist to perform and its affect on her work in community settings:

> I think that need, that love of performing or that need to perform or that form of expression, I think that extremely influences your group work. And then also that enables you to see in the group that you're facilitating, who is that role? Who's also the ham? So you get the ham on your side, all the time, you know, make sure that they're in on the group work that you're doing, it really helps to pull the group together.

She saw performance energy from two perspectives: the energy it took to work in the theatre with the energy needed to listen fully to others in the group setting. As Janet discovered, tapping into and using performance energy was closely connected to the group work skills of identifying pressing needs and working with the balance of group process and creative task completion:

> And then I think that applies to an artist as well, you know, that need to, if you're working on a production, you know, you're working on this huge production and this need for whatever you need for that, you want to get through your run-through today, but then you've got a scene partner that just went through something very emotional and it's like how do we work together and then how do we get this all to work together? How does my energy affect how you work, how does your energy affect how I work? How can we branch out and affect how everyone's working today?

For some, the joy of performance was a shared experience. Julia said she received satisfaction from the sense of energy in performing with the group. However, she knew it was important for the group members when they found the same satisfaction she had in performance:

> Depending on how you view group work, I think, as an artist, you can view each group session as a performance with you and your ensemble, the group that's with

> you. You think of each session as you should have a goal for that session. Think of it as a performance, and these are your fellow actors. That stops you from thinking, it's all about me. And if you think of them as your fellow performers, it's more fun. Instead of like, I'm gonna go in there and I'm gonna entertain this group for an hour, you know?

Some informants talked about the importance of picking up the energy in the group and encouraging performance energy among members. Informants believed in the group's ability to sense the energy and use it to help themselves and each other. Annie told about identifying and supporting spontaneous, creative energy in a middle school group where she was a visiting artist for a limited number of sessions. She was surprised by the administration's assumptions about the children and her ability as a facilitator to harness their collective energy:

> [The staff commented] It's an interesting day to be starting, there's a lot going on, there's a lot of energy and they weren't trying to scare or threaten me or do anything like that, I guess they were just trying to prepare me. And I just sort of looked at them, and I smiled and I was just like, you know, isn't that the best place to start? So when the group is the silliest or the wildest, I think, one of my traits is that is when I get the most excited, I could be exhausted physically and I see a group that's really just like, wanting to say something, and that's manifesting itself in this seemingly chaotic energy and that's the place were I thrive.

Expressive artists described energy in immediate, active terms. For Cathy, it was a "non-technical" quality. She embodied other informants' relationship to performance energy, which she tapped into instinctually; it was an intrinsic aspect of her own personality and presence in the group. "I just always have had an abundance of energy and really like to be around other energized people, and you do that with the theatre stuff. You're always running and you know, playing, a lot of play, I like play."

Modeling in Action

Informants embodied a number of performance-based characteristics described earlier, including listening, empathy, and humor. They transformed these characteristics into activators that they could encourage in their group members. They used modeling for translating and sharing performance-oriented traits with group members. Ritual, role play, metaphor, and physical activity actualized performance characteristics in group members. As expressive artists worked from a place of fully embodied listening, empathy, and humor, they modeled those characteristics through full engagement with group members in various performance-based interventions.

Modeling was a performance-oriented skill that flowed directly out of the personal traits performance artists brought to the work, most distinctly, performance energy. Arts workers tapped into their ability to model energetic presence in the group and fluidly used modeling to present and strengthen behaviors and actions for group members. For example, expressive artists described the importance of modeling behaviors and actions that supported development of a safe play space. For Doug this meant demonstrating a willingness to make mistakes in front of others; this could expose his vulnerability. “I was quite nerve-wracked, you know, a lot of the time when I was leading. And, you know, that’s not bad to feel that way, but it’s also okay to share it, to be open about that, and to be where you’re at with that, and to make mistakes, it’s okay to make mistakes, and if you’re gonna model a person who’s okay with themselves then that’s part of that, I think.”

The idea that it was acceptable to make mistakes resonated with Julia’s teens in a small school on the eastern coast of Africa. They struggled to learn English and wanted to

impress her with their proficiency with the language. Julia understood the anxiety of appearing incompetent in the group. She used ritualized physical activity to ease concerns about mistakes and modeled a lighthearted approach to learning by asking the members to teach her pieces of their language in warm up activities. She observed that with simple counting games combined with easy physical movement "we can easily learn and they can easily learn and we're in it together kind of."

Modeling involved fully entering into and engaging the group with an energized presence. Informants described their participatory role in the group; modeling was an active, involved skill. Annie gave an example of the marriage between performance-rooted traits, skills, and interventions in her work with middle school children through the skill of modeling:

> I think there is definitely modeling of behavior, I think it's a modeling of an attitude also, we're here and let it happen and trust yourself, and I mean, the number of times I've said, "Everything you have going on, it's okay. And, and you don't know what it is, and you feel crazy," you know, and the group feels crazy, and a lot of the activities that I use right before the end, right before the break, are the ones where we're just shaking, you know, and like moving around, and letting things out, and pouring things out, and upping our energy, and doing you know really high energy things because all these other emotions are manifesting in that, in that outpouring of energy, whether you know it or not and it just feels really good to model an attitude and a behavior that is, no matter what, this is exciting. And you gotta use this energy, this energy that you don't understand but that's so packed with so many things, you know, and I think it is a skill as a facilitator to, at the end, when you're as exhausted as your group members, or as all of them combined, to demand an energy of yourself that is the culmination of all the energy you were given throughout this entire group and to say I'm here with you in this crazy dark place where we don't know where we're going next, but we're going somewhere that we hope is gonna feel really good as a group. And I can't describe the breakthrough to them, but I can be with them, you know, at the place that I do know, every time, you know, with my group, you know, before there is this developmental breakthrough of sorts.

Annie manifested a number of performance-rooted traits in her work with middle school children. She modeled those traits in an attempt to take the children along on a

creative journey and tapped into the members' needs to release emotions related to their experiences in the group as they neared the end of each session. She accomplished that task through physical activity and by modeling an energetic presence in the group. She signaled her belief in the members' abilities to express the feelings that had come up in their work together, move through those feelings, and tap into their creative voices. She engaged in a physical dialogue with the children, encouraging a sense of play and trust in each other that built on the group's ability to establish mutual support. Significantly, Annie stated that she did not know how to tell the children they could reach developmental breakthroughs but she would *be with them* fully in the process.

Modeling performance energy and commitment to the group was a skill that expressive artists utilized from the moment they stepped into the group setting. Janet modeled these characteristics for seniors. "Not like I'm a great ball of energy, but just how you walk in, how you walk in to the senior center, your group starts from that moment on and how you interact…see I think even how you interact with the larger community, the other seniors that don't get to be part of the program, but you see weekly, and how that affects when you go into your group and how you lead, I think energy is really important." She understood the role performance energy played in her work with seniors, many of whom were on medication and struggled with staying present in the group. Her ability to model energized presence helped keep the group moving toward its performance-based purpose.

The Importance of a Playful Stance

Expressive art forms provide the container for playful discovery or re-discovery of self and enhancement of self-esteem (Camilleri, 2007). Informants provided examples

of the uses of creative activity within a playful context. This promoted discovering, connecting to, and developing a sense of playfulness in each group member. Expressive artists also described the importance of tapping into their own sense of play, the joy of play in communal creative activity, and the power of humor to help move the group toward achievement of its socio-emotional and task-based purposes.

Informants repeatedly used the words “play” and “play space” when they described the work they did in groups and the settings in which they practiced. Some used actual play scripts, “playing” moments, the importance of tapping into a “playful” stance with group members, and encouraging members to find their playful sides. They drew from a variety of sources to understand the meaning of play in their work. These included experiences and actions of children and their spontaneous creativity playing together on the playground.

Informants drew on the history and practice of theatre when they described “playing moments” with group members and working in the play space to create something together. For example, Annie described the relevance of play in her work with young people and talked about the universal roots of drama as a container for play, “I think it’s where drama comes from, I think all drama, all movement, I mean it’s play. It’s really play, at the base of all of it, it’s play, you know?” Play was part of the working contract among members.

Subjects shared an approach to group work that included a playful stance and a sense of humor. They tapped into and modeled their sense of humor to address important issues in the group in a non-threatening manner, bringing a sense of playfulness to the group encounter. This was an important part of the creative experience and group process

for the artists. This allowed them to tap into the unexamined and under-developed aspects of people's lives. For example, Jack hoped to instill in his group members a sense of play and help them to respond beyond their initial impulses:

> My first response was that I'm a tease, but (*Jack laughs*), I mean, I think it is an idea of play. It's an idea of being able to approach things in a light way, in a play space as it were that allows me to help work on things that might be a little too difficult if we actually talked about the real somber fact of the matter. I'm very aware of my interactions with my staff and my clients that I care too far sometimes, but I think that this ability to, to play with things is an important part of what I bring.

Margie also exuded a sense of playfulness that was particularly helpful in her work with dementia patients. "I think the thing that informs me most at work is a sense of play…And of course play is inherent in theater and art and drama." Margie understood that theatre, art, and drama were natural conduits to the childlike qualities in all people. She embraced these connections and used them to help her group members find relief from the daily struggles associated with dementia:

> I manifest [play] in a lot in things that make me crazy like Bingo, you know, where…for example, I have a resident who has a really hard time with Bingo, she's not organized enough, the numbers are too stimulating to her, the card looks like a big mush, right. And so she looks at it and sees like, I can't imagine what she looks at it and sees, truly, but what I don't want her to look at it and see is shame, you know? And so a lot of times she sits right with my volunteer who runs it or I come over and sit with her or she'll be moving the things and she'll be looking, you know, and it's very clear that, you know, Suzy doesn't know how to play Bingo…but she's still plays, because she likes to be with the group the whole time. Which is great. And so a lot of times she'll come and she'll just move the chips or and she'll just kind of, she looked up at me once and just sort of smiled and I said, meh *(Margie shrugged her shoulders and made a tossing motion over one shoulder with her hand)*, just throw the chip out the window if you want, who cares. And she laughed and she picked one up like she, you know, in some ways it's just that moment of, for me that was instead of going over to her and saying, I understand that this might be really frustrating for you, I chose to come at it from a moment, from an angle of play, to think like what is her impulse probably, what might it be, to try to intuit what it might be, and I've seen her get really frustrated though. Through play I acknowledge that feeling, you know?

Physical Activity and Play

A number of informants discovered the playful nature of theatre and movement to help members let go of their preconceived notions of performing or having to tell their personal stories in a group setting. Marc encouraged play through physical activity with inmates. He found that theatre activities based in aspects of play helped distract group members from what they thought they were "supposed" to do with theatre. He discovered physically based theatre "releases them in a way. I mean, it's all juvenile activity, and it's meant to sort of bring you into a playful state. And I think it works, it sidetracks, it makes them feel very comfortable if they're going "ahhh!" (*Marc made a roaring sound*), you know, in a circle all together." Marc was supposed to help a group of men put on a play for fellow inmates and prison administrators. He described a scenario that could easily have made adults feel awkward, vulnerable and closed off from their creative potential. He recognized the potential obstacles and identified a common human need to return to a sense of play. To move the group toward accomplishment of a full theatre production, he used physical activity, meant to elicit laughter and connect men back to their sense of silliness and play.

A background in movement training helped group members to a deeper level of trust and ease. Movement activities were introduced as playful events across age range. With seniors, Janet discovered simple sound and movement games set a light group tone. Raina's movement and theatre background helped children enter into the group on their own terms through a playful movement exercise:

> I would bring a bunch of different pieces of fabric, from the costume shop or something, and they could pick a fabric and so I created what is a typical dance, or a typical game, freeze dance, that a lot of, you know, kids play, and you play in this movement or whatever, and I downloaded a bunch of music and one

> particular thing that worked was the soundtrack from *Lemony Snicket's A Series of Unfortunate Events*, because it jumps from super creepy and tense to silly, happy, goofy, to you know, all different types of music, and so it was easy to just play that soundtrack and I asked them to just dance, you know, listen to music and move with the music.

Sometimes expressive artists discovered that there were cultural differences between how they understood the playful aspects of theatre and how their group members saw the theatrical form. Cultural context had a major impact on how expressive artists approached the playful aspects of creative physical activity. Julia talked about the challenges involved in using physical activity with young people in a school on the eastern coast of the African continent. She discovered that physical expression in the form of ritual group activities could be extremely beneficial in partnership with other elements of play, including storytelling. However, she first had to help the group members process and find a way to honor their culturally-based hesitance with mixed gender physical contact. Julia persevered; she believed that the activities she planned could help the group in achieving its socio-emotional and performance-based purposes, but that she would have to modify the activities to fit the specific cultural needs of the members. Julia used another activating skill of modeling an activity to help group members feels safe in the container that was being created. Julia found a physical activity that played on spontaneity, a sense of fun, and mutual support to work through the group's collective anxiety with physical contact:

> We did this plate dance activity, which was very low focus but it gets them helping each other and supporting. The thing about that activity is it starts off where you're just balancing a plate and if it falls, someone picks it up and puts it back on your head. And so, it begins with something where there's not touching but there's a sense of supporting each other and doing something that includes an interaction.

Julia emphasized that while the activity was physical and demanded full participation among the members, it was not intimately physical in a way that would intimidate, embarrass, or frighten the members. She talked about the progress of the activity and the importance of focusing on the playful aspect of cooperative physical work:

> Then we start exchanging plates, so you can have it on your elbow and you exchange the plate onto someone's elbow, so there's like an object and a task that is something to achieve together. It's kind of fun cause if something drops, you all laugh, you know, and so you can be silly together. Then you remove the plates and so it just becomes a dance, so that you might be elbow to elbow but now there are no plates, there's no task, but it's more fluid. I liked that one because it could be used to create more interesting physicality in terms of a scene but I also liked it because it built supporting each other as part of the ensemble, it built not being afraid to be silly, because if you drop a plate who cares, you know?

Julia was willing to look silly, believing her group needed to find humor and a sense of play in their work of building an ensemble. She wanted to support the members' resistance to breaking social barriers. Julia said that the plate activity was one "that solved a lot of things and it did change things." She adjusted the group activity:

> The students became much more physically creative and they were much nicer to each other because there's a lot of shame in that culture too, you know and humiliation, you don't want to be silly and everyone was just having fun together. And they all did kind of look silly and then they could have their own thing for the dance, so there was just a kind of creativity. And the women and men were working together. You picked it up with whoever you were next to and so the men were putting the plates back on the women's heads and there was much more collaboration.

Like a number of others, Lisa drew on her actor training in her work with groups; this also involved getting them in touch with the playful aspects of life through physical, theatre-based activity. However, her work with inner city teens presented a different understanding of the meaning of play:

> I wanted them to let loose, and kind of be crazy because it meant that once they were at that, I think it means you're open, you know, you're ready to give and take a little more, which is my whole, you know, one of my big things with them.

> It has a lot to do with the fact that I want them to get outside of themselves, but by kind of by getting outside of themselves, they're really getting into them, you know. They're really accessing something that they don't allow themselves, or isn't asked of them, to bring about, which is a sense of play.

Ultimately, she had to learn how to understand how the group members understood "play." Lisa told a story about a particular theatre exercise she tried with her after school teen group:

> For a lot of these kids, a sense of play has to do with, sometimes really interesting and fun things, but a lot of time, the stuff that they're playing with…When I asked them to show me we were doing physical status exercises, so I'd make really basic stuff, I'd make somebody sit on the ground and I'd have somebody stand above them. Then I'd have them kneel, and then I'd have them stand, and then we'd talk about, why'd I have them do that, what does that mean? How did both people feel? And then I'd ask, I'd take it another step, I want the person standing to position yourself in a non-threatening way. But you have to stay standing. What do you change? Do you change your arms, do you change the expression on your face? And I said, now I want you to stand in a really threatening way. And I had like three circumstances where I did the exercises, where they would all go like this, like with guns. And I was like, no no no, no fake props, just how do you change your body? And they're like, well you're threatening if you have a gun. It was there were so many guns in my class that it was like, there were just certain realities that sometimes came up, that their sense of play, it wasn't heavy to them. To me it was like whoa, okay. And I think for them, the way that they made it seem, was it was still pretty funny, you know? And there was a certain level, where it was like, people get shot. I think half of my kids had gunshot stories, either like heard a gunshot or saw somebody killed or knew somebody who was killed by a gunshot.

Lisa learned about her own perceptions of play and how they were different from her group members. Ultimately, she hoped that creative exploration in a safe, positive setting would allow members to explore and then move beyond their initial impulses with self-expression:

> I wish I like knew how to explore a little better, cause I mean that's kind of why I want them to let loose and kind of play, so that they can understand that the sense of play and the sense of themselves is so far beyond the gunpoint, they can do things that are still crazy and open them up and has a lot less to do with, of course they're a product of their environment, but they can also be a product of, like, themselves.

Ritual Activity and a Safe Play Space

A ritualized physical activity if approached with humor, full engagement, and a sense of fun can alter and diffuse behaviors in the group that might otherwise overwhelm the group members or negatively affect the group's development (Bitel, 1999; Siporin, 1984). Nina employed many performance-rooted traits to provide the environment her group of third graders needed after a long day in school to dispel negative energy and alter potentially destructive behaviors:

> Well, they were very tired at 3:15, they were exhausted, and I wanted them to work for another hour and a half to two hours. So I had to think about what can I do with them? And they were talking and they were all over, so I said, OK, we're going to do an exercise, I said, because everybody's so noisy and they're all over the place, so this is what we're gonna do. One person's the garbage can and they're gonna lie like this *(Nina laughed, demonstrating the position by lying on her back with her arms and legs pointing up in the air.)* Then the rest of you, you can do it as much as you like, but only one at a time, you come up and you can dump with a sound and movement into the garbage can. So you can go eh eh eh or uh uh uh. They would come in, they would say, I want to be the garbage can! *(Nina laughs once more)* And then they would dump. It was hysterical for me *(laughs again)*, you know?

Nina reported that the group used this activity regularly to "dump" the day's cares before moving on to other activities and creative projects.

Ritual helped build safe containers for creative play and self-expression. Ritual was a performance-based intervention; it was a tangible, repeated activity used in specific stages of group development for stage-appropriate purposes. Jack talked about the beginning ritual his group created and carried out each session "where we very specifically enter the play space…we pulled out a magic curtain, we walked through the magic curtain, differentiating between real and fantasy." Jack's group became familiar with the ritual as a way to enter into a more playful space, even if for only an hour in the day. Jack combined his ability to "approach things in a light way" with the creation of a

"play space" to "work on things that might be a little too difficult if we actually talked about the real somber fact of the matter." He worked with individuals who had multiple psychological and emotional problems; many of Jack's group members were medicated. Nonetheless, his group members were able to locate their playful side. Establishing a safe space or a safe container for play was the difference between shutting down and discovering a place and a means to amplify voice. "No one's gonna really work, no one's gonna put their real stuff out there and really want to if they don't feel the comfort level. If they feel like this is work and there's some judgment going on, then it's not gonna happen, unless the judgment's from group members, then that's a different story." He knew that in order for his group members to risk being vulnerable with each other, they had to believe they had the physical and metaphoric space to do so.

In order to achieve a safe play space, Jack employed several performance-based interventions; ritual involved physical warm-up, a physical representation of the container, and the group's ritualized entrance into a constructed play space. The container they created became a place for role play where members could air and explore issues safely through role distancing.

In drama therapy, this approach is known as Developmental Transformations (DT). Jack used DT to reduce the isolation members experienced living on the streets and struggling with mental illness. Several factors were involved in Jack's decision to use DT as an intervention in his practice; these were practice setting, Jack's dual role as administrator and drama therapist, and the group composition. Ritual activity and safety of role distancing provided means to address these factors.

Ritual physical activity played a pivotal role in Marc's approach to building a safe play space with maximum security inmates. Marc was not a drama therapist. However, from his experience as a theatre artist, he recognized the value of ritual in theatre ensemble building:

> In the rehearsal we started doing this thing. (*Marc claps a repeated rhythm with his hands*) It was just a ritual that we would do a lot. I used it in the beginning to focus the group, because you know, they all come in and their lives are really complicated. So I stand up in the middle and I do this thing, which I did for many, many months. *(Marc claps continually throughout his story*) So I just started this thing, and slowly, some guy was leaning against a wall, he doesn't want to…So we're all together, so we're making this music, and then once we're all together doing this then they started improvising, they started, you know, they started beat-boxing, using their voice. And then that's almost always how we came together, that sort of ritual. It also is a moment for them where it's like, god I can just drop, what they didn't know and I think what they found in the group work is that they can drop their shit for, it's just two hours every night, that's all I got, two hours every night. They could drop it and it was like freeing. So when I did that, when we did that and they submitted to it, it meant great, I've got two hours and all I gotta do is be me in this room, like he doesn't care really so much about…that that guy got beat up, you know, he doesn't care so much about I'm seeing the parole, it's just all we gotta do is be in this room together. And then at the end of the session we would talk for just like five minutes about their lives. Each guy would share something that was going on, Slim, what's going on with you? And it was, it was actually almost always pretty emotional for them.

Marc described the culminating event for his maximum security prison project as a whirlwind of performance energy that evolved directly out of the establishment of physical ritualized activity:

> So we created it, and it was scary, and it was exciting, and it was thrilling, and I think for civilians from the outside it was like, I have no idea what's going on, this is not what I thought. And they're in the round so they're seated next to incarcerated men. So they all charged into the space with all of the adrenaline of an opening performance, you know? Eighteen huge men coming at you, surrounding you and then stomping and…it was kind of neat.

The culminating event was the result of a long process of building rituals in the group. Marc talked about how his group found performance energy and harnessed it for

their final performance event. He recalled that he “needed something that would, in the beginning, like sort of lock us in the room and that would create a big, big gust of energy.” The result was a cumulative energy that brought the men together as a cohesive group and a solid performance unit. The use of ritual physical activity served a dual purpose: it established a sense of fun and energy in the group sessions but also created a performance space and sense of shared voice for the members during a final staged event for the prison community.

Many informants used physical warm-up as invitations to join the group. Simple physical movement served as a tool for building trust. However, for many populations engagement and trust were difficult concepts to embrace. For example, working with mentally ill group members, Doug understood the vulnerability and anxiety many felt in beginnings of group encounters. He described the importance of providing a safe container both literally and figuratively through repetition of a ritual warm-up. Doug noted, “With clients who need the real boundaries and container and specificities of it, for instance with psychiatric groups, we’re often really sticking with the same types of warm-up, which includes some movement, often with music, people sharing movement.” He suggested that the ritual of simple physical expression gave members a “chance to relate to their bodies by some sort of very gentle warm-up, listening to music, moving in some way, sharing movements between people, playing a really simple kind of game that gets them connected with each other, the essential part of bringing ever one together.” Larry also worked with people with mental illness and used physical movement, even something as simple as “sticking with the same types of warm-up, which includes some movement, often with music, people sharing movement, or taking your hat and putting it

on the side" when completed in the group circle and with the group "begins to create a different sense in the room."

The challenges were different for work with children. For Raina's in-school movement workshops creating a play space involved establishing safety rules first. She established the group's norms for spontaneous creativity from the very beginning. This gave children clear direction on how to proceed and provided a container in which they could conduct creative work safely. "These are the rules, no touching, keep to yourself, no talking, and listen to the music and react with your body, and move with the music…how amazing it was to watch some of the shyest children do some of the most creative work during those moments." When asked why she thought that was the case, Raina replied, "Maybe because there wasn't an audience, peer pressure, sitting in front of them…maybe the music, because I believe music is so freeing in so many different ways, and the first part was just to be in their own world." Raina's ritualized physical warm-up helped the group establish a safe container for creative expression, established rules for how the members would work together, and honored group process over creative task completion in response to the group's stage of development. She knew that the children were not ready to think about performance; they first had to become comfortable with the space, each other, and their own creative risk taking.

Metaphor, Role Play, and the Safe Play Space

Metaphor provided a context for looking at issues and aspects of self that might otherwise be intolerable. Role play allowed group members to live the metaphors out more fully rather than recreate a scene about their own lives. For some, use of metaphor, together with theatrical and physical activities, provided a route to voicing issues that

vibrated just beneath the surface of the group's work. For example, with the psychiatric patients in Doug's group, metaphors helped group members "break the mold [of] habitual patterns…to create distance so that people can engage in the process of building the drama." As they built a drama through metaphoric representations, members gained the distance necessary to address the issues that most affected them. They were better able to face and begin to address the stereotypes that others had of them.

Metaphor served a similar purpose for other expressive artists working with people trying to manage multiple stressors. For some, the use of metaphor was a foundational component of arts-based group practice. Daniel relied heavily on metaphor in his work with psychiatric patients. "I'm always looking for the metaphor, I'm always looking for where does this story or this complaint or this problem that this person's expressing in a kind of loop, you know we get into our loops…but at some point, not always, but at some point, you see an opportunity to metaphorize that story, and to metaphorize that thing that several people are talking about in the group and bring, always trying to bring the group into that." Daniel described the interventions he and a co-facilitator used and the spontaneous role play that developed out of a metaphor for stress:

> It was just all these stresses in this guy's life that he was expressing, family and addiction and the drug dealer and, so [my co-facilitator] personified each one of them to the point that they were all screaming at him at the same time, and he got, he got loaded up and in that case it was then a matter of trying to split those feelings off so that he could identify the one, and she did a painting actually, she had them, she had them, each of those stressors, the drug dealer, even the drugs, the boss, the son, all these different things, and the guy was a painter so he was able to, he put them in positions of prominence, and I think, what I picked up on to help her, when she set it up what I think I picked up on was that he needed to prioritize them. That what was driving him crazy was they were all, and what got acted out was all of them at one point, they started out one at a time and [my co-facilitator] was touching them on the shoulders and stuff, and then she touched

> everybody on the shoulder and it was just let them go at him, and that's what we did, and so in placing the people in the picture, the actual people it was important for him to prioritize them, like who do you need to deal with first? Where's the most prominent person, if you look at the picture, who stands out? Well that's a metaphor for which one he needs to deal with first. And then he could deal with them one at a time.

These group workers drew on a number of skills to address the group member's needs: they moved spontaneously into an extended role play that involved all the members of the group in the member's specific issues of concern. They drew on metaphor and were able to tap into both the member's artistic strengths in his painting abilities, as well as their areas of stress. They provided a safe container to look at various stressors in his life and provided the group with a specific, prioritized approach to managing multiple issues. Daniel and his co-facilitator modeled empathy, performance energy, and a confidence in the group to help the individual member address and move through his concerns.

In other practice situations, playing oneself in a role play exercise would have been too overpowering for group members. In these cases, informants used a process of role distancing, drawing on metaphor to unearth members' latent issues and playing them out through the safety of fictitious characters. Jack often used role play in his drama therapy work with mentally ill substance abusers, but he used role distancing to enable one member to express a deeply held secret about himself; it also allowed the group the safe container to explore the issue from a distance. Jack described an improvised murder mystery that took place on a train:

> That one ended up being about homosexuality. The person who got murdered first was killed because they were gay. And that brought up all sorts of feelings for the group, because as we were creating characters I said, all right everyone have a secret, each character has a secret, what's your secret? And the actor, he is very, very quiet, very, almost catatonic schizophrenia. He said, "I'm a homosexual." And the whole group stopped and was like, what? Yeah, he said he was a gay priest and that was the character he created. And as the play went on, his character

> ended up dying first and everyone had all these feelings around him being gay. And he was killed because he was gay and he was having relationships with various people on the train and the guy who murdered him, he was adamant for months that he killed him because he was gay and that people who were gay should die. And so we explored that, and I was really having some…some conflicts myself cause I'm like what am I, what are we showing here? How do we go elsewhere with this? But the actor came back to group one day and said, you know, I've been thinking and I don't think the ending's right, you know, I don't think it's right that I killed him because I, I think my character killed him because my character is really gay and doesn't know how to deal with it. Both of these are guys who struggle with their homosexuality as it is and so it was just really profound. It's this funny little murder mystery but it, it's all about their stuff. You know?

The extended role play allowed the group to explore the member's issues with his sexuality within the safe container built through an improvised scenario and distanced through "roles" rather than direct confrontation of the issues at hand. Jack described the process:

> I kept him in the role and we kept asking questions around it, well do your parents know? Who knows? Why haven't you come out, afraid of people retaliating. And the group was very energized around this, asking him lots of questions about, you know, the whole process of it. After we were through with the interview I said, all right, I want to check in with people because he just brought in a theme, a topic that I know people have various thoughts about, so let's talk about it. So then we had a group discussion about homosexuality and people's feelings and thoughts about that. And I was very clear to say, and we're talking about his character, we're not talking about him, we're talking about his character. Then we had different characters, then we started relationship labeling about who he might have had a relationship with and who had he learned about.

This was a clear example of the use of activity to keep the group in process as they moved into more personally charged issues. Through the safety of a play space and distancing roles, group members were able to address issues that might otherwise have been too difficult to address directly.

Metaphor and ritualized activity as holding spaces resonated across group types and ages. For example, Lisa talked about a ritual check-in activity with her teen group

that involved use of metaphor in describing personal weather. As she explained, one teen might say that they were “cloudy with a chance of showers” while another teen would respond that they were feeling “sunny” that day. Counselors in her after school program urged Lisa to change the activity because they feared the teens “hated” the activity. Lisa persevered with the ritual:

> But the thing is they didn’t all hate it. When it was each of their turns to say their personal weather, the majority of them loved having everybody look at them, you could tell. They just liked the attention, even though what they said, “My personal weather is” or “I feel”, you know, “sunny” and then they’d giggle afterwards, there was something about the fact that they, did they do it well? Did it go around, you know, in a minute or two? No. But… it became routine as well. That’s the other thing that the [program] really lacks, is routine.

She was clear about the impacts of metaphor and ritual check-in on her teen members:

> It brings it back home, it brings it back to somewhere that’s familiar, which, depending on the day, can be really comforting, but it can also be, I think, like really validating, that they’re like oh we’re back, at this point, which we were at yesterday, which we were at the day before. And the idea of routine especially with this particular population is that their sense of routine having to do with school, or after school, is really all over the place. Well, not to mention their hormones are crazy.

Lisa knew that ritual activity provided a holding space for the teens’ often chaotic feelings and the hectic nature of their lives. The purpose of the activity was to provide the space for them to share where they were without having to reveal too much to the group.

In the Moment: Spontaneity and Flexibility

Spontaneous and flexible interventions required a fully embodied, energetic presence in the group. This required intuitive response to what was seen, heard, and felt in the moment. Spontaneity required courage, a willingness to leap into the unknown with joy and excitement. Being spontaneous demanded a sense of play and playfulness toward creative exploration and the ability to work on a hunch. For informants, the hunch

was a look from a group member or a small gesture caught out of the corner of the eye in warm-ups. It may have been the way a body moved in relation to a particular piece of music, or the choice to use a found object on the floor of the group space combined with an intuitive feeling that the group needed to explore an unspoken but present theme.

Expressive arts workers drew on performance-rooted traits in the art of spontaneous and flexible interventions, including empathetic connections to issues and feelings in the group and an ability to manage ambiguity. A number described the need to embrace the unknown and follow the flow of ideas that emerged in communal creative activity fearlessly. After that, the task for the facilitator included modeling a willingness to engage in spontaneous play and the ability to hold the space for others to participate spontaneously.

The ability to remain with ambiguity, creative work, and to encourage members in taking creative risks were important concepts that emerged in the interviews. Earlier, expressive artists described how ambiguity on the part of organizations compelled them to create innovative group content and develop purpose for group work. Expressive artists took creative risks to develop group program they believed fit the unique needs of their group members; they made spontaneous creative choices given the ambiguous nature of programming in their practice environments. Their ability to take creative risks depended on a willingness to be open to new ideas in the moment; flexibility and spontaneity were rooted in the joy of creative discovery in the moment as well as a response to the ambiguities of practice setting.

Informants used two fundamental performance-based characteristics to encourage spontaneity, flexibility, and creativity among their group members: fully embodied

listening and performance energy. The degree to which they utilized listening affected other skills such as tuning in to what was going on in the group and meeting individuals where they were in the creative and group process rather than assuming where they should be. They had to trust the art of listening, but more so, to trust in the collective intelligence of the group to inform the work that needed to occur. This intensive type of listening demanded flexibility and spontaneity even though they might have a "plan" for the session. Nina reflected on her experiences as a novice arts worker in a maximum-security prison, "I think that's a big thing, is that I took a lot of clues from them. A lot. Because I think a lot of people who work in institutions where they don't know where they are really, they know it from a book and talking to someone. They go in and they just have a plan. And the more that I listened to them, the easier it was in the give and take like in any relationship. And the fact that they were convicts didn't matter." She moved to a different level of communication with her group members, but she had to develop the capacity to listen and enter into the relationship actively through spontaneous and flexible facilitation.

For others, performance energy played a large role in their spontaneity and flexibility. For example, Janet used fully embodied listening before group sessions as a way to determine the energy levels of her senior members and offer a spontaneous plan of action for the session. "Sometimes you'll catch a little glimpse or you'll hear other people who work in the center say, oh they're really having a tough time today. And then from there you just pick up whatever you can so that you can start. You can bring your own energy, but you have to go off of their energy."

Listening in order to tap into the "language" of the group resonated with other expressive arts workers. Much like Janet, Miranda tapped into the energy and the language of her group members, as she described in her drama therapy work with psychiatric patients, a group of people who are "tapped into this very creative, brilliant, artistic world that they live in." Miranda brought her own performance energy and ability to act spontaneously in response to what she heard and observed. She put it simply, "I think we really represent a very open and welcoming stance. I think there's something about coming in and saying, great! Hello everybody and taking a minute to ourselves feel where this group is at." Miranda took the pulse of her group; she listened fully and used her ability to connect empathetically to pick up the group's energy. Only then could she decide, "well, do I want to start this group by saying, let's say our name and if we were a color today what would it be?" In these moments of spontaneous facilitation, Miranda might work off the energy of the group and choose the activity, or she might determine the members' needs to take ownership of the choices. She would ask herself, "If I feel like, ooh, I think this group may have a really good idea, let's say our name and what should we say about ourselves today, right?"

In this example, Miranda balanced group process and task through spontaneous facilitation based on her ability to listen and trust member's ability to take ownership of the content. She commented on her balancing act between process and task, "Balancing those two, the first intervention is perfectly fine if we were a color today because it still gives them the opportunity to talk about themselves. The second intervention is more like, I'm all for sharing; I trust you all as a group. I really feel like you can come up with what we're going to share about ourselves."

Trust played a large role in how expressive artists managed spontaneity with creative content while balancing group process and task. For many, the task was in trusting oneself to make a creative leap with an intervention in the moment, or as Larry said, “When I say trust, trust sounds like such a heavy word, you know, I don’t so much always mean trusting other people and I really do mean sort of trusting the moment that you’re in.” Larry’s comment implied a fully engaged role; trust meant fully entering into and engaging in the interactions taking place and as an ensemble trusting each other moment to moment. For Larry and others, this often meant trusting one’s instincts enough to discard the plan for a particular session and go with what the energy in the room indicated for the group. Julia gave an example of taking a creative leap with her group of teens. She understood the obstacles of cultural differences and language barriers, which gave her more reason to go with the energy in the room and spontaneously alter her plan to best fit the needs of her group members in the moment:

> There’s this thing that happens in the moment of where you go okay, I was planning this activity where we were going to all twist into a knot. But I noticed that this group of people, the boys sit over here and the girls sit over here and they do not touch and they are not ready to touch and it is not necessarily appropriate for them to touch and I need to rethink what I was going to do next. Yeah, and then you go to your bank of activities and you’re like okay, well we need to build some kind of ensemble and community and we need to mix the group up a bit, but in a way that is very low focus and won’t include anyone touching anyone, so what am I going to do? So it, I mean, it’s those things that are in the moment and what are the boundaries, how far are they allowed to be pushed?

Julia thought about the impact of spontaneous interventions in relation to balance of group process and group stage appropriate activity. She also knew that she must have a plan in hand in order to feel confident enough to improvise:

> You have to go in with a very solid plan, I mean, I’ll plan it out sort of last minute and then absolutely be ready to throw it away based on what’s happening in the room. And I think that’s the biggest thing, I think you can’t go in with nothing,

> you have to go in with something really solid and then go, this is working or this isn't going to work.

Julia knew that she must first understand the needs of each member and the group as a whole and then plan activity specifically to address those needs. With a clear and specific plan of action in hand based on a full understanding of the members' needs, she could then confidently improvise in the moment with the group.

Improvisation: Spontaneity and Flexibility in Action

Improvisation is a skill that many artists utilize in their creative work; many consider improvisation essential to creative development. Informants used improvisation as a form of spontaneous creativity in the group. In order to move spontaneously into an improvised moment, expressive artists first needed to tune into the vibe in the group. For example, Larry honored the improvisatory process, one that encouraged leaping into the unknown in order to find creative voice. He described how he encouraged members to take the leap into creativity together by "letting a tether go out when you think it's going [well]…I'm back to improvisation, you know, like a good director, well let's try this, go ahead, take it all the way, go, go, go, take it, I don't care how, fail, you know, like the great advice [my acting teacher] would give, I want you to fail big and all that, you know, classic stuff in theatre. It's the same kind of thing, let it out and then you know we're gonna catch it. Trust, again."

Larry drew on a number of performance characteristics and facilitative skills to encourage creative and emotional development in his groups. He worked with improvisation because he enjoyed creating stories, movement, and music with others in the moment. He trusted that he could guide the group through improvisations and encouraged his group members to believe that there was no right or wrong way to

approach spontaneous creative activity. He believed that in order to open up possibility for individual and group creative expression, a facilitator had to work spontaneously with what was right in front of them. Larry returned to the subject of trust in discussing his use of improvisation in groups and talked about the relationship between trusting one's instincts and the learned skills of improvisation and theatre training, "It comes from experience and trusting yourself in groups, trust remains like such a key word, trusting your own instincts to go, you know let's try this, maybe it's crazy but maybe it'll work."

Like a number of expressive artists, Larry capitalized on the "found object" as a source for improvisation. He described the improvisatory nature of the found object activity, "It's really just kind of taking what's there and when I say taking something in the room, I mean sometimes it's as much as, like a true improviser, using an object that's in the room for that matter too."

Larry's found object improvisation was a tangible means for balancing group process and creative task. It was a non-threatening introduction to more deeply held emotions, feelings, and memories among the participants. In this excerpt, Larry highlighted the power of the activity to elevate a particularly resonant theme or metaphor for the group:

> I think the first time I did this was with the seniors, but I've used it with kids and, you know, it's just an asset, and actually used it with another group of seniors and I'll tell you about that too. Outside the circle there was, it was either, something, it was a dolly, it was something on wheels. And I just wheeled it into the middle of the circle and said, you know, okay you have to get from, one at a time, you have to get from this side of the room to that side of the room and this is in the middle. And, you know, they look at me like what do you…? and I say well you can, however you want to do it, you can move it out of the way, you can…just get from this side of the room to that. So one person would walk around, another person would hit it with their hip and slide it over, another person pushed it forward, another person sat on it, turned around, you know, everybody did it, you know, kind of a different way. And what this opened up was a whole theme about

> obstacles or things that are in our way, shall we say…I think with kids once I actually did a thing where OK, pretend there's this body of water in front of us, how are we gonna get across it? And do a pantomime of how you do it. Do you row a boat, do you tie a string and somebody pull it, whatever. But it led to the whole theme of things that get in our way, things, people, whatever, how do you get past them? I think another, I think another obstacle than using an actual object, I think I once had like a group, had the whole group sort of get in the middle and you've got to get through the group. Like you're getting on the subway, you're getting a crowd, are you going around them, are you pushing through, are you pulling one aside and saying help me out and let's do it, you know? So anyway it led to the whole, to that as a theme and that led to stories about a time I had to overcome an obstacle. And how I did it. And, or how I got to the other side or whatever. And you know, I remember the first time I did that it really just came out of that warm up kind of, led to it, just to get them to do something physical.

Larry liked finding the object in the room, in the moment and exploring what the object could open up for the group. Larry was not a therapist but from years of observing behavior as an actor and an arts worker, he tapped into a well of unspoken issues and feelings in the group. He listened fully to the voices in the room; he picked up on the unspoken themes; he used what was right in front of him and invited the group to join in the play. He reflected on the power of the found object activity for groups with varying levels of need and challenges. For Larry, the activity was a means toward raising empathy and mutual aid in the group:

> In an indirect way it does something, well I overcame this obstacle because I went to therapy for thirty years or whatever. Or I got my friend to go beat the guy up or whatever. But it evoked stories about that and it isn't simply to evoke the story of course. It's to evoke the story that's then going to elicit something from somebody else in the group and make them go, hey wait a minute, you know, I had something like that, or wait that reminds me of and let me tell you, or you know what you could've done also, you know, and suggestions.

Spontaneous interventions and flexibility of movement between various activities depended upon the expressive artist's ability to listen fully with the whole body. Miranda talked about her own early experiences of "relating to the arts as way of expressing myself when I couldn't necessarily all the time, just with words." She internalized that

experience and manifested it in drama therapy by “working in metaphor” asking repeatedly “what are these patients going through right now?” For Miranda, it might be as simple as encouraging her group members to “get up and dance and listen to songs they love, you know? And that is gloriously therapeutic.”

Daniel listened to metaphors, too. He worried about his ability to improvise, his need to control, and his expectations about what the group should be and how he should “perform” as a group worker. He knew the importance of letting go of expectations and trusting his performance training. “Every time I go into a group I can, within certain boundaries, grasp what’s going on in them, what they need in that moment. Yeah, so I guess my hope is that I can get a sense of what’s needed in the group. And then my next hope is to know what to do with that, if you go into metaphor, what kind of metaphor? Do you think this is going to work better as a group poem, do you this is gonna work better as very structured role play, is it gonna work better as sculptures…” For Daniel and others, spontaneous and flexible choices for content were built on trusting one’s skills of listening, trusting in the joy of creative expression, trusting in the group to find their way together, and trusting the metaphor to help the group find their way.

An Empathetic Connection

Expressive artists empathized with their group members’ needs to amplify voice. For example, Raina remembered her own experiences as a child who struggled with stage fright and being a shy girl in school. “I remember right before I’d go onstage I would be so terrified I would cry and say, no I don’t want to do it, but my mom really wanted me to do it, so I would.” She remembered the feeling of sheer terror when pushed into the

limelight as she reflected on an experience with a little girl in a movement group she facilitated at a public school:

> Well, first of all, the shy kids, or maybe just, you know, the super smart kids who just like to write and read and they don't want to get up, they're scared, first of all, I empathize with them. I don't want to force them and terrify them, basically. Because forcing a child who's terrified up on to stage to say something, I mean, I had a little girl cry once, because, I, you know, I really pushed her, you can do it! I had the whole class dancing, and, you can do it! and I mean it was so overwhelming to her she just broke down, she couldn't do it. I felt terrible, I said, oh never push them to that again, you know. So I said, all you have to do is try, you know, and eventually even the shy ones would get up, but only on certain games.

Raina also described a little boy in her after school drama group who threw himself on the floor and cried when he had to present himself in front of the others. She found a special role for him as her assistant director in the group's creative project, because she empathized with the boy's terror of exposure in the group and the need to find a role he could tolerate. "To him, it was everything. And to me it just, you know, it warms your heart to know that theater can give the same confidence that you found at that age, no matter what your situation is."

Manny's youthful experiences were also similar to those of his young group members; his feelings and needs, and his choices for self-expression were not acceptable to his father. Manny had to find other ways and other places for expression. To achieve this, he drew on the support of adult figures outside his home to help him. He had experienced suppression of his creative and political voice and his ability to empathize with his group members reflected those experiences. Many supported the need in his young group members to amplify voice even if they were not polite or theatrically appropriate.

Through his empathetic connection, Manny shaped what members said into more resonant, artistically powerful, and socially acceptable statements:

> They did a sound and movement thing and one of the kids had put a pencil in his pants, so it looked like an erection, cause they were talking about [the] body changing. And he turned around and they were all cracking up, I didn't know why and then all of a sudden when he turned around, I realized. So then, you know, we sat down and talked about it. I talked to them about the audience that we were gonna have and I said, well that's fine, but how can you tell the audience that your body's changing without having to show them your erection? What's another way? And they actually had a conversation about that and how we could do that, so that it didn't become like that they did something wrong. And I told him it was great, I said, you know, that's true, cause that's something important that happens, in puberty. So I said to them, so how else can you do that without literally showing us an erection? I go because this has to be at least an R, it can't be an X. *(Manny laughed)* And they came up with these great ideas, they go, oh you can hide it with a book.

Manny took their issues, fears, and confusion seriously, but he approached the situation with empathy and humor. He transformed his ability to empathize and his sense of humor into tools in the creative process. He balanced activity with discussion to frame the issues so the boys could tolerate the subject matter.

Creative activity was central to modeling and elevating empathy among group members. Janet found empathy through simple physical warm-up exercises with seniors as she physicalized empathy:

> We use sound and then movement to express however you're feeling, and then the entire group joins in with whatever your movement was. So that if you have someone who can only move their arms, we all get into that feeling, by doing it with them again, so that the sense that you're expressing yourself, but you're not on your own expressing yourself, we'll join and support you and then everyone comes from that place of well we're just moving our arms. So it's that idea of momentarily taking on somebody else's expression, their physicality, you know, it's like a quick jump into their shoes and then jump out to your own shoes.

Storytelling and Empathy

Storytelling was an effective tool used to build empathic connections among group members. Polly used empathy building in her storytelling work with Pre-K children and used creative activity to introduce and develop the children's abilities to take in others' experiences and begin to reflect on their feelings in relation to the characters' experiences. She considered this a major step for the children in developing empathy for others. The children in her groups began by simply listening and taking in stories "like sponges. There comes a day in the process, after you've told the necessary stories, where you try to ask them what did they remember and why?" This was Polly's way of introducing the concept of empathy to the children:

> Often they remember a particular thing where Brother Rabbit did this or that. And this is a question, why do you think he did this or that? And then for the first time they are articulating the why and connecting to their own understanding of what they've understood about it and by expressing it back to you, oh Brother Rabbit fell in love, and he got in trouble he didn't know what to do, so he stole… And then they have a response to that, he stole, he did it because he didn't know what else to do. There's a different kind of, some dynamic begins to happen where they're having a kind of inner reflection. So then finding this reflection allows them to find ways to voice that connectedness to the story, and their, and some ways their empathy or their relationship to what they've heard and it begins to be not about something that someone else has told them but their own relationship to the material.

Like many others, Larry also used creative activity in a purposeful manner to build empathy in the group. Storytelling and music helped him find his way to group members and access the unique stories of their lives. It also helped them find similarities in their experiences through stories and lyrics. An accomplished musician, Larry liked to use music in his work with groups. In this case, he used young peoples' original compositions and ensemble songwriting to capture their feelings about loss. The themes emerged slowly. They began with a story told by one of their teachers about loss in her

country of origin but connected that story to their own feelings about the terrorist attacks in their city on 9/11:

> This was shortly after 9/11 probably, it was the year, I think it was the year after, and this Columbian woman teacher talked about growing up in Columbia and talked about a mountain slide, an avalanche that had happened in Columbia and, 30,000 people died, years ago. And we wrote this song and you know, at one point, one of the lyrics, one of the kids said, oh she said that 3,000 people died. And another kid kind of went, no not 3,000, 30,000. 3,000 was the, was the World Trade Center. Ahhh, God, you know, like whoa. And then we started making up this [song], cause she talked about an eagle, how she used to like to go climbing up and see an eagle in the sky, and she talked about her father dying at an early age. So one of the lines in the song was, this girl got up and she sang the first line, she went, (*Larry sings softly*) "Clara saw an eagle up in the sky". You know, and I'm recording it so I can get the melody and another kid gets up and goes, (*Larry sings once more*) "She thought she saw her father at the same time". And I'm going, what?! Not only about the line, but the melody, I pretty much sang the melody, the melody was so slightly odd and off and musical…And evocative! And so, and then it became this beautiful, opened up into this really beautiful ballad. But, you know, it was a group of kids, just like, and here I go, just like a group of homeless men, you know, just like a group of doddering old people, no. There's no such thing as any of that. They were all a group capable of fun, capable of sensitivity, capable of real feeling at nine, ten years old. What's the big surprise here? There's no big surprise here, there just has to be ways of opening it up or allowing it to open up. And when it does you go, well. You know.

Empathy was a trait that experienced arts workers brought to their work and a quality they hoped to encourage in their group members. Creative activity helped locate and develop empathy in the group. Larry incorporated listening, his own ability to empathize and model empathy, and his repertoire of creative activities to suit both the group population and the needs at hand. However, he did not stop the creative process to reflect on the emotional content generated or bring the group's attention to the empathetic connections among the children. The creative task supported the group's process; the collective creative product supported members' needs to come together over issues of loss.

In other cases, everyone in the group built the space for empathy as an integral component of the creative process and the group's efforts at building community. For Cathy's group of teen theatre makers, empathy emerged when a new member needed to find a place by sharing their own reasons for joining the company. "A lot of the kids who first come, they sort of think that's what it's about and take a minute and express themselves and everyone's like, oh cool, yeah, I have the same thing, yeah my mom would even tell me to hurry up dummy, you know? Like, people just have similar experiences, and so then, they're like, ok cool, got it, bonded, let's move on. And then they write whatever they want to write and not necessarily about their impairment." As Cathy described it, empathy among the teens had a natural, easy quality that emerged in response to the caring, open environment the facilitators built and the work the group produced together. The group's focus was on creative activity and finding collective creative voice rather than dwelling on their shared impairments:

> [The theatre group] has been the most positive and supportive group of teenagers I've ever met. I mean, you kind of sort of think about teenagers as being, you know, not caring about anything, rebellious, like, you know, over it. Guarded. They flock to it. No one gets preachy, but as soon as somebody wants to talk about that and turn focus on that, it's like, OK, this is what we're doing. And I'm here for you, and if you want me to, if you want to hear my story, I will tell you my story, and they are right there. And then, as soon as this person, whoever started it or whoever, just feels like its over, OK, put on the Beyoncé song and we'll dance, it just goes right back to being teenagers.

Summary

This chapter examined the fluid interchange between performance-rooted traits and skills used by expressive artists and the interventions they chose to actualize the activators. What became clear in their descriptions of practice is that personal traits such as performance energy and empathy were inseparable from the practice skills expressive

artists used. These included creating a safe play space, modeling behaviors and actions, and the ability to be spontaneous and flexible in the practice setting. A core group of performance-based activities supported the expressive artists' efforts to balance group process and creative task. Their personal traits, which they brought as performers to the group and the skills they used deepened the affect of activities and honored the task of balancing group process and creative effort.

Energy was an indigenous concept for a number of performance-rooted qualities and performance-oriented skills among expressive artists. The "energy" that expressive artists described involved a love of being in the group; a sense of the performer, and a desire to infuse others with that same sense. It encompassed a capacity and a need to model empathy. The theme of harnessing and helping develop energies in the group resonated with all of the expressive artists interviewed for this study. Performance-rooted characteristics supported the efforts they used to move their groups toward amplification of individual voice and collective performance energy.

A playful stance combined with a focused energy that modeled belief in the group's efforts to build something of meaning for themselves and each other. These informants listened fully to members' needs and responded empathetically to the different energies in the group. They guided individual energies toward a more focused expression of self and increased connection to others' efforts. This was an important aspect of mutual aid that was modeled through a performance-rooted trait and encouraged in group members. It also represented a dual focus on individual and group and a conscious, consistent balancing of process and task. Through the purposeful use of a repertoire of performance-based interventions in the group space, expressive artists

helped group members shape individual energies into a performance energy that benefited both the individual and the collective. Using role play, physical activity, and storytelling, for example, arts workers moved their groups from expression of personal energy to focused use of energy toward a collective, creative expression of voice.

Expressive artists demonstrated how fluidly they tapped into their own creative tendencies, the traits identified in this study as performance-rooted qualities. These characteristics were always present and influenced the ways in which informants managed practice contexts and chose activities to fit various practice considerations. Practice setting did not dictate the degree to which expressive artists were able to use themselves creatively in practice. Rather, the combination of purposeful use of personal performance-rooted traits, performance-oriented skills, and a repertoire of performance-based interventions provided a container for creative expression for everyone involved. This, in turn, presented the real possibility for balance of process and task.

Annie summed up the role of the creative group worker in a way that suited all of the expressive arts workers interviewed for this study. She asserted that a group facilitator's tasks were "to guide, to balance, to fill spaces, to be astute, to listen." She described what she felt were the unique tasks of the expressive arts worker:

> I think it's all those terms I just used, in terms of guidance and listening, respecting, trusting, modeling, modeling behavior, and I think additionally, it is, in a creative process, especially people who don't consider themselves, you know, it's different when you're working with a population of artists, you know, who consider themselves artists. I consider everyone artists, but when you're working with a population who wouldn't call themselves that there's an additional modeling, there's a motivation, there's an inspiration, there's a role, one has to fill the role and the position of really doing something, using activities, choosing activities, participating in the activities, that will very quickly reveal creativity in a person. The purpose of revealing creativity, I think that's an additional, you know, role of the facilitator in a creative process to, early on, not have just the whole group looking to you to be the artist who creates, you know? But to really

> direct, to direct and to enable, to enable them to be directors, to be self-directed, and to find their way into surprise. As soon as you get somebody to surprise themselves, then the rest is just so easy.

The following chapter moves the discussion of performance-based skills and repertoire of interventions forward to examine their roles in balancing group process and creative task.

Chapter XI: BALANCING PROCESS AND TASK

Overview

In his text on a physical approach to acting, Stephen Wangh (2000) discusses the balancing act that actors strive for in their performance work. He notes that the actor maintains balance similar to meditation, aikido, or juggling. The centering process for all these disciplines is maintained by "absorbing the energy of distractions, and including that energy into the new center. In this way, each distraction is treated not as a problem that needs to be overcome but as a source of creative energy" (p. 19). Wangh suggests that in this process *center* is constantly redefined in order to maintain balance.

In the expressive artist's work with groups, performance-rooted traits, skills, and interventions converged to balance group process and creative task. The traits, skills, and activities described in earlier chapters worked together a balance of what needed to happen among members in the group to help them actualize their purpose for group participation and what they were trying to achieve together creatively.

This concept varies from the theory of purposeful use of activity in social work groups. According Middleman, process and task become one as the group moves through its life cycle (1979). Activity elevates process; the ultimate goal is to integrate the group's task fully with its process. Middleman (1979) asserts that the group work process and the tasks involved in activity are often "inextricably meshed" (p. 7). Ultimately, in social work groups activity is used in service of the group's process. In other words, activity becomes a means toward an end. This concept is supported in later social work theory, particularly by Whitney Wright (1999) in her discussion of the therapeutic impact of purposeful activity in social work groups. She suggests that dual purposes exist in

activity groups, one that is activity-centered while the other is focused on socio-emotional growth for its members. Wright asserts that activity-based groups in social work settings can veer into activity-focused groups, thus making it difficult to discern the difference between the collective as a social work group and a class. This assertion of a dual purpose in activity groups builds on Middleman's theory of process and task integration. Like Middleman and other social work theorists, Wright's work suggests that activity primarily serves the purpose of elevating the socio-emotional purpose for the group.

This concept relates in some ways to expressive therapies where the creative task is a tool in therapeutic work. For example, drama therapists describe therapeutic theatre as "a performance-based approach which encourages the awareness, healing, and/or growth from the actors and audience" (Johnson & Lewis, 2000, p. 463). However, even with this definition, a difference is apparent between social group work and expressive arts group therapies. One the one hand, performance is equally present with therapeutic goals in the group's work. On the other hand, in expressive therapies, there may not always be a clearly defined performance based purpose for the group, but members still experience a drive toward completion of the creative act. Creative activity is the focus of the group's work together. In performance-oriented groups, activity is elevated to an equal status with socio-emotional group purpose. As in the case of therapeutic theatre, a drama therapist's goal is twofold: to provide a performance-based experience for group members and to provide a container for healing. This suggests a balance of group process and creative task rather than a blending or total merging of the two aspects in group work. As has been described by a number of informants in this study, arts-based group

work strives for a true balance of process and task; each element is equally important and equally emphasized.

Differences exist between the purposeful use of activity in social work literature and the use of creative mediums by expressive arts workers. Based on the themes that emerged from interviews with expressive arts therapists and arts workers in this study, they focus on the degree to which expressive artists address process *through* the creative activity and the emphasis they place on the activity itself; the skills they use to do that; and the emphasis on members' experience of successful completion of a communal creative task. Practice context plays a role in how they use activity and the degree to which the expressive arts worker focuses on the balance of process and task, often elevating task to meet process. Many informants elevate the performative aspect of creative group work; the creative task became both a means and an end. What happened in the group and between the members was manifest though participation in a communal creative activity.

For many groups, the balance of process and task was strengthened by the inclusion of a performance-based purpose in some form. Claire Kaplan (2001) discusses this in her examination of the use of performance in social work groups. Kaplan's concept of a three-pronged purpose for activity-based groups reflects the experiences described by expressive artists in this study. In their narratives, various performance-oriented activities supported exploration of process, primary among them storytelling and role play. Although exploration of issues was not necessarily the focus for the group members, these activities invited such exploration. Often, skill acquisition and exploration of issues led to a culminating event or performance-based purpose for the

group. Again, practice contexts played a part in the degree to which these activities opened the door for raising issues in the group and the extent to which the group took the activity to performance level. Organizations varied greatly as to how they understood the performance element of group purpose; it could also vary if external influences promoted a culminating event to support organizational needs, such as fundraising. Working within and playing the various practice contexts, expressive artists combined performance-rooted traits, skills, and interventions to draw out group process through creative activity and to find a sometimes tricky but possible balance between the two essential elements of activity-based group work.

Balancing in Action: Examples from Practice

Role Play and Storytelling to Balance Process and Task

Balancing group process and creative task was a practical assignment for expressive arts workers. Through the stages of group development, creative task was the focus, and process emerged in the doing of activity together. Particular types of activities were effective in drawing out process through all stages of group development. Role play and storytelling were particularly powerful tools in facilitating process. Cathy described how activity sparked discussion of issues that were important to the teens she worked with, “We come at it from the theater thing, so we have theater games and workshops that we do and then if that stuff comes up, we let it.” Raina utilized improvisation and role play to help teen girls work through issues they were having with each other both in and outside the group. She struggled with how to help one young woman resolve her differences with others in the group:

> I’m gonna put ‘em together, they’re gonna learn to work together. So then they get onstage, and I think they’re fairies or something, and they have lines together,

> some at the same time, some at different times, and for some reason, being put up onstage, in different characters, there's some sort of loss of inhibition or…they almost kind of forget for a second that they gotta be all tough to the other person, because they're acting and they're saying the lines, they're given boundaries. So these boundaries they have to stay within and they're forced to work together, because they're in front of people and they don't want to look bad. So she did, she did improve; her attitude got a little better, and I think her mom even said something along those lines to me, you know, and the teacher definitely did, their classroom teacher said, you know, her attitude's gotten better, I can't believe this, you know.

Raina provided a safe space for the development of process. Rather than sitting the girls down and discussing their differences, she put the issue into action. The role play activity provided a container for trying on new roles and offered a conduit for new ways to interact with peers. Raina understood that their final product was most important for the group members. She supported process within the container of scene work but always maintained a focus on moving the group toward completion of its creative endeavor, in this case the play.

Balancing group process and task was in keeping with the fluid nature of the skill set expressive artists used in their work with groups. They relied on performance energy and modeling to raise process in a non-threatening manner. They modeled an ability to move back and forth between focusing on the creative task and the process-oriented work that emerged among group members. They utilized performance-based interventions to maintain a fluid balance between issues and creative activity. Daniel described the fluidity of process and task in his work with veterans:

> What usually happens is there's a sort of discussion about, you know, what's affecting you the most right now? Is it your work relationships, is it your living relationships with your, cause the landlord/tenant is more like, they each have a different dynamic Most of the time, its family. So the activity becomes a springboard, it triggers stuff with people, and it's kind of a springboard into either discussion for the rest of the session, which can happen, if its meaningful and if people are talking to each other and not just to us Or maybe a little bit of

> discussion which then leads to a deeper exploration in role of some aspect of the discussion. It may be activity, sort of general activity, discussion, deeper exploration, discussion.

The practice of using activity to access individual and group process resonated with Miranda. When asked if she thought her groups were more process oriented or more task oriented, she replied, “In my perfect world, both, totally both.” She described a fluid balance of process and task achieved through metaphor. She relied on metaphor and remained in the metaphor with her group members to help them link their actions, in this case

> Because to put a piece of paper in someone, in front of someone and say, you know…draw yourself as a tree. And then say, great, everyone show each other their trees, that’s more just the task, right? Like, OK, everyone did it, you completed the task, you drew yourself as a tree. Fine. And I’m not, like, there’s something going on there, but it’s not said and I think that one of the most important things is, especially working with creative arts and especially, I would say, as a drama therapist, like… Let me go back. The other option is to say, draw yourself as a tree, you know, and then, in sharing it, what was it like to draw yourself as a tree? How is it to look at that image of you as a tree right now? You know, where do you get your most nourishment as a tree? And so I feel like for them to be able to link maybe some of the unconscious process they were going through as they created with the words and bring it together, that’s the work and that’s the integration, and especially as a drama therapist and I have the pleasure of working with a lot of creative arts therapists where I work, music therapists, dance therapists, expressive arts therapists, and drama therapists, is that everybody? So everybody, so, and so I think that they all, especially when they work, we’re all kind of coming from a similar place and I think that the place that drama especially comes from is like, being able to link the feeling that comes up when you’re doing the movement with the word, right? And so I guess a lot of my work in terms of process is like, allowing them to be able to, to link, like, well how was that for you?

A number of expressive artists described how storytelling as an element of play supported the fluid balance of process and creative tasks in their groups. Storytelling provided benefits for individual members and the group as an entity. Through sharing personal stories, group members explored issues of importance to them and found means

for amplifying voice. Stories sourced from real-life experiences or, depending on the practice context, fictionalized stories. Either tapped into underlying issues but remained framed in a distancing activity. Stories could be played out through role play situations as well. The combination of activities provided opportunities for in-depth exploration and deepened the impact of the communal creative activity.

Story circles were effective tools for some expressive artists. Larry described the process and impact of the story circle for a group of seniors at a local library:

> We get together a group of senior citizens from the local neighborhood, the library in the neighborhood being the focal point and the meeting place. And basically we have a story circle. The idea, the object is to share stories, reminiscence to a degree. One year in particular the focus was thematically on Brooklyn but not every, every year. And you know, you come in with themes and ideas or things come up from the group and basically we share stories, there isn't, there's sometimes some acting out of the stories a bit, but the focus is more on listening to stories and controlling the bounce back and forth that comes when one person is telling a story, another one gets an idea, there's interruption, And then we put together a book.

The story circle was also an effective medium for balancing process and task across generations. Annie used story circles with middle school children. She found the activity a powerful means of connecting members to each other and a direct link to amplification of individual voices in the group:

> I pick a starting point. It's actually really important, I think, in facilitating a story circle, to be quite specific, because then the revealing starts to take place, the surprise starts to take place, the laughter starts to take place, or the tears, or, emotion, you know, something is experienced. Facilitating a story circle, I think, is as simple as picking a topic, giving a time limit, giving some time to think about it, and then allowing people to talk. Descriptive is better, you know, than just tell me something about yourself, you know, it's like, tell me something about you that I wouldn't know from looking at you, you know, you can choose one thing, or, tell me, like, describe in great detail the feeling, you know, not just what it was, but the feeling you got from eating your favorite meal after you hadn't had it in a really long time, and just opening up, opening up the space to, to not, you know, to not ever be able to fail because every story is gonna be good if you mean it, you know, and just, in facilitating a story circle I think it's just about providing

> a structure in which one can immediately, immediately know and discover that they have something to say that will be interesting, to the group that is there, because that's why we're there. It's doesn't have to be some—and this is also a reminder, it doesn't have to be some crazy profound thing that's gonna change our lives forever, like, tell us a story about, you know, something, tell us about, you know, your favorite sporting event that you went to and why, you know, what happened there?

The simplest stories about everyday issues and events could prompt group members to a deeper understanding of self and process. For Annie, the purpose of the activity was to provide a moment for each member to discover something unique about themselves and find voice to share it with others. Annie created the play space for the activity to occur; she set specific boundaries for the group, signaling to the members that she had thought through the process and that it was safe to share their unique stories with others.

For Polly, storytelling was an essential component in the process of amplifying the voices of her group members. Her description of the storytelling process underscores the fluid balance she maintained in her group between process and task. Polly talked about "trying to get them to tell the story that they need, that's getting in the way of them moving forward." For Polly, storytelling was an active tool; it elevated process but always in the framework of the dramatic story. In Polly's group, the art of storytelling was a method for amplifying voice. "So what you want to do is try to get them to tell the story that they need to tell, that's standing in the way of what they feel is their progression as a human being, with ownership, with self-possession – moving forward in life."

Balancing Process, Task, and Group Termination

The expressive artist's ability to balance group process and task became even more important to the group during its termination stage. As group members moved toward the end of their time together, the issues that come up in the group and for each member took place against the backdrops of the tasks the group was attempting to accomplish in the time it had left.

Social group work theorists describe a series of behaviors and actions typical during termination stage in a group's development. These behaviors and actions include reflecting on and questioning the value of the group experience for the member and preparation for separation from the group through physical and emotional distancing. Behaviors and actions during endings may include flight or denial of the group's imminent termination (Kurland & Salmon, 1998; Northen & Kurland, 2001). With activity-based groups, and particularly those with a performance-based purpose, impending termination can surface a number of feelings and actions related to both termination as a group entity and impending performance. Feelings that might arise in members during termination include pressures to perform and sadness over the thought of not having a performance-outlet or play space to share one's creativity with others.

For some expressive arts workers, impending termination brought on several pressures. Julia had to produce a self-scripted play with teens learning how to speak and write English. Her task was to help members build their language skills through theatre. For Julia, the pressure in the termination stage included incorporating all of the members' ideas for the original script but also focusing on the end product. It was important to the

group, the host organization, and the local ministry of education that the group and the performance be a success:

> It's those last couple days where you're like, now we have to put something on and it's the point where I go, no we can't try that, we have to do this. And that's where it does get harder again, cause then you are, it's more task-oriented in those last couple days but, you know, closing's coming up, so, you know. And those are the moments where you have to go, I love your idea, that's great, but let's just keep it this way, let's do it this way, because it becomes less about process and more about the performance.

Balancing of process and task was ingrained in a number of the expressive artists interviewed; termination heightened the tension in balancing the two. Annie experienced a unique pressure during termination with a group. Her inclination was to focus on balancing process and task all the way through the group's life cycle. What she discovered was that the group needed to move to a performance-based focus toward the end of its work. For her, the pressure emanated from a lack of focus on the balance of process and task. She learned she had to be much more fluid; she could not induce or force process. Instead, she had to allow it to surface as the group needed, because the members were focused on their performance:

> What sort of frustrated me at sometimes during this process over the summer, and yet I realized at the end of it there would've been no other way to do it, was to not ignore the process but to just let it take place, in all of its nuance, in all of its complexity, in all of its intricacies, and focus on the task at hand. Because we had to get it done, everybody was there because they wanted to get it done, and if we spent every second trying to move through human, I don't know if you want to call it error, or maybe just like…address every single person at every single moment, we would've lost ourselves, we would've lost the play, we would've lost the group ultimately, you know? And the impact on the group was obviously the most important thing. And the group wanted to get the task done. So we had to focus on helping them get the task done.

At some point in the group's life cycle, most often as the group approached termination, a unique pressure built up in the group. For groups attempting to show off

their creative efforts in a culminating event or product, the pressure was often more intense. Both group members and facilitators experienced it. Annie talked about the pressure she felt to push into producing a product when she wanted to focus on the group's termination process. Jack and his group members at the drop-in center felt pressure to move the group into a performance focus after a relatively long period of creative exploration. "What we usually find actually is we end up throwing the final thing together, cause we end up saying, all right, we've been working on this for nine months, we need, we need a product here, we actually need to move on to something else." His therapeutic theatre group focused on creating and performing an original play. He elevated the group's performance-based purpose to meet its socio-emotional purpose. Performance preparation became a very important component in the group's balancing of process and task:

> You know, I see the performance as the plan of crisis. You know? We're giving them a plan of crisis, we're giving them a moment where you're gonna have high stress here. And so we work them through that, we say all right, we're prepping for that. We still process and of course, if someone's going, something's happening with someone then we'll stop with that process, but you know, we say, all right now it's to business. And you have to show up, you have to rehearse, we're gonna have some extra rehearsals here, here, and here. What kind of costume does your character wear? We start working on the scenery. It's very much more about, we've got something to produce, we've got people who are going to come that we're doing this for.

Jack rooted the group's anxiety in performance language and tasks. "We normalize it. We say all actors experience this. You know the anxiety you're feeling, that's normal, that's what everyone would experience doing this." He carried the balancing act between process and task all the way through the group's actual performance of original material for others in the organization. Jack described how he managed members' anxieties, related to both performance and endings:

> It's very low pressure, people can carry their scripts if they want to, you know, we set it up so that usually the whole staff, the whole cast is sitting on stage all the time. I cast myself and the interns in it as well so that if we need to coax someone along or assist someone, we can do that. So it's kind of like just another group session in front of an audience the whole time."

Despite the pressures to balance process and task during the end of the group's life, expressive artists knew that termination also suggested the possibility for growth. Julia talked about the struggles to balance what she felt the members needed with the product they were trying to produce. She still found it possible to look to process and task balance as an opportunity for the members to learn something new about themselves and each other. She continued with her story of the teens who presented a self-scripted play, "But then there's still, they're open for things like here's this shy boy who wants to just come on and do this. Am I going to worry that he didn't rehearse for the last five days? No. I said let's rehearse it a couple times, let's give him the support he needs, but have him come on and do this because, frankly, the fact that he's getting up to do this is like fantastic. And the group responds, and responded beautifully."

The group practitioner's ability to approach the balance in a fluid manner was particularly important at this stage in the group's development. At this point in the group's life, fluid interplay of performance-rooted traits, skills, and interventions were particularly important to the successful achievement of both socio-emotional and performance-based purposes. Members could experience success in their accomplishment of both purposes simultaneously. Julia talked about her belief that a "socio-emotional breakthrough" was "part of what the task should be" and that "this kind of culmination is really such a release for the group." Julia was clear that the creative tasks and the culminating theatrical event drove the group's process; the activities provided necessary

skill acquisition. Movement, ritual warm-ups, self-scripting and role play, enabled members to discover things about themselves, and achieve their socio-emotional purpose. However, the performance was equally important to the group:

> It's what we've been working together towards…I think it's so tied into the socio-emotional that if you haven't had that kind of process together and it's all been task-based, then you don't, you don't see how you could do anything else as part of that ensemble but the thing that you've just been rehearsing over and over again to be perfect…I think the only way you could have the last sort of couple days be about task is if you're going to then have another couple things that are about culminating with this process and the task. Because otherwise I think that it just kind of drops off.

For Julia the performer and Julia the expressive arts worker, the idea of a group just dropping off was not acceptable.

The concept of process and task balance was elevated through the discussion of fluid interchange between characteristics, skills, and interventions. It was at once vital to the achievement of group purpose and an ongoing task throughout the stages of group development. The focus on balance of process and task took precedence over the concept of mutual aid as an overarching goal for groups these informants described. Although these expressive arts groups provided space for development of mutual aid, it was not the central goal of the group's work. The traits, skills, and elements of play described throughout this dissertation constituted a vibrant, playful, and rich means for the important work of balancing group process and task. This tangible goal was fitting, given the nature of the work involved and the practice settings and group populations described by expressive artists.

As informants described this task through practice examples, it became clear that the skill of balancing the two aspects of group involvement related closely to amplifying voice. Expressive artists discussed how they used their relationship to performance and

play in the group to help members raise important issues and to elevate the creative process. Although this touches on the importance of the group as a system in mutual support, it highlights the role of the group as a means for finding and raising individual voice which links to the role of collective creative activity in the amplification of voice. This may require the development of the group as a system in mutual aid. As the individual members engaged in creative self-expression, they also found capacity to connect to others in the group. This process translated as mutual support, but it was a byproduct of the group purpose informants described.

The following chapter brings the discussion of a typology of skills full circle. The analysis began with expressive artists' stories of development of creative expression, search for creative expression, and how they found their voices. These experiences established the roots of a typology of skills based on very personal experiences with the development of creative self-expression. The following chapter comes full circle with a discussion of these informant's aspirations for their work – the transmission of voice to others.

Chapter XII: TRANSMISSION OF VOICE

The metaphor of *voice* emerged repeatedly in the narratives of expressive artists interviewed for this study. It appeared in their searches for creative expression. For some, voice represented freedom. For example, development of a creative voice could lead to freedom from a restrictive home life. For others, creative expression provided a means for building a new, tolerable identity. For a number of expressive artists, the opportunity to engage in creative self-expression came more easily than for others. The search for a means and a place to raise voice was the common thread. For all of the artists, development of a creative voice was a joyful, enriching experience that propelled them into careers in the arts.

For these artists voice was a metaphor for creativity and self-identity. As professionals, expressive artists used the term *voice* to describe a goal they wished for their group members. They drew on their early experiences with development and amplification of a creative voice to inform the approach to their group work. They understood and played social, political, and environmental contexts to raise voice in others. These artists modeled giving voice through movement, drama, music, and conversation. Voice as self-identity; voice as metaphor; voice as a tool; and as a goal were all components that emerged in the artists' stories about practice. Ultimately, the goal of group work for every expressive artist interviewed was to transmit voice to others. Voice was the overarching metaphor and indigenous concept for the skills and tools informants used in their work in community groups. Utilizing performance-rooted characteristics, skills, and interventions, expressive artists engaged in activity-based

group work toward development and amplification of group members' individual voices and the creation of a group voice.

Expressive artists described their active role in amplifying voice through a fully engaged presence in others' struggles to express themselves. For many, active participation in that process stemmed from the struggles they had faced as young artists. They saw their efforts mirrored in the life challenges their group members faced. Manny remembered what it was like to have his voice silenced when as a child he had to hide his art from disapproving adults. He insisted on an agreed upon vocabulary with his adolescent and teen group members so that any issue could be explored safely and fully. He was determined that his young group members' experiences with finding self-expression would be different from his own; an accepting adult figure would hear them. Together, Manny and his group members created a common vocabulary that was respectful and acceptable to everyone in the group. Rick used theatre to raise political voice as a young artist. By bringing theatre to young people, he then acted as conduit for others' expressions of important issues. He used theories and exercises from Agosto Boal's *Theatre of the Oppressed* (2000) to bring group members' issues to the surface. Rick reminisced that the young people he worked with in a local community center "embraced a sense that they were being seen by someone who they felt had not seen them before." He understood the social, cultural, and economic obstacles his group members faced in developing their identities within their community. His experiences were different from because as a child, he had permission from adult figures in his life to explore his creative interests and his political and social beliefs. He recognized the

importance of providing a supportive, energized presence. Rick touched on the role he believed artists played in amplifying voice:

> There's no way for young people to feel like their voices can be heard and to meet artists who say, well, okay, no one may hear what you say, you may be right about that, no one may be listening. But that doesn't mean that you can't express yourself, that doesn't mean that you can't actually formulate and articulate a view of the world and a view of your own experience. I think that's something that is pretty unique to the interface between young people and artists.

Performance-based interventions were ready tools to amplify group member's voices. Among them, storytelling and theatre activities worked particularly well with young people. Manny used improvisation to help adolescent boys and girls explore and voice their feelings about negotiating the tumultuous terrain of puberty. He drew on his experiences with theatre to find a vocabulary of his own. Manny understood that adolescents often had conflicted feelings and they needed a way to actualize their creative potential. Rick used street theatre, improvisation, and self-scripting to help his teen theatre makers express their rage, fear, and frustration with gang warfare and social alienation.

Lisa described how no one urged her group of teen theatre-makers to tell their own stories. She recounted observing to the group, "Nobody really talks about your story, and even if they talk about, like, you know the story of, in quotes, of young American teenagers, urban youth, your story is your story." She recognized how easy it was for others to dictate one's story and how important it was for the teens in her group to declare their own version. She believed if a supportive adult encouraged teens to find their voices, they would have stories to tell. She used ritual warm ups, improvisation, writing exercises, and role play to move the teens toward expression of their unique stories. She drew on her own experiences with the freeing power of group ritual and theatre activity

to do so. In another strategy to promote adolescent voice, Cathy's teen theatre group wrote their own material. As Cathy noted, the group tried to "spend more time just brainstorming, just talking about the whole picture." In the effort to amplify voice among teens stigmatized by speech impairments, Cathy and her fellow expressive arts workers asked the essential questions:

> What kind of a play do you want to write? What do you want the audience to go away with? What do you have to say? We've given you a place, so trust yourselves, and you do it wonderfully. But what else? What else is there? What do you actually want to say? Do you want to send a message? Do you want the audience to just go away thinking a particular thing or having a particular feeling? So let's start with that.

A number of informants experienced silencing as young artists; this led many to recognize the effects of silencing on their group members. Elements of play became the microphones for raising those voices, whether members were stigmatized teens, adolescents struggling to find words, or seniors silenced by disease and age. Margie relied heavily on storytelling as a vehicle for turning up the volume, helping the voices to be heard. She clarified that her work with seniors was "really about creating a new story, and it's amazing to see what comes out." Margie talked about how the silencing process affected the seniors in her group and why she used storytelling as a corrective:

> I just love the projective device of story, I think it's such a wonderful way for people to express themselves, and I'm so interested in ways for expression for this population that is so silenced, you know. They're so silenced. Dementia silences you; they're silenced on so many levels, like societally the elderly are silenced, especially if you have dementia. Within my community in many ways they're silenced. We're up on the third floor, on one end, we're not on the first floor, in the hub of the activity and then, you know their bodies are silencing them because they can't get their thoughts out all the time. Their families, it's a really multi-level thing, so I love that this gives such voice.

Stories needed to be told because they brought meaning to individual experience; stories amplified those experiences and moved them from internalized, solitary ones to

those that other group members could hear and accept. Larry noted that the purpose of his storytelling circle with seniors was to listen to the stories being told, "stories that have to do with their history and their lives." Each week, the seniors in Larry's group met to talk about the events that had given meaning to their lives. His joy of storytelling and performance transformed the weekly event to something greater for the members involved; they could perform their stories for each other and in doing so, amplify their voices. Telling stories in the groups served as witness and provided the opportunity for release, relief, justice, and acknowledgement of the value of one's experiences.

Storytelling was an effective tool for amplifying individual voice but it was also a means for raising the issues and character of the community. For Polly, storytelling had a magnified role. "Not only are they telling the stories that need to be told for themselves, but they're telling the stories that their community needs to hear or these kids need to hear. They're telling the story that needs not only to be told, but to be heard by a larger population." Polly told the story of a workshop she held with seniors and the power of the stories that emerged when she asked one simple question of the group, "what is the happiest day of your life?"

> We all went around, and then this man, this elder man told this story about the happiest day of his life was when he was about six years old and he was with his father at a picnic. And at this picnic there was a whole bunch of men and they were all, there was a barbeque and all kinds of treats to eat, but, and all the men had on white aprons that came down over their shoes. He continued to tell the story of how his father lifted him up, put him on his shoulders, and how blue the sky was and he looked up and everything, and in front of the whole group, with all of us listening, as he told the story progressively, we all discovered together, including him, that he was at a lynching. That was the happiest day of his life with his dad. And he came, as he told it, it was revealed, because it was just a picnic, for him it was just a picnic. But then in the telling of it, in the telling of it, it became, it unfolded in front of all of us, that he was at a lynching where a black man was killed and burned. And, but all he remembered essentially was being

> connected to his dad and what a great day it was, being one of the men, being one of the guys. And he wasn't the only child that was there.

Polly, like the group members, found meaning in his story; it resonated with her early memories of racism and hatred and hearing about racist experiences as a child. She was able to integrate member's stories into her own understanding of the world. Her ability to do that was because of her capacity for empathy, the performer's need to tell the story, and her understanding that this particular element of play could produce in other's lives:

> And then when he tells that story, then it triggers the stories we all have, like the time my grandfather told me he wanted to buy a Coca-Cola in one of those little Southern places, and when he passed the table there was a group of men standing around, and there was an elder black man in the middle of them, but he went to the counter, got what he needed, and he had been told never to look or pay attention to things like that, but as he was leaving he looked back and he saw that they were making this man eat a bag of peanuts, hulls and all. And it triggered all these stories; it triggered all these stories that nobody had ever told to anybody. And it started off with what was the happiest day in your life. And it ended with those stories.

Polly knew that he could tell his story without shame because of the way she had framed the activity. She had created a safe space to play and participated fully in the event with her own story. She knew that the group's ability to tolerate the man's story "came through the listening, the quality of the listening." The event had an effect on the group. "You know, and we cried, and we laughed, and but it was needed, and that was the story that had to be told. And he came, he came from a very censored place, but then when he realized what it was all about, he discovered and he was crying and everything, right there, it was happening to him right there and we were all witnessing it."

Storytelling provided the container for a safe exploration of terrible truths in the group members' lives. It also provided the place for others to become witnesses rather than judges. Polly found that individual group members' efforts to amplify voice in turn

amplified the voice of the community they shared. Creative acts in the group reverberated into the community and served as a voice for the collective. Storytelling with her group of seniors was “always like throwing a pebble into a pond, it always has this kind of rippling effect.” In each case, these arts workers and others interviewed for this study drew from their own lives, connections to performance, and their belief in the group as a means for exploring self-expression. They elevated process and focused on task in an effort to help members identify, develop, and use their voices.

Expressive artists defined voice in relation to the work they did everyday in arts-based groups. These definitions spoke to their desire to transmit voice to those with whom they worked. The practice contexts varied and the needs of the group members were diverse. However, a common thread was the need group members had for others to hear them in a meaningful way. For some, like Janet, amplifying voice was both an individual effort and a collective achievement. Others described voice in physical and visual terms. For Polly, voice rippled out like the waves in a pond, affecting the individual and the community. Many described voice as the telling of one’s story.

The narrative interviews represented stories told. Expressive artists began with their own stories. By sharing their unique experiences, they provided a context for understanding the power of and the need for amplification of voice. They revealed a common set of traits that provided a foundation for the activating skills they used to amplify voice in others. The activators they used in turn supported interventions they chose to help group members find joy and relief in creative expression. Similar to their own early experiences, the group members’ experiences with finding creative self-expression were personal, individual acts that needed expression through the collective.

In this respect, mutual aid was possible. However, mutual aid was not an end goal for the group, nor did expressive artists describe the process as one that would bring about a system of mutual aid. Instead, mutual aid was a byproduct of individual creative acts reflected in and supported by the group's witnessing each other's creative exploration. This was the balancing of group process and task in action. Through performance-based activities, group members found meaning in their own and each other's stories; this experience was universal, regardless of the groups they described. It was the expressive artist's conscious and intuitive balancing of performance-rooted traits, skills, and interventions that group members found the courage and means for giving voice.

Chapter XIII: SUMMARY OF THE FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

Introduction

Aspects of mutual aid in groups occur across fields of practice, including the expressive therapies and arts based group work. Despite literature suggesting challenges to the implementation of mutual aid based arts groups in social work, a body of empirical evidence exists on the use and benefits of the arts in working with groups across social science disciplines, including the field of social work.

This study set out to examine aspects of group work practice in response to the challenges to mutual aid based group work cited in the social work literature. This study focused on the skills and traits used by expressive arts practitioners to explore the ways in which they understood and utilized performance-based activities in groups. A number of questions surfaced: Were there skills unique to the work practiced by those who utilize the arts in groups that can benefit the field of social group work? Did expressive artists recognize and develop mutual aid in their work with groups? Did they consider mutual aid an important component of group development? The study also examined expressive artists' understanding of the balance of group process and task in arts-based group work as it relates to the development of mutual aid in groups. It addressed the following question: Could those outside the field of social work provide insight into mutual aid based group work and the balance of group process and task through their descriptions and use of expressive activity with groups?

The purpose of this study was to explore whether or not those outside the field of social group work experienced the same challenges to development of mutual aid in groups and to what degree the use of purposeful creative activity affected the

development of the group as a system in mutual aid. Through interviews with a sample of expressive arts group practitioners, this study sought to identify the skills used by expressive artists to determine whether those skills had a significant impact on group dynamics, specifically on the balance of group process and task and the development of the group as a system in mutual aid.

Discussion of the Findings

This study proposed to examine aspects of mutual aid in arts-based groups and the skills used by expressive artists in the actualization of mutual aid in groups. The study evolved into something much more rich and nuanced; it became an exploration of the traits, skills, and interventions involved in amplifying individual voices through collective creative expression. Expressive artists' conscious efforts at balancing group process and creative task spoke to an action-oriented approach to mutual aid. Aspects of mutual aid became evident in expressive artists' practice. However, the focus of the study moved from examination of expressive artists' identification of mutual aid and the skills used to develop mutual aid in the group. What emerged was a typology of facilitative skills unique to the work of expressive artists in arts-based group work. This typology reflected a focus on performance-rooted traits, facilitative skills, and interventions that resembled aspects of the interactional or mutual aid approach to group work but moved beyond that model to address the unique aspect of creative arts in groups.

Comparison of Skill Sets

This study provided a theoretical framework for examining mutual aid based group work based on the interactional model of social group work. In a review of the literature on social group work theory, certain concepts and skills were identified in the

interactional approach that were also identified in the literature on expressive arts therapies. Those concepts were rooted in dynamics of mutual aid, including development of group cohesion and empathy, problem solving in the group, and the role of the worker in the group. Given the similarities in approaches between the interactional approach and various arts-based approaches to group work as detailed in the literature, the interactional approach seemed the best "fit" for examining the skills expressive artists use in arts-based group work practice.

The interactional model describes facilitator skills in a linear, stage-based format. This structure was helpful in delineating the differential use of skills in specific stages of group development as described by social work theorists; Appendix 11 provides a visual overview of the skills identified in the interactional approach through each stage of group development. A number of the skills and tasks identified in the interactional approach corresponded to those practiced by expressive artists in their work. However, as the typology of arts-based skills suggests, these skills are expanded through performance-rooted approaches to working with groups.

In the beginning phase of work, expressive artists talked about the necessity of a clear purpose for the group. This task is also pivotal to establishment of the group as a system in mutual aid in social group work. However, study participants reported purpose as an expanded concept. They talked about the task of juggling dual purposes, attending to the group's socio-emotional purpose and task-based purpose simultaneously. In this respect, expressive artists demonstrated a working understanding of the balance of group process and task. Articulation of simultaneous purposes demanded an ability to find an ongoing balance between the two. For some, performance was an important aspect of the

process and task balance; the group needed a culminating event to mark completion of its work. For others, performance took on a different meaning; achievement of a performance-based purpose related directly to practice contexts, including agency setting, member composition and needs, and purpose for creative activity in the group structure. Regardless of the degree of focus on performance purpose, the facilitator's conscious use of creative tasks and the ability to engage the group in focusing on those tasks remained an essential component of the work. This approach differed from that noted in social work literature of fluctuating purpose and the concept of task in service of process.

Expressive artists reported an ability to work "under the radar" in order to accomplish the purposes they had established with their groups. This position suggested opportunity as well as unique challenges. Artists reported struggles defining a role and a formal presence in host organizations, a factor that had an impact on achievement of group plans and goals. The degree to which expressive artists were able to actualize group purposes depended on several agency contexts, including the artist's assigned or assumed role in the organization. The freelance worker juggled an often ill-defined role and the uncertainty of part-time work with a freedom to create a socio-emotional and performance-based purpose with their groups that fit the unique needs of the members. At the other end of the spectrum, full-time arts therapists described more freedom to create creative program given their formal role as expert in creative therapies.

Other tasks associated with early stages of social work group development resonated with expressive artists interviewed for this study, including contracting with the group, inviting full participation, and establishing an environment conducive to group development. However, expressive artists described these tasks through physical action

rather than verbal interaction. Arts workers described physicalized ritual to build a working contract with the group, to invite members to join fully in the group process and creative task, and to help establish a container within which the group could move toward achievement of its socio-emotional and performance-based purposes.

Performance-based interventions served various purposes throughout the stages of group development. They were a means for introducing a group to its performance-based purpose and served to raise process throughout the life cycle of the group. Although study participants described these skills in relation to beginning stage of group development, they appeared throughout other stages of the group's life cycle and exemplified the fluid nature of the skill set used by expressive artists in their group work. This weaving of stage-based skills with performance-based interventions in a fluid, iterative manner rather than the linear one suggested by the interactional model is at the root of the typology developed in this study.

The middle or work phase in groups described in the interactional approach is a point when group members display more commitment to the group and invest more fully in the group's movement toward achievement of its purpose. Consequently, middle phase is also a time of conflict among members as they establish their roles in the group; members can also engage in conflict with the group worker. According to the interactional model, major facilitative tasks at this stage include confronting issues, reaching for empathic connections, and reporting one's own feelings. These tasks and related skills were similar to those expressive artists described. However, performance-based interventions moved the group through conflicts and helped members make empathic connections. Expressive artists reached for empathy through role play,

storytelling and metaphor, as described in a number of practice examples in previous chapters. Expressive artists used a repertoire of performance-rooted traits and skills that physicalized and energized the skill of *reporting one's own feelings* to help group members work through issues. Fully-embodied listening, the use of performance energy to model a belief in the power of individual and collective creative effort to work through issues, spontaneity and flexibility, humor and play were all ways of accessing and using self in service of the group.

The tasks and skills related to termination stage in the interactional model include addressing feelings and behaviors associated with endings. Expressive artists described a physically engaged, task-focused approach to addressing issues around termination. Again, physically-based activity was cited as a tool in rooting the group to its past, present, and impending termination. For those groups that focused on a performance-based purpose, the pressures to perform added a unique dynamic to the process of closure. Performance also offered the possibility for new physicalized, ritualized, and symbolic ways to address issues of termination. Performance-rooted traits and skills helped arts workers move the group through the process of termination while simultaneously addressing the pressing need for creative task completion.

Most significantly, the interactional model provides a linear skill set that had some practical application for expressive artists working in groups. However, although social group work promotes a number of skills and tasks similar to those used by expressive artists in their work with groups, core differences in approaches surfaced as expressive artists described both the skills they used in practice and the ways in which they used them. Expressive artists talked about an approach to arts-based group work that

was considerably more expansive and fluid and did not fit neatly into the framework suggested by social work theorists. The fluid, cyclical quality of expressive artists' skills, their vibrant, performative approaches to practice, and the application of traits and skills to interventions revealed an expanded concept of group facilitation; it resonated with a performance-oriented typology for arts-based group work.

Aspects of the Creative Worker, the Worker's Role, and Agency Context

The role of the group worker was central to this study. Preliminary findings suggest that the role of the expressive arts worker regarding agency context influenced the degree to which artists could successfully balance group process and task and actualize socio-emotional and performance-based purposes in their groups. Practice contexts played a large role in how creatively expressive arts workers applied their skills to balance group process and creative task. The most successful practitioners were those who knew how to play creatively within all of the practice contexts to their advantage to address the needs of their members and the purpose for their groups.

The interactional model described a specific context for the role of the worker in the group. According to the model, the worker's primary role was as a guide in the group's movement toward mutual aid. The worker remains outside of the group in this model, who acts as the key agent in the development of mutual aid. For informants in this study, mutual aid was never a focus in practice examples. Rather, they described a dual role as artist and arts worker or therapist. This dual identification assisted in the conscious, ongoing work of balancing group process and creative task, which addressed the development of mutual aid indirectly. It was clearly not a primary goal for their groups. Expressive artists described a reciprocal nature to their role as group facilitator;

they both gave and received creative stimulation. This stood in sharp contrast to the role for social group workers using any theoretical models; they remain well outside the life of the group. Here study participants reported an expanded role in the group; they were fully engaged in the process and tasks of the group and fully integrated into the activity and energy of the group. The performance-rooted traits and skill set outlined in this study assisted this dual identification and engaged stance.

Many qualities of the creative social worker identified in social work literature were evident in the expressive arts workers interviewed for this study. Social work theorists suggest that the creative practitioner embraced cultural and intellectual stimulation to enrich their approach to practice. This was the case with expressive artists who straddled performance careers with group work practice. Creative qualities of social work practitioners identified in the social work literature included the ability to apply new approaches to old problems and issues and to adapt existing tools to create new opportunities. Both creative social workers and expressive arts workers remained open to new ideas and tolerated ambiguity and uncertainty.

A Typology of Skills for Arts-Based Group Workers

In this study, a typology of skills emerged specific to arts-based group work that contrasted with the linear model as described in social group work literature. The set of skills that emerged were not specifically group-stage specific, although study participants provided examples of differential use of skills and interventions in relation to group members' needs at particular stages of their work together. The skills expressive artists used were activators and fluid in nature; they described a performance-oriented approach to the group encounter, fully engaging facilitators' performance skills, and encouraging

the development of various performance-oriented skills in group members as means for amplifying individual voice. If this raised mutual support among members, it was not by design.

Core concepts emerged in the development of a typology of facilitator skills. The skill of fully embodied listening was a central theme among expressive artists in their discussions of skills, traits, and activities used in arts-based group work. Listening was a skill identified in both social work literature and expressive artists' discussions of practice. Social work theorists describe the essential skills of fully listening and tuning in as important to mutual aid based group work. This idea of fully listening resonated with expressive artists. However, for arts workers, listening was a fully embodied skill that emerged from their own experiences with developing a creative identity. Listening was at the core of everything expressive artists did in their work. Listening with the whole body related closely to the ability to model behavior, including empathy and mutual support. Listening was a physically active, integrated skill that demanded a deeper engagement in both group process and the task at hand. This concept expands well beyond the notions of tuning-in and focused listening described in the social work literature.

Performance energy combined the personal creative journeys, professional talents, and personal character traits that uniquely identified the arts-based group worker. Most expressive artists interviewed for this study considered themselves simultaneously artists and arts-based workers. For those who were trained in expressive arts therapies, psychotherapeutic practice was an "art." In keeping with the fluid nature of the skill set they used, performance skill combined fluidly with group worker skill to produce a unique approach to group facilitation.

Ultimately, the linear nature of the interactional approach to examining facilitator skills could not contain the fluid, iterative, and dynamic nature of the performance-based skill set used by expressive artists in arts-based groups. Although aspects of the approaches were similar, expressive artists did not discuss their work in a linear progression. They described a back and forth quality to the skills they used, introducing, building on, and returning to skills even as they moved toward culmination of creative work. Expressive artists transmitted performance-rooted traits to groups through performance-based skills, played out through performance-oriented interventions; all aspects of the typology worked in fluid interchange. Expressive artists described a fully active physical presence in their groups' activities and interactions. As many artists remarked over the course of this study, they "entered the play space" *with* the group. This suggests a deviation from the more verbal and worker distanced stance to group discussion and activity assumed in the social work literature.

The Question of Mutual Aid

This study began with questions about mutual aid in group work practice. At its core this study sought to explore to what degree expressive artists recognized and attempted to develop mutual aid in their groups through the use of creative activity. Aspects of mutual aid based group work appeared in expressive artists' discussions of their groups and the goals they hoped to achieve in their work with groups. For example, modeling of empathy and development of empathy in and between group members was evident in the stories told of use of role play and storytelling as elements of play. However, the skills used and the containers chosen were not implemented specifically for building the group as a system of mutual aid. Expressive artists did not talk explicitly of

mutual aid as a concept or a goal for the group; rather creative activity became the tool for the purpose of elevating individual voice in a collective creative environment. With that focus, the expressive artists drew on personal traits and skills and various mediating skills to balance the issues that came up for individuals in the group while supporting a focus on the creative task at hand. Expressive arts workers did not explicitly identify skills they used as those to develop mutual support among members. Mutual aid was a by-product of collective creative expression; it was manifest in role play and storytelling. Those particular elements of play helped actualize group process, as described repeatedly in practice examples provided by study participants. In essence, expressive artists worked with the balance of process and task in a consistent, active approach that by its nature helped develop aspects of mutual support as identified in social work literature. In doing so, they attempted to accomplish what they described as overarching purpose for arts-based group work: the amplification of individual and collective voice.

Voice

The typology of arts-based group work skills begins and ends with amplification of voice. It may be that the development and actualization of mutual aid appears through the ability of group members to discover, explore, and amplify their own creative identity and capacity for self-expression in the group setting. The search for mutual aid was at the heart of this study; it evolved into a much more complex exploration of what expressive artists do when they use arts-based activity in groups. This study did not dismiss the importance of mutual aid as a keystone of group work practice. Instead, it expanded the possibility for individual and collective growth through the group process with articulation of a typology of skills unique to arts-based group work.

This study identified challenges to group work as described in social work literature. Given the challenges to implementation of mutual aid based group work, it posed the question of what expressive artists had to offer the field. This study was exploratory in design and did not seek to generalize findings to the larger population of expressive arts workers or social group workers. However, it provides a glimpse into possibility for an expanded understanding of creativity in group work practice and a different perspective for group engagement through performance-rooted skills and interventions. It suggests a joyful way of facilitating and engaging in creative group work that moves beyond traditional models of group work.

Chapter XIV: PRACTICE AND RESEARCH IMPLICATIONS

Practice Implications

In this study, I identified issues cited in the social work literature regarding problems with mutual aid-based groups in contemporary practice. My motivation was to explore possibilities for alternative ways of thinking about and practicing group work that could enhance established methods and approaches. Initially, I hoped to explore alternative ways of addressing the challenges to mutual aid group work. The initial purpose of this study was to explore what was actually happening in groups that utilized creative activity despite or in tandem with established group work practice to imagine new ways of thinking about and working in groups.

By incorporating the experiences of a unique group of practitioners, expressive artists, I was able to discover novel ways of approaching group work. This enabled me to move beyond the exploration of mutual aid in arts-based group work, which was the original organizing rubric for the study. The result was a paradigm shift away from the linear theoretical model as proposed by the interactional approach to group work. This shift in paradigm has clear implications for the development of social group work theory and practice. Specifically, the typology of skills presented in this study suggest an expanded and highly engaged role for the worker; it supports a fluid, cyclical quality in the use of skills and interventions that moves beyond the approach provided in traditional models of social group work. Most significantly, it suggests that arts-based group worker's primary and essential task lies in the consistent balance of group process and creative task completion. Engagement around both process and task promote the

transmission of voice to group members. The purposeful use of arts-based activity supports that process.

The typology of arts-based skills non-MSW expressive arts workers identified can expand social workers' understanding and application of performance-rooted skills. For example, development of fully embodied listening skills expands on and transcends the social worker's understanding of *use of self* in service of the client or group. This in turn has the potential to influence how social group workers understand, identify, and develop the balance of process and task and its potential affect on individual and collective development of voice. When social group workers describe focused listening, they do so from a perspective outside of the members. When expressive artists described how they listened, it was with all of their senses.

The concept of *voice* was a significant aspect of this study and has implications for anti-oppression work across the field of social work. Expressive artists highlighted the importance of identifying, developing, and transmitting voice as means to challenge experiences of oppression. A performance-rooted approach to working with groups supports the development of individual and collective voice; it draws from social work's history of anti-oppression efforts and expands those efforts through the development and utilization of a skill set that both recognizes and actively addresses oppression.

In-depth interviews with expressive arts practitioners from a wide range of practice experience and training revealed a consistent typology of performance-based traits, skills, and interventions that may serve other professions that work with groups. This exploratory study marks the beginning of the development of a model for teaching arts-based practitioner skills in the use of expressive activity in groups. It may benefit

professional artists seeking ways to use their unique talents and experiences in service of community-based groups. It provides a foundation for an approach to teaching performance-based group work to a wide range of expressive artists and those who would enter the field of arts-based group work. The typology of skills developed in this study provides a strong foundation for exciting and creative group work.

Research Implications

Limitations of the Study

There were clear limitations to this study. The study sample was limited in size and not representative of a larger pool of expressive artists. As noted in a chapter on methodology, I did not seek to generalize findings to a larger population but hoped to open a door to new ways of thinking about arts-based approaches to group facilitation. Although a variety of practice settings were explored through participant interviews, it did not fully take into account the many other practice settings and group populations that participate in arts-based activities. As such, I anticipated that this study would be a first step in an ongoing exploratory process toward articulation of a typology of facilitator skills for arts-based group workers. The study would serve as the foundation of an approach to teaching and practicing arts-based group work.

Directions for Further Study

This study was an important starting point for further exploration of performance-based facilitative skills in arts-based group work. An earlier plan for data collection included observation of arts-based group facilitators in action. Issues with feasibility, noted earlier, prevented me from completing this piece of the study. Therefore, a second study will include context-specific observation of arts-based groups and follow-up

interviews with expressive artists to explore in more detail the skills they use in practice. The immediacy of events in practice settings and the interactions that happen in those setting allows the researcher to pursue an inductive, discovery-oriented process to data collection rather than rely on pre-conceptualizations of the setting or less immediate recounting of phenomena solely through the interview process or group process notes. I am also interested in pursuing an earlier research design that includes a comparative study of MSW group workers and non-MSW group workers using arts-based activities in their work to assess the degree to which purposeful creative activity impacts balance of group process and task completion in relation to theoretical or practice orientation. Of particular interest to me as a researcher and educator is the way in which social group work-based skills and interventions and performance-rooted approaches to practice may be integrated more fluidly into a comprehensive, creative approach to teaching arts-based group work.

Another area for study involves discussions with expressive arts workers and therapists from a wider range of geographic locations and practice settings. This study has provided interesting initial thoughts about performance-based group work. I welcome the opportunity to explore work in other areas, including large-scale community-generated performance projects, site-specific arts-based group work, and social action theatre projects.

There are opportunities to focus studies on specific populations as well. For example, preliminary findings suggest arts-based group work is effective in addressing a number of issues with incarcerated men and women. I am interested in exploring in more detail the arts worker's balance of group process and task in relation to agency pressures,

member needs, and facilitators' practice orientation. Prison settings would offer a context-specific arena for that exploration.

The implications for continued development of a teaching model prompt further exploration of performance-based group work skills. The possibilities are many; the potential is for a re-invigorated approach to addressing amplification of individual voice through collective creative expression.

Appendix 1:

Emailed or Mailed Request for Recommendations of Study Participant

(Date)

Dear (Academic Departmental Contact):

I am a PhD candidate in the Social Welfare Program at the Graduate Center of the City University of New York. My dissertation is a study of the skills employed by group workers who use dramatic and movement based activities with small groups. I am specifically interested in learning about the skills they utilize in the promotion of mutual aid within the group through the use of expressive arts forms.

I am wondering if you would be willing to share the attached flyer describing my study with expressive arts practitioners who might be interested in participating in this study. Participation in the study is voluntary; participants may withdraw from the study at any time without penalty. Material will be kept confidential and all participants' identities will be disguised in my dissertation or any subsequent publications. Informed consent forms will be provided for all group participants; group members will be videotaped only if they have provided consent in writing.

In the event that an expressive arts practitioner you know is interested in participating in the study, they can reach me via email at mcb12@nyu.edu. I appreciate your assistance in sharing information about my study.

Sincerely,

Mary C. Bitel, LCSW
Associate Teacher
New York University, Tisch School of the Arts

Adjunct Lecturer
Hunter College School of Social Work

Attachment

Appendix 2:

Recruitment Flyer for Potential Interview Subjects

DO YOU FACILITATE DRAMA OR MOVEMENT GROUPS?

My name is Mary Bitel and I am a doctoral student at the CUNY Graduate Center. I am conducting a study on the skills expressive arts practitioners use in group practice. I am interested in talking with group practitioners who use drama and movement-based activities in their work. Are you interested in becoming a participant in this research?

You are eligible to participate in this study if:

- You are currently or have in the past twelve months facilitated a multi-session group using drama and/or movement based activity with groups
- You have been practicing group work professionally for at least twelve months
- You are willing to participate in a 90-minute, one-to-one interview to discuss your practice experiences, skills, and background using the expressive arts in groups

If you would like to receive more information about this study, please contact me via email at mcb12@nyu.edu.

Mary C. Bitel, L.C.S.W.
PhD Student in Social Welfare, CUNY
Associate Teacher, New York University
Office: 665 Broadway, 6th floor, NY, NY 10003
email: mcb12@nyu.edu

Appendix 3:

Email Response for Potential Participants who Contact for Study

Hello (Prospective Participant's Name):

Thank you very much for contacting me regarding a study I am undertaking on group work and the arts. As (Referral Source) may have mentioned, I am a PhD candidate in the Social Welfare Program at the Graduate Center of the City University of New York. My dissertation is a study of the skills employed by group workers who use dramatic and movement based activities with small groups. I am specifically interested in learning about the skills they utilize in the promotion of mutual aid within the group through the use of expressive arts forms.

I am interested in interviewing you about your work using drama in groups and specifically in discussing the skills you use in facilitation of arts based group work.

Participation will consist of an initial interview to last no longer than 90 minutes. I will audiotape the interview with your permission and I will have an informed consent form for you to sign should you agree to meet with me. In a second phase of the study, I will be observing groups and should you be interested in continuing your participation beyond an initial interview we can discuss the possibility of including your group in the study. Please be assured that participation in the study is voluntary; you may withdraw from the study at any time. Material will be kept confidential and all participants' identities and practice settings will be disguised in my dissertation or any subsequent publications.

Are you still interested in being interviewed? If so, we can set up a convenient time and place to meet. Would you like me to give you a call? Here is how you can reach me:

Mary Bitel
PhD candidate in Social Welfare, CUNY
Office address: Tisch School of the Arts, Special Programs
665 Broadway, Room 632
New York, NY 10012
(646) 263-8011
Email: mcb12@nyu.edu

Thanks again for your interest in my study about group work and the arts. I look forward to hearing from you.

Best regards,

Mary Bitel

Appendix 4:

Telephone Response for Potential Participants who Contact for Study

Hello (Prospective Participant's Name):

Thank you very much for contacting me regarding a study I am undertaking on group work and the arts. I am a PhD candidate in the Social Welfare Program at the Graduate Center of the City University of New York. My dissertation is a study of the skills employed by group workers who use dramatic and movement based activities with small groups. I am specifically interested in learning about the skills they utilize in the promotion of mutual aid within the group through the use of expressive arts forms.

Can you tell me about your experience in expressive arts based group work? I am interested in interviewing you about your work using drama in groups and specifically in discussing the skills you use in facilitation of arts based group work.

Participation will consist of an initial interview to last no longer than 90 minutes. I will audiotape the interview with your permission and I will have an informed consent form for you to sign should you agree to meet with me. During a second phase of the study, I will be observing groups as part of my study and should you be interested in continuing your participation beyond an initial interview we can discuss the possibility of including your group in the study. Please be assured that participation in the study is voluntary; you may withdraw from the study at any time. Material will be kept confidential and all participants' identities and practice settings will be disguised in my dissertation or any subsequent publications.

Do you have any questions? Are you still interested in being interviewed?

If , "Yes,": That's terrific; let's set up a time and place to meet. I'll send you a confirmation of our meeting; what is the best way to get that to you, email or via post?

Participant name:_____

Practice Setting/Group Population:_____

Contact phone number/
address: _____

Contact email address:_____

Initial Interview Location/Date/Time:_____

If "No": Thank you for your interest; I appreciate your time in talking with me about my

study

Appendix 5:

Confirmation of Group Practitioner Participation

(Date)

Dear (Participant):

Thank you for agreeing to participate in my study on the use of dramatic and movement based activity in the promotion of mutual aid group work. I am writing to confirm our meeting for an initial interview. We have agreed to meet on DAY, DATE, TIME at PLACE.

As I mentioned in our earlier conversation, the interview should take approximately 90 minutes. With your permission, I will audiotape conversation, and I will have an informed consent form for you to sign when we meet.

I look forward to our conversation. Should you have any questions before our meeting, please feel free to contact me via email at mcb12@nyu.edu or by phone at (646) 263-8011.

Thanks again for your interest in the study!

Sincerely,

Mary C. Bitel, LCSW
Associate Teacher
New York University, Tisch School of the Arts

Adjunct Lecturer
Hunter College School of Social Work

Appendix 6:

Informed Consent Form for Interview

Mary Bitel is a PhD student in the Social Welfare program at the City University of New York Graduate Center. She is conducting a study of the skills group practitioners utilize when they employ drama and movement based activities in their work. The purpose of this study is to learn what skills expressive arts practitioners use in arts-based activity groups and what they hope to achieve through use of expressive activity in work with groups. You are being invited to participate in this study because you are a group practitioner who has used expressive arts in your practice in the past year. Eight to ten group workers will be interviewed for the study. This study is being conducted for the researcher's doctoral dissertation.

You are being asked to participate in a 90-minute interview about the skills you use in facilitating arts-based groups. You will also be asked about your interest in participating in a second phase of the study that involves observation of a group you are facilitating. Participation in this study is voluntary. Individuals will not be penalized in any way for refusal to participate. You may refuse to answer any questions you wish and you may withdraw from the study at any point without penalty. There are no known risks to participation in the study other than those encountered in daily life. There are no known benefits to participation; however you may gain satisfaction in contributing to knowledge about the use of expressive arts in groups. You will also receive a list of professional affiliations and educational referrals for your participation in the study.

Although the researcher will know your identity, the information you disclose will be kept confidential to the full extent permitted by the law. The researcher will digitally audio tape and videotape the interview with your permission and she or her trained research assistant will transcribe them. Any information that can identify you or your employer will be immediately eliminated from the transcripts. The audiotapes will be stored on the researcher's private office computer at New York University which is password protected. The digital videotapes will be stored on the researcher's personal computer which is password protected. All written materials associated with this study will be kept in a locked file cabinet in the researcher's private NYU office for three years after which they will be destroyed. No reports will contain your name, the name of your group or group members or the organization's name. Any identifying information will be disguised in written reports so you will not be identifiable as an individual. The findings of this study will be used as a part of the researcher's doctoral dissertation and may be submitted for publication in professional journals or conference presentations.

If you have any questions about this study, please contact Mary Bitel at (646) 263-8011 or her dissertation advisor, Professor Harriet Goodman at (212) 452-7113. If you have any questions regarding your rights as a participant in this study or feel you have experienced a research related injury, contact the Hunter College Office Institutional Review Board Office at (212) 650-3053.

I have read and understood the information above. The researcher has answered all the questions I have about my participation in this study. I have been given (or will be given) a copy of this form. I consent to take part in this study.

_____	_____
Signature of Participant	Date
_____	_____
Signature of Researcher	Date

Appendix 7:

Group Practitioner Audio Tape Consent

Protocol # _____

Researcher: Mary C. Bitel

Title: The Expressive Arts and Mutual Aid in Groups: A Qualitative and Observational Study

I would like to record my interview with you for my dissertation by using audio-tape. You will not be identified personally through this process. If you are willing to consent to an audio-tape interview and researcher's transcription of the audio-tape, please indicate so below.

The researcher may audio-tape my interview for the dissertation. _____

The researcher or her assistant may transcribe the audio-tape. _____

Agreement

I have read the description above and freely give my consent to have my interview recorded on audio-tape and transcribed by the researcher.

_____ _____
Signature of Participant Date

_____ _____
Signature of Researcher Date

Appendix 8:

Group Practitioner Video Tape Recording Consent Form

Protocol # 060811931

Researcher: Mary C. Bitel

Title: The Expressive Arts and Mutual Aid in Groups: A Qualitative and Observational Study

As part of this project, a video tape recording will be made of you during your participation in this research project. Please indicate below the uses of these videotapes to which you are willing to consent. This is completely voluntary and up to you. In any use of the videotapes, we will not identify you personally.

1. The videotapes can be studied by the research team for use in the research project. _____

2. The videotapes can be shown to subjects in other experiments. _____

4. The videotapes can be shown in classrooms to students. _____

5. The videotapes can be shown in public presentations to non-scientific groups. _____

Agreement

I have read the above description and give my consent for the use of videotapes as indicated above. I have you also been given a separate consent form.

Participant's Name: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Researcher's Name: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Appendix 9:

Semi-Structured Interview Guide

Following are examples of questions that will be asked of expressive arts practitioners during the initial phase of the study. Questions will be developed further through issues that emerge during early interviews.

Thank you for agreeing to be interviewed for this study. As I mentioned earlier, I am interested in learn more about the work you do with groups. Please feel free to ask me any questions as we go along.

Let me begin by asking you a few questions about your background in working with groups

Q1. How did you get involved in working with groups in the first place?

Q2. What is your background in drama/movement?

Q3. How and why did you decide to include the use of drama/movement in your work with groups?

Let me now ask you a few questions about the work you currently do with groups

Q4. Where do you practice group work?

Q5. How did you get involved with (name of agency) in the first place?

Q6. Do you work (have you worked) with other agencies prior to your work with (current agency/organization)? (Probe: do you work with other agencies currently?)

Q7. What type of group members do you work with? (e.g., children, teens, seniors) (Probe: in your other group work do you work with the same population(s)? Probe: What do you think are the needs of these kinds of group members?)

Q8. Do you have any specific training in working with groups? Tell me about it.

Q9. Do you have any specific training in drama and movement? Tell me about it. (Do you have training in drama/movement therapies?)

I'd like to turn now to what you do with your groups

Q10. Why does your group meet? (Probe: group purpose and individual/group goals)

Q11. What do you hope will happen in your group?
(Probe: What do you think you do to lead to this happening?)

Q12. Why do you use drama/movement with this group?
(Probe: do you ever use drama/movement to explore conflicts? If 'yes': what kinds of conflicts – and what kinds of activities do you use?
Probe: do you ever use drama/movement to build cohesion in the group or build communication among members? Can you share a practice example?)

Q13. Is there anything else you do besides drama and movement to achieve the goals and purpose of the group as you have described them?
(e.g., do you have discussions? Other forms of expressive activity?)

Q14. Can you give me some examples of how you use expressive arts with your groups?
(Probe: Do you have any specific purpose(s) in mind when you use these activities? Can you share an example from one of your groups?)

Q15. If you were to look at your group as having a life or cycle (beginning, middle and end), how do you use activity to 'fit' those different stages? Can you share some examples from your practice?

Q16. Are there any particular group concepts or skills that you feel are especially important to your group work?

Q17. What would you say is the focus of your work? (e.g., the individual; the group; the larger community? Does that change from group to group or setting to setting?)

Q18. If there was one word to describe how you lead your groups what would it be?
(Probe: Why did you choose that particular word? What does it mean to you?)

Q19. If there was one word to describe what you hope your group members will get out of their participation in the group what would it be?

CHECK LIST
Level of training in group practice; Training institution
Focus of training
Training theory base
Number of years in practice

Appendix 10:

List of Resources and Referral Services:

1. The Association for the Advancement of Social Work with Groups (AASWG), 2303 Winfield St., Rahway, NJ 07065-3620, 732-669-7852; www.aaswg.org

2. National Association for Drama Therapy (NADT), National Office: 15 Post Side Lane, Pittsford, NY 14534, 585-381-5618; www.nadt.org

3. American Dance Therapy Association (ADTA), Suite 108, Little Patuxent Parkway, Columbia, MD 21044, 410-997-4040; www.adta.org

4. Office of the Chair, Group Work Practice
   Hunter College School of Social Work
   129 East 79th Street
   New York, New York 10075
   212-452-7000

5. New York University
   Steindhardt School of Culture, Education, and Human Development
   Department of Music and Performing Arts Professions
   Masters Program in Drama Therapy
   35 W. 4th Street
   New York, NY 10012
   212-998-5402
   nyudramatherapy@yahoo.com

Appendix 11:

Facilitator Skills in Relation to Beginning Phase of Group Development

Group Stage, Facilitator Tasks and Skills	Operational Definitions
BEGINNING STAGE	
Clarifying group purpose; clarifying facilitator's role; identifying common ground between members needs; Fostering cohesiveness; building commonalities among members; modeling empathy and inclusion	
1. Referring to purpose	Reminds group of reason for group formation and common goals of group membership
2. Reaching for information	Draws out information from members to increase group's understanding of situation or event
3. Verbalizing norms	Verbally addresses acceptable codes of behavior for group participation
4. Contracting	Establishes a working agreement between facilitator and members and among members on common goals and codes of behavior
5. Actively listening	Tunes-in to verbal and non-verbal cues from members
6. Observing/scanning	Visually takes in all members to assess levels of engagement; actively notices and accurately reads nonverbal communication

Facilitator Skills in Relation to Beginning Phase of Group Development

Group Stage, Facilitator Tasks and Skills	Operational Definitions
BEGINNING STAGE	
Clarifying purpose and roles; identifying common ground; fostering cohesiveness	
7. Selecting communication patterns	Establishes patterns of verbal and non-verbal communication among members
8. Inviting full participation	Uses physical and verbal gestures to encourage full member participation

Note. From Garvin, 1997; Middleman & Wood, 1990; Schwartz, 1971a, 1976; Shulman, 1994; Steinberg, 1997.

Facilitator Skills in Relation to Work Phase of Group Development

Group Stage, Facilitator Tasks and Skills	Operational Definitions
WORK STAGE	
Exploring conflict; problem solving; making a demand for work among members; mediating between members and between members and agency	
1. Confronting situations	Openly and empathetically presents group or individual issue for group exploration and problem-solving
2. Reaching for information	Draws out information to increase group's understanding of situation or event
3. Acknowledging/reaching for difference	Actively seeks and observes various points of view on issue/problem from members
4. Turning issues back to the group	Asks members to take on task of grappling with and exploring problem-solving group issues in the group setting
5. Reaching for consensus	Checks with members to see if there is agreement about how group is managing problem-solving process

Facilitator Skills in Relation to Work Phase of Group Development

Group Stage, Facilitator Tasks and Skills	Operational Definitions
WORK STAGE	
Modeling empathy; encouraging expression of ideas and feelings; observing and reinforcing different ways members help one another	
1. Reaching for empathic connections	Guides members to share emotions or feelings they are experiencing
2. Acknowledging and reaching for feelings	Encourages members to identify and Share with the group emotions or feelings they are experiencing
3. Reaching for feelings links	Encourages members to find connections to each others' feelings
4. Reporting own feelings	Expresses and uses own feelings to model appropriateness of expressing one's feelings and experiences in the group and to encourage connections of feelings and experiences among members

Note. From Garvin, 1997; Middleman & Wood, 1990; Schwartz, 1971a, 1976; Shulman, 1994; Steinberg, 1997.

Facilitator Skills in Relation to Transitions and Endings Phase of Group Development

Group Stage, Facilitator Tasks and Skills	Operational Definitions
TRANSITIONS AND ENDINGS STAGE	
Helping group engage in separation and forward movement	
1. Sharing own feelings about endings	Shares own emotions and thoughts about group termination in order to illuminate range of mixed/multiple feelings about endings
2. Reaching for members' feelings about endings	Guides members to share emotions and feelings they are experiencing and stay with feelings related to termination
3. Partializing members' feelings	Divides expressed emotions into smaller, more manageable parts for group to explore each in turn
4. Helping members summarize work	Reviews group's process and task accomplishments
5. Voicing group achievements	Summarizes what members have accomplished together

Note. From Garvin, 1997; Middleman & Wood, 1990; Schwartz, 1971a, 1976; Shulman, 1994; Steinberg, 1997.

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