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Self-Revelatory Performance: The Intentional Use of Theatre's Therapeutic Nature

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The views expressed in this paper are solely those of the author.

**Self-Revelatory Performance:
The Intentional Use of Theatre's Therapeutic Nature**

An Honors Study
Presented by
Leah A. Shapiro

To The Department of Theater
In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirement for
Honors in the Major Field

Advised by Professor Virginia Anderson

CONNECTICUT COLLEGE
NEW LONDON, CONNECTICUT
MAY 5, 2016

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Dedication

To my loving parents, who put me in my first theatre class at the age of five, and without knowing it, introduced me to an art form that has continued to inform, feed, challenge, energize, and soothe me every day since. I dedicate this to you.



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I also could not have done this project without Lara Gold, the drama therapist and director I worked with to create this beautiful and therapeutic piece of theatre. Thank you for taking a chance and agreeing to work on this project; you truly made Self-Rev come alive for me. With your guidance, I was able to immerse myself entirely in the Self-Revelatory performance process and make some crucial discoveries about the way I function as a human being.

To my fellow thesis-writing classmates, I will be forever thankful for the support, company, inspiration, encouragement, and laughs we have been able to provide each other over this past year.

To my dear friends, both theater friends and my “normal” friends (as Jaffe would say), thank you for being my family away from home and being there for me even when I was stressed and no fun.

Finally, to my real family, Mommy, Daddy, Rachel & Becs: thanks for being my cheerleaders now and always. You guys make me feel as though I can accomplish anything; you’re my rocks.

Abstract

Self-Revelatory performance, considered both a form of drama therapy and a unique type of theatre, is defined as a form in which a performer creates an original piece of theatre based on existing life issues in need of therapeutic exploration (Emunah, 2015). The purpose of this Honors Study is to delve into Self-Revelatory performance as a form that explores the intentional use of theatre's therapeutic nature. Self-Revelatory performance is a hybrid of both therapy and theatre because it is an experience that offers transformation, understanding, transcendence, and often healing, while ultimately creating a captivating and moving performance to be witnessed by an audience. Theatre in its very nature is therapeutic because it raises awareness to emotions, attitudes, and issues (both personally and socially). As is common in examining performance as research, my exploration has taken place through traditional research but also through praxis-based research to ensure a final project that is grounded in praxis and informed by theory. This Honors Study highlights existing research in the field of drama therapy and Self-Revelatory performance as well as includes my own experience, process, and assessment of the form. This structure has allowed me to simultaneously thoroughly and genuinely experience this form of drama therapy while also analyzing its history, practices, and ultimately, its true potential. For this reason, this Honors Study has both a written component and an original performance component, my own Self-Revelatory performance, *It's Okay Not to be Okay*.¹

¹ *It's Okay Not to be Okay* was performed May 1, 2016 in Tansill Theater at Connecticut College.

Chapter 1: An Introduction: Why Self-Revelatory Performance?

“Theatre will no longer be an entertainment for a minority relaxing at the end of a day's work, but a meaningful activity for thousands of leisured people.... I think it probable that we shall see the drama, the dance, taken out of the hands of the professional and restored to the people.”

- James Roose-Evans, *Experimental Theatre (1970)*.

The Context

I still vividly remember the day I Googled “theatre” and “therapy” side by side. I was on vacation with my family over winter break of my sophomore year and we were discussing what I might do with my life. I started thinking about how perfect it would be if there was some way for me to combine my two majors of theatre and human development; a way to combine my love for theatre with my passion for helping and working with people. The internet introduced me to drama therapy and I discovered that not only was drama therapy a field of study, it was also a profession with graduate programs devoted entirely to the field. In that moment, I instantly knew this was a field I had to explore. Drama therapy immediately made sense to me. It clicked. As someone who understands from personal experience the therapeutic benefits of theatre, it made perfect sense that there would be a field devoted to exploring this connection.

I love sharing the story of how I got introduced to theatre. While it might not be readily apparent, I was an extremely anxious child. I was a child who threw up on the first day of school and sleep away camp each year because of a strange combination of nerves and excitement. I was a child who believed something terrible was going to happen while I was sleeping, like someone would break into our home or the house would catch fire. I was an older sister who slept in her baby sister's room for the first two years after moving to a new house. According to

my parents, while very outgoing with my peers, I was uncomfortable going outside of my comfort zone.

My parents thought that enrolling me in an acting class could help with some of these insecurities. I could not be more thankful to my parents for that decision. Theatre changed my life. While I am still anxious in nature, I am nowhere near that little girl I described above. Theatre has made me more comfortable in my skin. I may still get anxious about certain things in life but the second I get on a stage, I feel at home. I shine and I thrive. Within the broader field of drama therapy, Self-Revelatory performance caught my attention because I have always had this desire to share what theatre did for me with others. I want to help others grow, evolve, and change through the therapeutic wonder of theatre.

Self-Revelatory performance (from here on often referred to as “Self-Rev”) is the perfect meeting place of theatre and therapy. But it is a relationship that still needs to be further studied and explored. It is not yet a flawless partnership, as finding the balance between theatre and therapy is a constant juggling act, which in my opinion, is all the more reason to explore it. I believe, the best, most effective way to help my readers understand the practice of Self-Revelatory performance is to take them on the same journey I took in order to discover Self-Rev for myself.

Though I ultimately decided to explore Self-Revelatory performance, I began my thesis inquiry with broader parameters by simply researching the field of drama therapy. I remember walking into my first meeting with my advisor about my future Honors Study and I excitedly told her that I wanted to research drama therapy. She smiled and maybe even laughed a bit and in the nicest way possible, told me I would have to narrow that topic. As I was about to find out

first hand through my research, the field of drama therapy is enormously expansive. That day, I began my journey of exploring the very broad field of drama therapy that ultimately led me to Self-Revelatory performance. Self-Revelatory performance was ultimately the drama therapy practice I discovered that captured this rare notion of putting something inherently and intentionally therapeutic on stage for an audience to witness, an idea that both excited and intrigued me. Moreover, in my research, I came across Emunah's (2015) comment that "Self-Rev is ideally suited to the drama-therapist-in-training because of how it contributes to the development of self, including expanding self-awareness, compassion, insight, integrity, interpersonal skills and cultural competence which are paramount to clinical training" (Emunah, 2015, p.81). As someone who is interested in entering the field of drama therapy, discovering this statement made me realize all the more that this was the technique within drama therapy I was meant to explore.

The Question

The central research question of this study is: Who is Self-Revelatory performance for? With conflicting existing claims about who the practice of Self-Rev is best suited for, I seek to assess if Self-Rev should be available to any person willing to going through the experience or if it should be limited to those who have a background in theatre or are in the process of becoming a drama therapist. With praxis-based research alongside extensive research of the work that has already been done in this field, it is my goal to find the answer to this question and assess the true potential of Self-Revelatory performance and whom it best serves.

The Relevance

The current understanding of the potential of Self-Revelatory performance is severely limited due to the shortage of scholarship in both breadth and depth on this form of drama therapy. In fact, the majority of research on Self-Rev is from one scholar, Renée Emunah, the originator of Self-Revelatory performance. As David Perrin (2011) writes in his own drama therapy Master's thesis, "Drama therapists continue to rely on the original definition as articulated by Renée Emunah without further substantive debate and discussion of its scope and merits" (p.58). Due to the scarcity of existing knowledge, Self-Revelatory performance is a new form of theatre and therapy in desperate need of exploration. This paper is a catalyst for further examination into the capabilities of Self-Revelatory performance and a call for others to engage, discuss, examine, question, and explore this exciting new form. I hope that not only my review of existing literature provides a useful overview of drama therapy and Self-Revelatory performance, but that my personal experience, assessment, and detailed process analysis of creating my own Self-Rev proves useful to others exploring similar, scarcely-documented processes.

In this study, I hope to understand the history and development of drama therapy and Self-Revelatory performance, to experience first-hand how performance can be intentionally therapeutic through the creation of my own Self-Rev (titled: *It's Okay Not to be Okay*), and finally to assess for future persons interested in Self-Rev, who this form of drama therapy is best suited for. My goal is that this paper will contribute to the ever-growing field of drama therapy and more specifically, the knowledge already available on Self-Revelatory performance. As a general disclaimer, all methodology and techniques of drama therapy and Self-Revelatory

performance cannot be summarized in this paper. This paper does not speak for all of drama therapy, just what is most relevant to Self-Revelatory performance and it should be understood that there are other approaches of drama therapy not mentioned in this paper.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Drama Therapy

According to the North American Drama Therapy Association, drama therapy is “the intentional use of drama and/or theater processes to achieve therapeutic goals” (“What is Drama Therapy?”, 2016). Drama therapy is an experiential and dynamic approach to therapy that allows participants to have an environment in which they can go over their life stories, find understanding, express themselves, and ideally attain catharsis. Underlying drama therapy is a belief that dramatic processes can help people who might need assistance with a range of mental health, cognitive and developmental disorders as well as people who are simply going through times of stress, emotional disturbance, or disability (Langley, 2006; “Welcome to Drama Therapy,” 2016).

The intentionality is truly what separates drama therapy from other forms of drama or theatre. For instance, while theatre and drama are able to be accidentally therapeutic because they increase consciousness to feelings, attitudes, and issues, drama therapy purposefully uses drama and theatre techniques to adjust or rework attitudes and behaviors, as well as to assist in confronting and enlightening many life challenges (Langley, 2006). Dorothy Langley (2006) writes in her book *An Introduction to Dramatherapy*, “‘Intention’ is the important word; change does not happen by chance” (p.1). While theatre often is focused on a certain standard of final performance, drama therapy is much more process oriented and so the experience of going through drama therapy is emphasized, as that is where the therapeutic elements are most prevalent (Langley, 2006). Sally Bailey (2007) clarifies this distinction between traditional theatre and drama therapy:

Traditional theatre uses mainly a fictional, presentational approach. Some drama therapy approaches involve clients putting on a play designed to express common themes in their lives...the process of preparing the performance is itself therapeutic. Approaches that are performed for an audience and deal with more non-fictional, true-to-life issues include Forum Theatre (as part of Theatre of the Oppressed), Self-Revelatory Performance, and Playback Theatre...it should be noted that all these are considered to be part of the scope of drama therapy. (p.165)

Clearly, while conventional theatre is set apart from drama therapy, within the field of drama therapy the range of practices is still quite large.

The expectation for healing with drama therapy is derived from the sense that a change will occur. According to Langley (2006), healing can mean a “relief or cure, a change of perspective or behaviour, adaptation to disability, coming to terms with reality, or simply personal growth” (p.1). With this definition and for this reason, drama therapy applied and guided appropriately has the ability to help a wide range of people with a variety of conditions and problems in a range of settings, as discussed in detail later in this chapter. Drama therapy either occurs in a group or individual setting with a focus on one specific issue and for this reason, it is imperative for drama therapists to create a close and trusting relationship with the client(s). This unique relationship and awareness to the intention of the drama therapy session is what sets drama therapy apart from traditional drama. Drama therapy is advantageous because there is no one right or wrong way to conduct it, every session will be unique to the group or individual (Langley, 2006).

Langley (2006) points out that not all clients who seek drama therapy have a specific disorder or disturbance. In fact, many people simply are looking for a better understanding of themselves, their life, and their personal problems. In fact, it is a normal inclination for a person to want to assess their feelings or issues at some point in their life. Drama, due to its “metaphoric

foundation,” offers a perfect creative medium for this exploration to take place (Langley, 2006).

The NYU Steinhardt Drama Therapy program highlights on its website that participants are able to develop a range of dramatic roles which in turn help strengthen their own life roles

(“Welcome to Drama Therapy,” 2016). Langley (2006) explains:

Clients can consider their lives, relationships and the issues around them by finding a metaphor, exploring it and then connecting their experience to reality. It also encourages a state of personal awareness which, although not necessarily healing in the strict sense of cure, is a means of working towards establishing peace of mind and/ or improved functioning. (p.3)

It is common for drama therapists, in order to fully understand the process and truly understand their own personal issues, to go through drama therapy themselves. While the general techniques of drama therapy are described later in this chapter, the essence of the drama therapy approach is that the intentional use of any form of drama and/or theatre can be used as a channel for change whether it be for a person to work through a life crisis or to facilitate a personal growth (Langley, 2006).

History of Drama Therapy.

Before exploring drama therapy and therapeutic theatre further, it is important to obtain some historical context. The history included in this section is that which is most relevant to my study.² To start, we must discuss the very beginning: the distinction between drama and theatre. According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, drama is most commonly defined as, “a composition in prose or verse, adapted to be acted upon a stage, in which a story is related by means of dialogue and action, and is represented with accompanying gesture, costume, and scenery, as in real life; a play” (“Drama,” 2016). Commonly linked, *Oxford English Dictionary*

² For a more comprehensive historical overview of drama therapy, see the timeline in Appendix A.

defines theatre as, “a place constructed in the open air, for viewing dramatic plays or other spectacles” (“Theatre,” 2016). While minor, these distinctions between the two words will help clarify different practices of drama therapy within the field that I discuss later.

While drama and theatre have been in practice since Ancient Greece, for the purpose of this paper, the question is how did drama therapy come to be? When did the intentional use of drama become a practice for therapy? The origin of the intentional and therapeutic use of drama and theatre dates back to Aristotle’s *The Poetics*. In this work, Aristotle offered that the purpose of tragedy was:

to induce the emotional and spiritual state of catharsis—a release of deep feelings that originally had a connotation of purification of the senses and the soul. The method by which the emotions of pity and terror are evoked is ‘mimesis’ – a combinations of vicarious participation and suspending of disbelief. (Jones, 2007, p. 24)

In essence, both actors and audience members must willingly “participate and collude” to create successful theatre (Langley, 2006). For this reason, ‘as if’ is key to drama therapy today as it insinuates that belief and disbelief must go hand in hand (Langley, 2006). For a long time, this notion of catharsis has informed people’s understanding of the relationship between theatre and therapy and the notion that theatre has the ability induce human feelings and to impact a person’s life. Some current scholars have understood Aristotle’s catharsis as a means of healing, deducing that theatre and drama could be used contemporarily in processes of healing (Jones, 2007).

Despite its ancient roots, it was not until the twentieth-century that drama therapy as a field emerged. Around this time in both Europe and the United States, the practice of drama therapy began appearing more frequently in the health services field and specifically hospitals. People began looking at new ways to view mental health including new ideas of treatment. It was also during this time that people began to see theatre as something else besides pure

entertainment (Jones, 2007). First, theatre became an appropriate pastime for those suffering from mental illness and later it was realized that participation in the drama could also be therapeutic for the mentally ill. Before long, stages were being built in mental hospitals and plays were being written and performed by inmates (Jones 1996; Langley, 2006).³ Whereas in earlier centuries there was no intersection between entertainment and the medical concern of mental illness, a connection between health and theatre that suggested healing capabilities began to emerge in the twentieth century.

Development of Drama Therapy.

The formation of drama therapy as it is today involved much more than the increased presence of theatre in hospitals. The twentieth-century was also a time of innovation in psychotherapy, psychodrama, experimental theatre, and educational drama, all which made crucial contributions to the theory of drama as a change agent in one's life (Jones, 2007). These new forms of drama highlighted that theatre could be about something more than just the performance. These advancements in theatre revealed that theatre has a larger role in society than many people originally acknowledge, particularly in regard to having therapeutic benefits.

Founded by Jacob L. Moreno in the 1920s, psychodrama is often considered drama therapy's "immediate predecessor" (Emunah, 1994, p.3). Psychodrama is a method of using spontaneous dramatization to explore psychosocial issues. It is an action method, often used within the field of psychotherapy, where clients use improvisation, role-playing, and dramatic

³ In mental hospitals, plays would be written both by and for residing inmates. One of the most well-known inmates who wrote plays was Marquis De Sade who spent about 32 years of his life in various prisons beginning in 1801, including 13 years in Charentan Hospital, an asylum in Paris. Sade who was known for his erotic works wrote many of his works while incarcerated. Although it would no longer be considered appropriate today because theatre in that form provides the opportunity for people to make fun of those with mental illnesses, at the time of Sade, some productions were open for public viewing. Regardless, this was the beginning of therapeutic theatre (Langley, 2006).

self-presentation to depict and explore personal issues in the hope of ultimately gaining insight about their lives (Jones, 2007). Psychodrama takes place in a group setting but it is individual centered. A typical session includes the “protagonist,” the member of the group who depicts their issue that has come up in therapy, and their interaction with the “auxiliaries,” the other members of the group who support the protagonist and take on the other roles relevant to the protagonist’s portrayal of the situation as well as the therapist who serves as the “director” (Morstad, 2003). With the help of the “auxiliaries” and the “director,” the “protagonist” examines their internal conflicts and relationships through specific psychodrama techniques including *role reversal*,⁴ *mirroring*,⁵ *doubling*,⁶ and *soliloquy*.⁷ An entire psychodrama has three phases, the warm up (when the group selects the protagonist and the dramatic activity is prepared), the main action (when the role work takes place), and the post-discussion phase (when the sharing and reflecting takes place) (Jones, 2007).

While he was trained as a psychiatrist, Moreno’s prominent interest in theatre led him to discover the field of psychodrama. In his lifetime, Moreno not only revolutionized psychodrama but also set a strong foundation for the practice of drama therapy (Johnson, 2009). After Moreno’s death, however, a divide began to form in the field of psychodrama between its theatrical roots and how it was actually being practiced. Theatrical training was no longer necessary in the training to become a psychodramatist, as the field was mainly attracting mental

⁴ Role reversal is when the protagonist will reverse roles with an auxiliary so that the auxiliary portrays the protagonist and the protagonist portrays another significant person in their life (Baim, Burmeister, & Maciel, 2007).

⁵ Mirroring is a prominent technique in psychodrama where the protagonist first acts out their scene and then an auxiliary actor steps in and performs the exact same scene with the protagonist watching the portrayal of themselves (Đurić, Veljković, & Tomić, 2006).

⁶ Doubling is when an auxiliary expresses the inner feelings, thoughts, and emotions of the protagonist (Baim, Burmeister, & Maciel, 2007).

⁷ Soliloquy is when the protagonist in a specific role speaks out loud, to themselves and associates freely (Baim, Burmeister, & Maciel, 2007).

health professionals and not many theatre professionals. It was during this time that new pioneers in the drama therapy field came forward (Johnson, 2009).

The true creation of drama therapy is impossible to pinpoint as no one person can be named as the inventor of the field, as can be done with psychodrama (Jacob L. Moreno) or psychoanalysis (Sigmund Freud) (Emanah, 1997). The goal of drama therapy is not to entertain an audience, but rather to assist the clients in improving their behavior or better understanding their thoughts and emotions (Bailey, 2007, p.164). Most current drama therapists come from the world of theatre. This became increasingly evident to me when I discussed my thesis with some professors in the Psychology Department at Connecticut College and they revealed to me that they were not familiar with drama therapy. This is not unexpected as the North American Drama Therapy Association claims drama therapy is still considered a relatively new field of study and not as well-known throughout the world (“Careers in Drama Therapy,” 2016). These conversations emphasized to me the real opportunity I had with this thesis to explore and promote something new. Like me, drama therapists are often people who recognize the healing and therapeutic abilities of theatre through their own life experience or education and want to help create the same change and growth in others.

Those drama therapists who do come from the world of therapy are often ones who felt that talk therapy was not making enough of a difference and wanted to explore more creative and hands-on approaches with their clients (Bailey, 2007). Drama therapists are typically trained in four areas: drama/theatre, general and abnormal psychology, psychotherapy, and drama therapy. Experiential learning, a practice where one learns by “doing, practicing, getting supervisory feedback, and refining skills” is a major component of drama therapy so that drama therapists are

ultimately “able to facilitate the client’s experience in a way that keeps the client emotionally and physically safe while the client benefits from the dramatic process” (Bailey, 2007, 165).

While drama therapy is truly an amalgamation of many things, it became its own field in the twentieth-century as major work in the field was occurring in both the United Kingdom and the United States. Along with the work of Konstantin Stanislavsky,⁸ Bertolt Brecht,⁹ Antonin Artaud¹⁰ and the entire Experimental theatre movement of the 1960s and 1970s, drama therapy increased in popularity as people began to challenge the traditional way of putting on theatre by engaging the audience with more psychological, political, educational, and spiritual matters of society (Emunah, 1997; Morstad, 2003). In the UK, Peter Slade, Marian “Billy” Lindkvist, and Sue Jennings were three pioneers involved in the development of drama therapy as a profession and field (Jones, 2007). It began in 1954 when Slade coined the term “dramatherapy” (today, more commonly referred to as drama therapy in two words). Later, in 1973, Jennings published a key book called *Remedial Drama* where she examined how to apply drama techniques to children with special needs. Jennings, along with Lindkvist, originated the first two training programs in England to serve children with special needs (Emunah, 1997).

The use of drama and theatre in education also emerged during the late nineteenth century and twentieth century. This development was built upon the concept of “play” and how

⁸ Stanislavsky was a Russian actor and theatre director who developed a psychological approach utilizing the unconscious (as an access point to tapping into true emotion) and given circumstances (where an actor attempts to embody the exact physical and psychological factors of the character they are portraying) to assist actors in character development and performance (Bailey, 2009; Jones, 2007).

⁹ Brecht, a German poet, playwright and director, is best known for emphasizing social and political issues in theatre. His key principle was *Verfremdungseffekt* (translated as the distancing or alienation effect), which emphasized that theatre is simply a representation of reality. His goal was to create a detachment between the audience and the action of the play to encourage their criticalness so that they would recognize the social injustices of the world and be moved to create change (Jones, 2007).

¹⁰ Artaud was a French dramatist well known for his Theatre of Cruelty who deeply believed theatre should reach and liberate the subconscious of humans. Instead of coming to the theater to escape, Artaud wanted his audiences to come to theater to face their worst fears (Jones, 2007).

play is essential to a youth's learning process. Caldwell Cook, a British educator, wrote about this concept in his book *The Play Way* by making the claim that "doing" is a better method of learning than reading or writing:

The natural means of study in youth is play, as any one may see for himself by watching any child or young animal when it is left alone. A natural education is by practice, by doing things, and not by instruction... It would not be wise to send a child innocent into the big world; and taking is of poor avail. But it is possible to hold rehearsals, to try our strength in a make-believe big world. And that is Play" (Cook, 1917, p.1)

These notions of play and rehearsal are essential to drama, which is how theorists made the connection between the two. In essence, educational drama was another way people understood drama as a tool to assist in personal development (Jones, 2007).

Drama therapy officially entered the professional realm when the North American Drama Therapy Association (NADTA) was established in 1979. NADTA was founded to "to establish and uphold high standards of professional competence and ethics among drama therapists; to develop criteria for training and registration; to sponsor publications and conferences; and to promote the profession of drama therapy through information and advocacy" ("About NADTA," 2015). NADTA currently aids professionals and students in the United States and Canada in the field of drama therapy. David Johnson, recognized for his work with patients with schizophrenia, Eleanor Irwin, known for her psychoanalytically-based work with children with behavioral and emotional disorders, and Renée Emunah, renowned for her work with adolescents and adults in day treatment centers and halfway houses, are considered to be the major United States pioneers in the field of drama therapy (Emunah, 1997; Morstad, 2003). The first two drama therapy training programs were developed in the early 1980s, one at the California Institute for Integral

Studies directed by Renée Emunah and the other at New York University, spearheaded by Robert Landy.

While drama therapy was deeply influenced by psychodrama, which explains many of its shared techniques and practices, drama therapy strays from psychodrama with respect to necessary distance from the material. This notion is referred to as “aesthetic distance” by drama therapists (Landy, 1996). Distancing involves the converging of physical, emotional, and intellectual elements when working through an issue and people can become either ‘underdistanced’ or ‘overdistanced’ depending on their relative physical, emotional, and intellectual closeness to the matter. If one is ‘underdistanced’ they appear to have no separateness from the material, whereas if one is ‘overdistanced’ they appear to have no closeness to it (Landy, 1996). To Landy (1996) the point of equilibrium would be considered “aesthetic distance” where one achieves an appropriate amount of closeness and separateness, experiencing a harmony and balance with the subject at hand. When individuals are able to revisit a troubling or unresolved experience without becoming either overwhelmed by it (too little distance) or removed from it (too much distance), they achieve aesthetic distance (Landy, 1996; McFarren, 2015).

Whereas psychodrama works directly with the personal experiences of clients, drama therapy uses theatre games, improvisation, script work, and stories with the help of costumes, lighting, staging, masks to create a distance and safe space for clients to express themselves (Cattanach, 1996). This distance also allows for the clientele to change or reinterpret stories based on personal experience. Emunah (1997) believes that “engaging in the world of make-believe offers not only a healthy sense of freedom, but also the disguise that enables self-

revelation” (p.4). The made-up world of drama therapy is also for people to see and communicate ideas they normally would not as themselves. Given this knowledge of the development of drama therapy, the next step is to understand how it is being practiced today through common techniques, methods, and goals.

Techniques, Methods and Goals.

There are several notable theoretical approaches used by drama therapists. Among these specialized theories, which will be elaborated upon here, are: Role Theory by Robert Landy (Landy 1993; 1994; 2009) and Integrative Five-Phase Model by Renée Emunah (Emunah, 1994; 1997). I have chosen to go in depth in my research into these two theoretical approaches as they are the ones whose influences I recognized in my own work as I began creating my Self-Revelatory performance.

In Landy’s (1993) book *Persona and Performance*, he encourages his readers to think of Role Theory within the dramatic paradox of “to be or not to be” (p.11) While this line is clearly associated with Hamlet’s famous soliloquy, Landy (1993) believes this line, containing Hamlet’s ponderings of what is better (the known of living or the unknown of death), establishes “the connection between the world and the stage, [and] leads to an understanding of the healing potential of drama” (p.11). With this description, Landy is exploring the idea that an actor often exists simultaneously in two, often diverse, realities:

present and past, rehearsal and performance, the studied moment and the spontaneous moment, everyday life and the life of imagination, internal and external, fiction and nonfiction, the ordinary and the wonderful, the expected moment and the enhanced moment, actor and role, and “me” and “not me” (Landy, 1993, p. 11).

The paradox of drama is that an actor and the role they play are both separate but also joined in that the real life of the actor coexists with the made-up life of the role (Landy, 1993). Landy connects this theory to drama therapy because he believes there is healing potential if a person is able to take on the stance of both “me” and “not me” and work therapeutically through their problems in a place of both reality and imagination and “being” and “not being” (Langley, 2006, p.32). “To be” is being in the role and capable of action while “not to be” is being outside the role and having the ability to reflect on it (Morstad, 2003). Landy (1993) writes that “by being simultaneously actors and characters, ordinary human beings and something else—gods, demons, heroes, villains, we are capable of transforming our understanding, feeling, and valuing” (p. 30).

For this reason, Landy believes role and story to be two of the necessities in the drama therapy process. By creating and telling stories, Landy believes a person’s many roles can be explored:

Role is ‘the container of those qualities of the individual that need to be enacted in drama therapy. Story is the verbal or gestural text, most often improvised, that expresses the role, naming the container. The client as creator invents stories...as a means of revealing role. At the end of one’s story,...one should be able to answer the question, Who am I? And the answer involves both an identification of individual roles I play and an integration among my many roles.’ (Landy, 1990, p. 223; Emunah, 1994, p.15)

Healing and self-awareness come to a person once they are able to better understand the many roles they play (Ciona, 2001). Landy’s role theory is based in theatre and social psychology as he views “personality as a system of interdependent roles that result through biology, social interactions, or action. As role players, Landy believes people have the potential to recreate themselves by trying out new ways of being; which leads to role balance” (Landy, 1994; Ciona, 2001, p. 13). Landy (1994) considers human personality to include an arrangement of many

different but interrelated roles that provide humans with a sense of direction and purpose. Roles in Landy's Role Theory are categorized by type, quality, function, and/or style. While it is possible for different roles to contradict each other, a situation referred to as role ambivalence, which comprises the core of role theory, the ultimate goal is to find a balance between a person's many roles.

Landy (1994) believes a balance of roles is essential so that a person can live with their role contradictions and it is through the inconsistency and uncertainty within ones' roles that change happens. Although this might be a contradictory process, psychological growth and understanding is likely to transpire (Ciona, 2001). A final crucial component of Role Theory is the role of the *Guide*, who is often the therapist, and who helps clients integrate and find their way through their different roles. Landy (1993; 2009) devised an eight-step method to legitimize and systemize the therapeutic process of Role Theory:

1. Invoking the role
2. Naming the role
3. Playing out the role
4. Exploring alternative qualities in subroles
5. Reflecting upon the role play: discovering role qualities, functions, and styles inherent in the role
6. Relating the fictional role to everyday life
7. Integrating roles to create a functional role system
8. Social modeling: discovering ways that client's behavior in role affects others in their social environments. (Landy, 2009, p. 75)

Many drama therapists including Landy himself have noted that to go through the entire role method is a long-term undertaking. For this reason, Landy (1993) believes it is not necessary for this method of treatment to be followed exactly for every client but that it should be taken as a guiding principle to base drama therapy sessions off of. Role Theory has been viewed as a productive means of discovering different parts of self but as less intense than psychodrama

because clients are able to create these fictional, “me” yet “not me” roles, as opposed to entering very real roles like is done in psychodrama (Langley, 2006).

Renée Emunah’s (1994; 1997; 2009) Integrative Five-Phase Model incorporates drama therapy and psychodrama through five therapeutic phases: dramatic play, scenework, role play, culminating enactment, and dramatic ritual. Emunah (2009) often refers to this model as a therapeutic journey where each of the phases paves the way for the next. The first phase, dramatic play, exists to lay the foundation for the rest of the process. During this time, a safe and playful environment is formed which allows the participants to better develop trust, self-confidence, impulsiveness/freedom, and interrelationship. These times of structured play, theatre games, and improvisations gradually lead participants to take part in scenes with more developed roles, marking the start of the second phase.

The scenework of the second phase continues to be fictional and often improvisational, though sometimes scripted. Although the participants are not playing themselves, they may express sentiments that come from both themselves and their character. In these early phases, the drama therapist will not take charge in the moments of playing and performing. By the end of the scenework phase, the participants, who often by this point identify themselves more as actors, begin to form connections with their role and scene.

In the role play and culminating enactment phases, the shift from fictional to personal begins as participants initiate exploring their own experiences (Emunah 1994; 1997). It is this shift that explains how psychodrama is included in this therapeutic model because in psychodrama participants play the role of themselves in a range of situations (Emunah, 2009). In the role play phase, participants will enact and explore real problems. This culminates in the

fourth phase, culminating enactments, where clients explore their greater issues and more intense emotions. Finally, the therapeutic journey ends in the fifth phase with dramatic ritual, a celebration and ritual of commemoration for the experience, which exists to facilitate reflection, integration, and closure among the clients.

The progression of the Integrative Five-Phase Model is one that begins with playing and acting and transforms into reenacting. Each stage eases the participant into the next one, allowing for the process to be safe and accessible for any participant to feel comfortable working through their issues (Emunah, 1994; 1997; 2009). The idea is that ultimately “the roles are shed, the masks unraveled, and the fictional scenarios give way to life scenes” (Emunah, 2009, p.38). The transition from one phase to another tends to happen organically, which allows the changeover from the fictional to the personal to be entirely in the control of the client (Emunah, 2009).

While every person who participates in drama therapy will be working through a different and unique personal issue, Emunah (1994) identifies five main goals of drama therapy that transcend individual cases. The first involves the “expression and containment of emotion,” where one can find an appropriate and acceptable way to express, release, and control their emotions. The second goal is called “the observing self” or “the director within” which strives to create a part of ourselves that is able to reflect, witness, and comment on the other parts of one’s self. The third goal is to expand one’s “role repertoire” which allows one to play and take-on different identities as a means to discover and experience new ways of behaving, coping, and responding to situations. The fourth goal, “modification and expansion of self-image” is the opposite of role repertoire because its focus is on discovering and understanding the many facets within ourselves. Finally, the fifth goal is to practice and better develop “social interaction and

interpersonal skills” that then can be used and applied in greater society (Emanah, 1994, p. 31-33).

In reality, these two methods of drama therapy have similar goals and it is interesting to see how they build off each other. A lot of the basic ideals of Emanah’s Integrative Five-Phase Model are actually taken from Landy’s Role Method as clients are encouraged to connect with the fictional roles they have created. Personally, I find the Integrative Five-Phase Model to be a slightly more natural way of conducting drama therapy as it relies on the client making certain connections before the drama therapist will move on to the next phase; this ultimately puts less pressure on the client and helps them to naturally find their way through their different roles and issues.

In conclusion, drama therapy is considered a creative way to approach therapy through the use of a range of theatre practices including storytelling, play, and creativity. The theatre methods employed by drama therapists range from theatre games, puppetry, masks, improvisation, stories, mime, and performances. The key to drama therapy is physical expression and performance drama therapists use these many different exercises and techniques to help their clients deeply explore selected topics. Drama therapists generally practice in mental health facilities, schools, hospitals, private practice settings, substance abuse treatment centers, adult day care centers, correctional facilities, community centers, after-school programs, shelters, group homes, nursing homes, corporations, theaters, housing projects, medical Schools and training organizations (“FAQ,” 2015). People who benefit from drama therapy fall within all walks of life; potential clients include people recovering from addiction, dysfunctional families, people with developmentally disabilities, abuse survivors, prison inmates, the homeless, people

with AIDS, older adults, behavioral health consumers, at-risk youth, and the general public (“FAQ,” 2015). Drama therapy is traditionally practiced in a group setting but it can be applied to individuals as well (Jennings, 1993).

In the field today there are many different drama therapists all who work in a multitude of different ways as every practitioner is bound to have a different view and a different client. The beauty of breadth in the field is that therapists and clients together can find the style and practices of drama therapy that work best for them. The key is for drama therapist and client to have a good relationship and the rest will fall into place as it is not truly the final product or enactment in drama therapy that matters but the overall experience (Langley, 2006). Due to the playfulness, distance, and safety crucial for practicing drama therapy, this method of therapy can truly be applied to any group or person in need.

Current and Future Directions.

As of 2015, there are now five drama therapy Master’s degree programs that are both regionally accredited as well as approved by the North American Drama Therapy Association. The four programs in the United States are at New York University in New York City, Lesley University in Boston, Antioch University in Seattle, Washington and finally, California Institute of Integral Studies (CIIS) in San Francisco where Self-Revelatory performance originated. There is one final program at Concordia University in Montreal, Canada (“Accredited Schools,” 2016).

In terms of drama therapy licensure, neither the United States nor Canada has national licensure so the ability to become a licensed drama therapist depends on the state or province in which one resides. Therefore, it is suggested that students pursuing drama therapy think about where they would like to work and live post-graduation and research the licensing and practice

policies for that state or province. While it possible to receive a Registered Drama Therapist credential which states that a person is board certified to practice drama therapy and has complete proficiency in the field, it is not considered a license. As of now, New York is still the only state that has a licensure available specifically for drama therapists (“Drama Therapy Licensure,” 2016). According to Bailey (2006):

The professional credential for drama therapists in the U.S. and Canada is the R.D.T. (Registered Drama Therapist) which can be applied for after one has finished an appropriate Masters degree, the approved drama therapy and psychology coursework, an 800 hour drama therapy internship, a minimum of 500 hours of theatre experience and a minimum of 1,500 hours of professional hours working as a drama therapist. (p. 218-21)

Given this understanding of what is required to become a Registered Drama Therapist, it is evident that one needs a strong background in both theatre and psychology to be a practicing drama therapist. However, Bailey (2006) also states that many of those pursuing this professional credential have well-beyond 500 hours of theatre experience because of their previous backgrounds as theatre artists or educators who have realized the healing potential of drama. This again sheds light on why drama therapy is less familiar in psychology and other social science realms. Notably, however, Bailey (2016) mentions more counselors, therapists, and religious clergy are turning to drama therapy as they feel talk therapy is not always effective enough to ensue transformation and understanding in their clients.

Self-Revelatory Performance

Where does Self-Revelatory performance fit into the development and growth of drama therapy? Self-Rev came from drama therapy. It is a practice that is made possible only through the techniques discovered and used in the field of drama therapy, yet it is also a whole different field beyond drama therapy because of its theatrically aesthetic values. While drama therapy usually involves process-oriented exercises intended to provide therapeutic growth for clients, Self-Rev should be viewed as a more creative and artistic process and accomplishment for both performer and director (a practicing drama therapist) that is simultaneously a therapeutic experience for the performer (Emunah, 2015).

In the previous section on drama therapy, it was demonstrated how the creation of plays and performance by clients is one possible approach to drama therapy. It is an effective method as it encourages personal growth, invites exploration of a wide range of therapeutic issues, and assists in the growth of social skills (Bailey, 2009). Most notable, and what sets Self-Revelatory performance apart from other drama therapy techniques, is that the client actually gets to perform their work on stage. Bailey (2009) explains:

Any role, any emotion, or any experience that be imagined can be tried out. In the act of performing or of watching a performance, the willing suspension of disbelief, which is basic to theatre, allows what is not real to be transubstantiated into the imaginary-real (p.376-377).

The stage becomes a sacred space where anything is possible and Self-Revelatory performance is a form of drama therapy that fully embraces this notion.

As a refresher, Self-Revelatory performance is a form of drama therapy and a form of theatre where the performer creates a unique piece of theatre based on material drawn from their own life and current issues they wish to explore. The chosen issue can range from being

interpersonal, circumstantial or intrapsychic; most issues are possible to address just as long as the focus is something the performer wishes to better understand, work through, or heal (Emunah, 2015). Ultimately, an audience will witness the final performance. Self-Rev is about finding the balance of creating a theatrically-stimulating piece that can be performed for an audience that is also therapeutically healing (Emunah, 2015). While many struggle to understand the innate discordance of Self-Rev, this multifaceted nature of the practice is what makes it so unique. In this section, while I will be mainly discussing existing literature and research on Self-Revelatory performance, I will also periodically be referring to my own Self-Rev, *It's Okay Not to be Okay*, as a way to help make some of the ideas and concepts more concrete.

Development of Self-Revelatory Performance.

Both the term and the practice of Self-Revelatory performance were coined by Renée Emunah in 1983 and further outlined in her 1994 book, *Acting for Real*. Since then, Self-Revelatory performance has been further cultivated with the help of graduate students and faculty in the graduate Drama Therapy Program at the California Institute for Integral Studies (CIIS) and even more recently, by colleagues throughout the drama therapy field (Emunah, 2015). During the 15 years she worked as a drama therapist with psychiatric patients, Emunah discovered a certain “theatrical potency of healing-orientated, emotionally-intense scenes” that led her to become more curious about “the coinciding of therapeutic and aesthetic objectives in scene development” (Emunah, 2015, p.73). While she was training graduate students to become drama therapists, this curiosity led her to develop an assignment called “(the creation of) a Self-Revelatory Scene” (Emunah, 2015, p.73). She first assigned this in a class in 1983 during the

first year of the Drama Therapy Program at CIIS. Emunah (2015) describes these original scenes in detail:

The 7-10 minute scenes were to revolve around a compelling current issue and involve healing or transformative directions. The performed scenes were immediately engaging and powerful and, as all the students performed the scenes on the same extended class day, a sense of sacred theatre/healing space and the universality of human struggle was palpably evoked. (p.73)

Although it has been clarified throughout the years, this assignment has remained in the introduction and foundations class at CIIS. From these scenes came the full-blown practice of Self-Revelatory performance. Since 2004, graduate students have had the option to create 40-minute Self-Revelatory performance pieces as a capstone project instead of writing the traditional thesis and this option has undoubtedly become the most popular, serving as a 'rite of passage' for those completing the Drama Therapy Program at CIIS (Emunah, 2015).

Self-Rev is about breaking the barriers of traditional theatre and allowing it to meld into the world of therapy. While normally there is a separation between the actor and the self, the actor and the audience, and the world of the theatre and real life, Self-Rev blends these distinctions allowing for a theatrical performance that is authentic, immediate, powerful, and moving (Ciona, 2001). While in a traditional theatre performance, the actor would shed the role they have played at the end, in Self-Revelatory performances this does not occur as "the actors have been coming out as themselves throughout the performance" (Emunah, 1994, p. 289). Further, the actors in a Self-Rev are more than just actors; they are writers, creators, and innovators. A Self-Rev requires a certain amount of courage and support as the performer often will embark on a very personal and individual journey that will eventually be performed in front of others (Emunah, 1994). According to Emunah (1994), a major part of performing Self-Revs in

front of an audience is so that the performer can hear the applause at the end and be filled “with a deep sense not only of accomplishment but of acceptance” and experience a reaffirmation of their honest identity (p.289).

Emunah (1994) cautions that self-indulgence may be a major danger of Self-Revelatory performance. Although Self-Revs are about a personal issue, they must still create meaning and apply to a universal audience in theatrical form. If the performer’s particular problem is too inward and self-pitying, then it will not relate to the general human condition. A performer of Self-Rev needs to have reached a certain level of understanding and resolution with the issue they are addressing in order to ensure emotional protection for both the actor and the audience (Bailey, 2009). While the purpose is first and foremost for the actor to reach a point of transcendence, Emunah (1994) argues this cannot be the sole purpose, and that it must attempt to also inspire and touch the audience. If not, Emunah (1994) fears some of the therapeutic benefit will be limited as well.

Therefore, the aesthetic quality and theatrical success of a Self-Rev is important. Success does not mean perfect or even up to the standard of traditional theatre performances but “it does mean attaining excellence according to generally held aesthetic notions—that works of art should be communicative, evocative, and engaging” (p.290). What this means is a Self-Rev should be worthy of appreciation, praise, and recognition from viewers who also understand the courage needed for creating such a piece of theatre. Without such acclaim, the applause at the end of a Self-Rev merely reflects that support of the performer getting up on stage instead of the work and product that has just been accomplished. To support only the performer and not the work can

ultimately be “countertherapeutic,” a shame in a performance practice that is meant to be profoundly transformative (Emunah, 1994).

Self-Revelatory Performance versus Solo Performance, Autobiographical, and Therapeutic Theatre.

Self-Revs can often be mistaken for other forms of similar theatrical practices including solo performance, autobiographical theatre, therapeutic theatre, etc. One of the key differences between self-revelatory performance and solo performance is that in a Self-Rev, the actor/performer is always playing themselves (or another figure in their life) making the material performed directly related to the real person standing before an audience. This is different than a solo performance piece where an actor can take on the life story of someone else.

While Self-Rev and autobiographical theatre are also very similar forms of therapeutic theatre, the two forms of theatre have some key distinctions. Autobiographical theatre involves the dramatization and telling of a person’s life story but does not have the intention of working through the subject matter like Self-Rev. Thus, autobiographical theatre lacks the intention of healing that Self-Revs possess. Further, Self-Revs are focused on current life issues and in autobiographical theatre the performances are more often than not focused on issues and experiences of the past (Emunah, 2015). That is not to say Self-Revs cannot be focused on past or recurring life issues but the idea is that these issues should still be prevalent and present in the performer’s life (Emunah, 1994). Often the experience of performing a piece of autobiographical theatre has healing benefits because this type of performance still involves the therapeutic components of a Self-Rev, but Self-Rev sets itself apart by having the direct intention of working

through (discussed in more detail in the next session) a current issue in need of healing or understanding (Emunah, 2015).

Throughout the years, different names having been given to pieces of autobiographical theatre that were performed or directed by drama therapists including Therapeutic Autobiographical Performance, Therapeutic Performance Research, and Autobiographical Therapeutic Theatre (Emunah, 2015). All these existing titles for essentially the same type of theatre performance highlight the need for a consolidation of terms within the field. The term ‘therapeutic theatre’ perhaps came from this effort as most practitioners within the field of drama therapy agree that:

therapeutic theatre refers to performances by a group of people who share similar issues or are considered part of the same so-called ‘special’ (and often marginalized) ‘population (terms that may also warrant reconsideration. The performances, which typically are directed by drama therapists and/or theatre artists, are not necessarily based on real life...The performances offer a sense of creative mastery and achievement, even victory (Emunah, 2015, p.72).

Thus, the intentions of therapeutic theatre pieces do not aim to tackle and heal issues in a person’s life, as Self-Revs attempt to do.

Self-Revs are unique as they “integrate cultural, social, political, racial and gender contexts that inform or add perspective to the central issues, though the primary focus is on raising psychological awareness, and reaching for therapeutic change” (Emunah, 2015, p.73). This emphasizes just how broad and wide-ranging the themes for Self-Revelatory performance can be. As long as psychological cognizance and therapeutic transformation is an emphasis of the process, the topic chosen can be extremely specific, personal, and meaningful to the performer. Self-Revs strive to reveal something not just to an audience, but more importantly, to oneself. While Self-Rev has many overlapping qualities with solo performance, therapeutic

theatre, and autobiographical theatre, the unique intentions and characteristics of Self-Rev make it a distinct category of performance in drama therapy with specific concepts and methodology.

Exploring ‘Working Through’: Concepts and Methods.

As mentioned previously, the distinctive purpose of Self-Revelatory performance is to not only communicate and represent the issue a person is addressing but also to ‘work through’ it, a fundamental technique of Self-Revelatory performance. Emunah (2015) explains working through as a:

...conscious effort to contend with the material, dive into it, untangle the issues and better comprehend their origins and implications. It means psychological self-examination as well as ownership of our own interplay with the forces that shaped us. And it means finding ways to be strengthened or softened or altered by the material, and to ‘move through’ it. (p.74)

She continues by defining 'moving through,' “It can mean letting go, taking hold of, coming to terms with, confronting, embracing, shifting, admitting, committing, forgiving, inviting, renewing, revolting, revisiting, recreating” (Emunah, 2015, p.75). In fact, it can mean any or all of those things, as every individual’s issue is unique and complex in its own way with specific nuances. Working through the material is the greatest challenge of a Self-Rev performer and their director. The director’s job is to figure out how to work with the story and material of the client. While healing can occur through the simple sharing and witnessing of a person’s story, the idea of working through argues that a more substantive healing occurs when the material is tackled more thoroughly (Emunah, 2015).

Emunah (2015) calls for a bit of faith from those who decide to partake in the Self-Rev process as the act of digging deeper into one’s issues can initially be painful, but ultimately will

lead one to a “happier state of being” (p.75). ‘Grappling with’ is another phrase Emunah (2015) equates with working through. In the process of a Self-Rev “there is no undoing nor fixing, and possibly not even any clear resolution, but there can well be a discovery of how to live with, learn from and construct out of our experience. And while the attempt is conscious, the unconscious is activated—including dreams, memories, symbols, creative processes” (p.75). It is in this unconscious that Emunah (2015) feels one’s deepest and prevailing inclination towards healing resides.

There are currently several published methods to accomplish this working through ideal of Self-Rev. Many of the methods used are also taken from process-oriented drama therapy and some specifically from the Renée Emunah Integrative Five Phase model of drama therapy as discussed earlier in this chapter (Emunah, 2015). ‘Embodying parts of the self’ is a method of working through where the client can identify different parts within oneself and then embody and perform from those different perspectives of self. These parts become easier to enact as the different parts of oneself often will become distinct and separate characters within ones Self-Rev. Usually, the performer will play all the different characters themselves but it is also not uncommon for a person to use auxiliary actors to play these different characters (Emunah, 2015). Emunah (2015) describes the beauty in this method:

The enactments tend to contain humorous, psychologically rich and dramatically intense moments—as one breaks down the self into its compelling and often competing components. There is both clarity and tension as the performer investigates and depicts the complexities of our multidimensionality. (Emunah, 2015, p.75)

The goal in this method of working through is for the actor to get to a place of acceptance, validation, understanding, mastery, and transformation with the numerous parts within themselves. For example, in my own Self-Rev, *It’s Okay Not to be Okay*, which is included and

discussed in the following chapters, I was able to identify and utilize two clear different parts of myself: my inner-director and my inner-critic. By identifying these parts within me and then embodying them in my Self-Rev sessions, I was ultimately able to stand up to as well as accept certain personal troublesome characteristics and tendencies.

Another method of working through often employed in Self-Rev, ‘taking on roles of others,’ is always used in conjunction with other methods of healing. In ‘Taking on roles of others,’ the performer adopts the role or perspective of another person who is often important in their life (i.e., friend, parent, sibling, partner). Taking on this perspective in relation to the underlying theme of the Self-Rev often helps that person gain a broader understanding and gain a different perspective or multigenerational view. This is a method also often used in autobiographical performance (Emunah, 2015). In my Self-Rev process, I tried taking on the roles of past teachers, parents, and friends in order to shed some light on how I was perceived growing up. While some of this material made it into my final performance, much of it did not; nevertheless, the basic process of taking on these roles led to some key discoveries about myself.

‘Trying something new’ is a rather self-explanatory method where the performer will try new things, in rehearsal or in performing, to disrupt old patterns of behavior and represent taking a step forward to new ways of being in the future (Emunah, 2015, p.76). In my own process, I found this to be an extremely effective method of working through that I used in my process as it allowed me at times to break away from my prescribed script and act out/embody what I wanted to do instead of what I felt like I was supposed to do.

‘Closing and opening chapters’ is a fourth method of working through in which the performer can enact and verbalize the closing of one chapter and often the opening of another.

This type of working through is often used when a person has learned a valuable lesson in one period of their life and intends to start new/act differently in the next stage of their life because of what they learned previously.

A fifth method, ‘preparing for immanent change,’ describes when a performer uses Self-Rev techniques to prepare for essential real life changes or events. Emunah (2015) includes a touching example of how this works in her most recent published article on Self-Rev:

A former CIIS faculty member, Judith Glass Collins, who was about to get married, created a Self-Rev...in which she prepared for her wedding day...Her piece included a psychoanalytic investigation into an uncanny relationship and dynamic: her fiancé’s former wife had died from cancer, leading to his eventual availability to a new partner. Judith’s parents had lost a baby, a tragedy that led them to try to conceive again – resulting in her birth. The former death brought her love and the latter brought her life; both were also fraught with guilt. Bringing these subconscious themes to consciousness (including a moving scene in which she speaks to her partner’s deceased wife) enabled the performer to walk down the aisle in a state of grace and peace which she did in the Self-Rev itself and then again a month later on her actual wedding day. (Emunah, 2015, p.76)

This is a touching example of how Self-Revelatory performance can be utilized in helping humans feel more at ease and at peace when transitioning into new stages of their lives.

‘Integrating dramatic healing ritual’ is a method of working through in which the performer can incorporate dramatic healing rituals in their Self-Rev. Past examples of these rituals in Self-Revs include the incorporation of photographs (e.g. of ancestors), altars, candles, family or religious traditions, and/or the creation of a character with healing powers (Emunah, 2015).

‘Confronting a perpetrator’ is a method within Self-Rev that demonstrates how psychodramatic scene work can also be included in the Self-Rev process. In this method of working through, performers may enact feelings, scenes, dances, etc. that represent the

perpetrator but then also in some manifestation confront a representation of their perpetrator as well (Emunah, 2015). Emunah (2015) describes a woman's Self-Rev where she was able to face her abusive father through this method.

'Integrating an internal nurturing figure' is a method where a performer can take time exploring how to take care or heal a hurt or neglected part of him/herself. Most adults who participate in Self-Revs are looking to nurture the child they once were (Emunah, 2015). I found this method of working through to really resonate with some of the work I did in my Self-Rev process as a big portion of my Self-Rev was searching for a point in my life where I got disconnected from my feelings, where I came to believe my own feelings were not legitimate enough to listen to. Through this journey, I discovered 'Sunshine,' an internal role or truth-teller, who did not end up in my final piece, but who still helped me dismantle those other embodiments of self (my inner-director and inner-critic) and ultimately, helped me reconnect to my neglected feelings.

A final method of working through is 'commenting on process in the here-and-now.' In Self-Rev, the theatrical fourth wall¹¹ is almost always broken and so it is a possibility for the performer to pause the action of their Self-Rev and comment on the process in the moment. This method can often include audience participation. 'Commenting on process in the here-and-now' is also a way to ensure performers remain emotionally connected to their piece but while maintaining enough distance from the painful memories they might be reliving (Emunah, 2015). In my performance, I had the audience repeat the phrase "it's okay not to be okay" over and over

¹¹ According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, the fourth wall is "the proscenium opening through which the audience sees the performance" ("Fourth wall," 2016). In the theatre world, this wall also represents the idea that the performers are unable to recognize, interact, or address the audience. When the fourth wall is broken, this often involves the performer acknowledging or speaking directly to their audience.

again when I pointed to them as way of connecting with my audience and to make them understand just how much I needed to hear that phrase in that very moment of the performance. It would not have been enough for me to say the line, as I desperately needed to hear it and take the words in, in order to believe it.

Aside from pausing the action during a performance of a Self-Rev, Emunah (2015) shares that she will often stop the action when working with a client during Phase Four or culminating enactments scene work of the Integrative Five Phase model as it is a good opportunity to check-in with the client about how they are feeling in the moments of action. Emunah (2015) writes:

With a somatic focus that allows client (and therapist!) to take a ‘breather,’ we can glimpse at how the work is ‘registering,’ reconnect to the client-therapist relationship, and stay cognizant of current strengths or resources-at the same time ensuring an easy re-entry into the prior dramatic-emotional terrain” (p.78).

Just as in the process of culminating enactments described earlier, the Self-Rev process also involves the working through of many layers in relation to the core problems being addressed in the piece. From the very beginning of my process, the drama therapist I worked with, Lara Gold, told me there were many layers to any Self-Rev and that while people initially thought their performance would be about one thing, it often ended up being about something different and deeper as the layers of the process peeled away. Thus, as the layers slowly unfold throughout the therapeutic process, Self-Rev allows performers to ‘reweave’ or rework what they have uncovered into pieces of theatre that are more salient and also “psychologically textured and theatrically nuanced” (Emunah, 2015, p.78).

Working through is a crucial component of Self-Rev as merely disclosing and discussing hardships can often leave clients and audience feeling only unsettled, vulnerable, and exposed. A Self-Rev where the performer is simply airing their grievances cannot offer healing to the

performer and it also has the unfortunate potential to burden the audience with the performer's issue. While it is important for the audience to relate and feel for the performer, the audience should not be weighted with the issues of the performer. Rather, if a performer is working through and striving for transcendence, transformation, self-awareness, and healing, the audience is then moved and invigorated.

Theatrically speaking too, it is not the disclosures but rather the healing strands that tend to be more poignant and riveting moments for the audience, and where the universality of the capacity for human resilience is illustrated. (Emunah, 2015, p.78)

Working through is not only unique but also key to Self-Revelatory performance as it gives performers a true sense of mastery of their issue as well as refreshed state of mind and heart (Emunah, 2015).

Still, with these possible risks and stakes for audience, it raises the questions: what is the role of the witnessing audience and why is having a witnessing audience so crucial to the Self-Rev process? I found my answer to this question of the purpose of a witnessing audience by further investigating the importance of witnessing as well as re-exploring the concept of catharsis.

Witnessing

One of Self-Revs defining features is its involvement of live theatre with a witnessing audience. The witnessing factor of performance in drama therapy adds another dimension to the healing process. People are witnessed for their creativity, strength and honesty, an act that can only increase a person's self-confidence (Bailey, 2009). As we know, in Self-Revelatory performance, with the guidance of a director, the actor can directly embody past experiences,

current issues, and future anticipations. However, in addition, an audience will witness, respect, and validate the performer's story, not only offering positive feedback but also a general acceptance of that person and what they have accomplished. Audience members at a Self-Rev play an extremely important part. The role of the audience is to witness the performer. They are *actively* witnessing. Therefore, there is and should be this sense of honor in being an audience member at a Self-Rev.

While a Self-Rev has a witnessing audience, the audience isn't just anyone. In most cases, the audience members have been intentionally invited by the performer to attend. It is important for a performer to really think about who they want present at their Self-Rev which often depends on the content matter of the performance. An invitation to a performance can happen in a number of different ways. In the case of my performance, by putting up posters and publicizing my performance and this thesis, I consciously invited a more general audience because of the educational reasons behind my Self-Rev. However, I would like to think that even if I was not doing the Self-Rev as part of an Honors Study, I would still have invited my college community to attend. I say this because early in my process I decided to really separate my performance piece from my research. Besides journaling so that I could remember what I had done, I separated the two processes of literature research and praxis-based research until the very end, in order to truly immerse myself in what it felt like to go through the Self-Rev process. Finally, I feel pretty comfortable sharing my piece with a wider audience based on the life issue I chose to face but the topic chosen by different performers would definitely have an effect on who they would or would not want to invite to the event.

However, it is important that the audience members enter this experience knowingly. So, before or during a Self-Rev, it is important for the director to give a speech to remind the audience of why they are there and what their role is as the audience. Due to the extreme vulnerability and emotionality involved in sharing one's personal story of struggle, it is okay to tell the audience that the performer may be in a fragile or delicate space after the performance and that they should only be received with applause and smiles after the performance. Despite the audience's active witnessing, there is never direct verbal feedback right away in the Self-Rev process. In some cases, as I will be doing, a questionnaire is handed out to collect feedback for the performer to read at a later date. Further, by entering the space of the Self-Revelatory performance, the audience has agreed to be there for the performer. There is a shared intention between audience and performer to work together to aid personal growth and clarity. The performer has all the power in making the performance whatever they want and this can include audience participation or not. For some performers, it feels right to have the audience be involved as a statement to audience's active witnessing. In one Self-Rev, anytime the performer she said the word "breathe," her audience would respond with "I can feel my body, we're here." This was this performer's strategy for not getting too wrapped up in the work and for showing herself that her audience was there solely to support her (L. Gold, personal communication, February 19, 2016.)

It is notable that many people are already familiar with this notion of being witnessed through other ancient and religious rituals and performances. In fact, many social rituals in our society and societies around the globe also partake in this act of witnessing. At a 1980 planning meeting for the World Conference on Ritual and Performance, Victor Turner, a Scottish-born

anthropologist, stated, “Cultures are most fully expressed in and made conscious of themselves in their ritual and theatrical performances” (Schechner & Appel, 1990, p.1). Turner believes that it is in such rituals and performances that a culture’s values and goals truly become transparent (Schechner & Appel, 1990). In contemporary American culture people get married, have a bar or bat mitzvah and/or graduate in front of a witnessing audience. The idea of being witnessed to legitimize what just took place is a norm in society and Self-Rev simply builds upon and makes intentional this norm.

I was able to experience this feeling of honor when witnessing others when I attended Lara Gold’s, Self-Revelatory performance workshop in New York City and the entire group did a sculpting exercise together. Each person picked a verb that they felt represented an issue or theme for a potential Self-Rev topic, and based on that verb, each participant sculpted a partner to reflect and represent this theme. Each sculpture could incorporate one movement and one sound or phrase. Then, each “artist” placed their “sculpture” around the room and then we had an “exhibition” where the artists toured around the room and took in every sculpture. Afterwards, the group discussed how honoring it was to witness these live verbs knowing that they represented a present issue someone in the room was working through at this very moment. I have to admit I got chills during this exercise. Especially when the group further explored a few people’s sculptures. Lara asked the artists to place themselves in a position in relation to their sculpture, to speak to it, and to move with it. It was a very moving experience to witness the artist’s journey with their sculpture which in many ways was the embodiment of their “beast/issue.” In this process, there were also moments of seeing oneself in another person’s journey. So, although the Self-Rev is for the benefit of the performer, there is definitely the

possibility that other people witnessing a performance will relate to it. It is this relatability alongside of audience legitimization that makes witnessing a crucial aspect of Self-Rev.

A Purpose: Catharsis, Relatability, and Universal Stories.

As mentioned earlier, theatre is considered an important medium to have in society in large part due to its cathartic impact. Upon closer examination, this notion of catharsis, of purgation and cleansing, also helps explain the purpose of Self-Revelatory performance and the necessity of a witnessing audience. The importance of witnessing raises the question of who Self-Rev is for, the performer or the audience. To answer this question, we need to first look more generally at who theatre is for. Although it is generally accepted that Aristotle introduced catharsis as a means of purgation and cleansing, a great deal of uncertainty exists about what Aristotle's intentions were for this term. Or better yet whom catharsis was intended for.

Garrick (1998) in his article "Constructing 'cathartic moments' in theatrical drama: An ancient theory of drama meets the new psychotherapy" questions, "Did he intend the term to apply to the characters only, to the characters and the spectators together, to the spectators only, or perhaps to the highly fraught situation itself?" (p.100). The idea of *mimesis* or imitation of an action is central to catharsis. It is the notion that audiences could watch the tragedy of Oedipus unfold on stage, feel sad and horrible for him but also simultaneously be horrified that if this could happen to Oedipus, a king, it could also happen to them. In Ancient Greece, the audience seating was called the *theatron*, which translates, into the seeing place, the place where the audience could view the action on stage. For these reasons, it is unmistakable that catharsis was intended to influence audience members because the audience and their ability to see the action

was crucial to the set-up of theatre in Ancient Greece. Thus, while it is frequently assumed that Aristotle's intention was for the audience to experience catharsis, it is also arguable that the actors "as the vehicle through which the emotions of the characters are expressed" would naturally experience catharsis as well (Bailey, 2009, p. 374).

Garrick (1998) supports this notion and makes the argument that "an identifiable 'cathartic moment' can be experienced by dramatic characters, directly, and by spectators vicariously" (p.99). He argues that catharsis today can be described as a unique experience in which audience and spectator can enter concurrently. Garrick (1998) introduces psychologists Jay Efran and Timothy Spangler who studied and put forward an explanation as to why and how audience members experience touching moments in drama. Their study was based off of audience's response to filmed drama and they noted two kinds of moments in particular when spectators felt unhappy about the characters' situation and when spectators wept for the characters' situation. Garrick (1998) reports on Efran and Spangler's (1979) study:

the experimenters concluded that most individuals can begin to distinguish (to their own satisfaction) the particular cognitions that reflect sadness and those that trigger weeping—they are not the same. They begin to notice, for example, that they do not and did not cry about Lassie being hopelessly lost (although that is sad and causes tension). They cry when it is clear that Lassie will successfully make her way home (66). (p. 119)

Accordingly, in a cathartic theatrical performance, it is possible for both character and spectator to be cognizant that there is a significant emotional barrier standing in the way of the character's personal ambition and that both will feel suspense and anticipation as to whether the character will be able to overcome said obstacle. However, in pieces of theatre with extremely "revelatory moments" the character's desire to achieve and overcome their obstacles will be so high and palpable, that the audience will willingly also be able to identify and become emotional while

witnessing the character's struggle (Garrick, 1998, p.120). Garrick (1998) believes that without explicitly stating it, Efran and Spangler were exploring the sensation of catharsis:

Spectators experience the abreaction phase of catharsis when they allow themselves to identify with a character who is reliving a trauma. They experience the release or weeping phase of catharsis when the character brings the unfinished emotional business to completion... Thus we may say that spectators may weep or feel a lump in the throat when characters experience raw grief and also later when the characters experience of cathartic release and insight—but the weeping or the lump in the throat is cathartic for the spectators only when it is aroused by the characters' experience of cathartic release and insight (p. 121).

Although Garrick is making his claim about psychodrama, his thesis is also relevant to the main purpose of Self-Rev. While a Self-Rev is first and foremost for the benefit and therapeutic clarity of the performer, it is also necessary for the audience members to be able to relate to or find some universality in the material.

This moment became quite real for me in one of my Self-Rev sessions with Lara when we were working on finding a metaphor as a way of framing my Self-Rev. She pointed out that finding a metaphor is crucial because it is the way to find the universal story within my own personal struggle, a key component of a Self-Rev as that is how the audience can connect and relate. She reminded me that if my story is too specific, then I am only talking about myself, but if I tell my story on a deeper and metaphorical level, we (as humans) can *all* relate because there are only so many stories of struggle or hardship. That is the reason people who are in the audience and witnessing cry or get emotional at Self-Rev performances. There is going to be someone in the audience who connects with your story, not just because it's yours, but because it is also theirs.

“A New Genre of Theatre”: The Meeting Place of Theatre and Therapy.

When people inquire about Self-Revelatory performance, one of the most common questions about the whole practice is whether it should be considered theatre or therapy. The simple answer, and the reason this practice excites me so much, is that it is both. Self-Rev is intended to be a piece of theatre that also has therapeutic and cathartic benefits. Now, the question that usually follows is: but isn't all theatre therapeutic in a sense? Yes, this can be argued especially when thinking again of Aristotle's original intentions for theatre as a cathartic experience for theatregoers and how often performing can be a moving experience in itself for the performer. Aristotle's view of catharsis claimed that theatre should be inherently therapeutic for the audience and spectators and Self-Rev explores the opposite. So yes, in many instances, theatre is extremely therapeutic, but Self-Rev is different in that it is intentionally therapeutic for the performer (and hopefully but not necessary for the audience), a focus that is not often thought about in the typical theatre performance.

Process-oriented drama therapy usually stays between a client and a drama therapist but a crucial component of Self-Rev is that it is worked-on and created with the intention of having an audience witness the final product. The issue chosen to focus on in a Self-Rev, therefore, is not just worked through as discussed in detail earlier but also worked on until it is worthy, in the theatrical sense, of an audience (Emunah, 2015). While working through refers to finding ways to dig into the issue at hand, working on refers to the work one would do on any other theatrical show. This polishing, working, and rehearsal process of a Self-Rev reflects one of any theatrical performance. Further, like in the world of theatre, some final performances will soar and some may flop. Emunah (2015) in her research beautifully articulates the exciting essence of Self-Rev,

“The very nature of the potential contradiction between therapy and theatre paradoxically serves as the crux of inimitable dramatic possibility in the well-done Self-Rev” (p.79). Essentially what makes Self-Rev so exciting theatrically is the fact that theatre and therapy, two fields not usually combined by the laymen, are being combined on stage for an audience to witness.

Let’s really think about this. People enjoy going to the theatre because they like following characters’ stories. They are captivated by the issues faced, the natural ups and downs of plot twists, and being taken into another world or often more specifically, another person’s world (away from the stresses of their own). Therefore, a Self-Rev performance has all of the qualities of theater in the first place, but the circumstances being portrayed are real instead of made-up by a playwright. There is something intensely engaging about witnessing another person facing a current, real-life issue in front of them. Moreover, theatre is already a place where audience members can identify with the characters and experience a range of emotions and even catharsis. These happenings are only made stronger when experiencing them alongside a real human being who is not separate from the character they are playing. Identification and psychological exploration is only augmented in these situations. Further, a more heightened, moving, and raw piece of theatre is then created, notably a goal of most theatre productions, because the separation between actor and character is so minimal. This lack of distance permits for an experience that allows audience members to feel directly connected to the performers’ challenges while the main purpose of the performance still remains the performer’s ability to find understanding (Emunah, 2015). This is different from “regular” theatre because the performance is ultimately for the performer, not the audience, even if they are affected or brought in anyway.

The ability to create theatre that is both captivating for audiences but more importantly therapeutic for the patient/performer is what truly sets Self-Revelatory performance apart.

Yet, with these two components of Self-Rev, the act of balancing them is constant. While a performer wants an engaged and supportive audience, this cannot take priority over the performer mastering the addressed issues. Therefore, there must be equilibrium between the therapeutic and artistic qualities of any Self-Rev. As described earlier, if the scale tips too far in either direction, the performance becomes at risk of either inciting too much pity on the part of the audience or decadence on the part of the performer. Both would unfortunately lead to an inhibiting experience as opposed to a fulfilling or an uplifting one (Eemunah, 2015). In a balanced Self-Rev, both empathy on the part of the audience and transcendence on the part of the performer should be achievable.

As discussed in Chapter 2, distancing theory or aesthetic distance (Landy, 1996) is a key component of Self-Rev because while the performer must be emotionally connected, open, and even vulnerable to their piece, they must not be too close or they risk becoming emotionally overwhelmed and unable to complete the performance (Eemunah, 2015). While it would be plausible for a performer to get emotional during a performance of their Self-Rev, it should not be to the point that the performance cannot be carried out in its planned state.

The best way to comprehend aesthetic distance in relation to a Self-Rev is to understand that the performance must balance moments of underdistance and overdistance. In Self-Rev, moments of underdistance would involve a performer getting emotionally impacted by their piece, which often times adds to the potency and reality of the performance. Audience members in these moments can understand just how authentic the piece and the issues brought up in the

piece are to the performer. For this reason, crying or emotionality should never be planned in a Self-Rev; if it is meant to happen, it will naturally. Alternatively, moments of overdistance would involve the performer, almost observantly or objectively, commenting on what just ensued in their performance. These moments provide insight, perspective, and occasionally humor to audience members because it shows that the performer does have a hold and control over the issue they are grappling with.

According to Emunah (2015) some people believe that when theatre or art is intentionally therapeutic, it cannot truly be considered art. Her response to this is, “Self-Rev breaks that myth. Self-Rev manages to hold the tension between art and therapy. Neither component is sacrificed; rather, both are amplified” (p.81). Now is that not exciting? Self-Revelatory performance is breaking down barriers. It refuses to complacently identify as either theatre *or* therapy, rather proudly claiming its place in both. In my opinion, Self-Rev bridges the gap. It answered my questions as to why and how theatre does so much for me. To me, it’s a place where theatre artists can intentionally create that therapeutic experience they crave while also informing and sharing with others why theatre is so important and full of therapeutic qualities if put into the right context. Beyond that, it is a way for theatre artists to share with those not familiar with theatre how they can use this incredible art form to target issues in their own lives and ultimately experience their own healing and transformation.

Emunah (1994) argues, “Self-revelatory performance is not only a new kind of therapy, but a new genre of theatre” (p.290). As discussed earlier, like great experimental theatre directors and companies who did not view theatre as solely a means to provide entertainment, Self-Rev speaks to the spiritual and emotional needs of audience members and seeks to improve their

quality of life. Self-Rev is right in the center of a new world of theatre where in recent years there has been an abundance of autobiographical theatre and storytelling based in real-life.

After graduating from CIIS, it is not unusual for graduates to perform their capstone Self-Rev performance in the mainstream theatre world. Capstone Self-Revs have been performed at venues like Afro-Mio Theatre Festival, the Diva Festival and the San Francisco Solo Mio Festival as well as at the NADTA conferences. Numerous alumni have taken up offering workshops for actors and non-actors alike to create their own Self-Revs (i.e., Lara Gold, the CIIS Drama Therapy alumni with whom I have been working) and writing or publishing about this experience (Emunah, 2015). Other CIIS alums have taken up directing Self-Revs full time as they continue to find the work fulfilling and exhilarating.

With the growing development of the field of drama therapy, it is evident that there is truly a heightened awareness of the healing potential for both actor and audience through the use of real-life material in theatre (Emunah, 1994). There are, however, differing opinions on who this healing potential of Self-Rev will best serve. On the one hand, Emunah (2015) claims “it is best to limit the use of Self-Rev to work with clients who have some degree of theatrical skill or at least inclination and who have the capacity to be authentically self-reflective” (p.81). Alternatively, Bailey (2009) asserts Self-Revelatory is a performance technique of drama therapy for anyone, “Embodying one’s own story directly allows the self to be seen openly in public—a powerful experience for those who are ready for” (p.378). While Emunah (2015) could see Self-Rev being limited to those with theatrical backgrounds, Bailey (2009) sees Self-Revelatory performance as a way for actors, clients or really anyone to explore and have their own personal

story witnessed in a nonfictional context. I will explore the validity of both of these claims through my own personal experience with Self-Revelatory performance.

Chapter 3: My Self-Revelatory Performance

My Process

The structure of this thesis was greatly informed by my discovery of the experiential learning emphasis in drama therapy training. Many of the Master's programs of Drama Therapy have final theses or capstones that involve creating one's own Self-Revelatory performance. I then also felt the need to deepen my research on Self-Revelatory performance through praxis. I craved to learn by doing, experiencing, receiving feedback, and refining. This chapter chronicles the journey of my praxis-based research on Self-Revelatory performance.

I was very fortunate in my Honors Study process to have the opportunity to work with Drama Therapist, Lara Gold (MA).¹² Lara's qualifications in theater, and dance and drama therapy allow her to use a variety of techniques with participants. In support of my attempt to receive funding from my school for my thesis, Lara wrote a letter to faculty and professors at Connecticut College to explain the purpose of Self-Revelatory performance:

I work with each participant to create a performance piece that will serve as a catalyst for personal growth... There are many benefits of doing this kind of project including increased self-esteem, greater sense of belonging to one's community, increased trust in others and self, personal insight, increased spontaneity and creativity. Most people choose to do a "Rev" because it is an unparalleled way of working through a personal issue through the use of modern ritual. (L. Gold, personal communication, November 1, 2015)

¹² From Lara Gold's website: "Lara Gold, MA is a drama therapist, actor, director and mama with over 10 years experience working in the entertainment business. She earned her BA in dance, graduated from the Neighborhood Playhouse School of Theatre and received her MA in drama therapy from California Institute of Integral Studies. She has worked clinically with individuals grappling with addictions, depression, anxiety, grief & loss, sexuality, gender identity, body image and creativity blocks. Lara now leads RevWorks workshops and provides coaching and counseling to artists looking to deepen their creative process and anyone seeking a greater sense of freedom authenticity in their work and home life. As a coach and director, Lara draws on her training in movement, Developmental Transformations, method acting and drama therapy" (Gold, 2016).

This letter and her articulation of Self-Revelatory performance only reinforced my excitement and curiosity for the form. Lara also clarified that creating a Self-Revelatory performance should not be considered the same thing as attending therapy. In the format of a Self-Rev, Lara's role was that of a director and mine was that of a performer, as if we were putting on any piece of theater. In fact, Lara often recommends that Self-Rev participants seek out emotional support on top of the Self-Rev sessions in the event that the process becomes too emotionally difficult (L. Gold, personal communication, November 1, 2015).

When I initially decided to research Self-Rev and approach my project with a praxis-based learning component, I knew it would be crucial to work alongside a drama therapist so that I had the support and expertise of a professional in the field to ensure I was safely and properly experiencing and analyzing this form. I had nine total sessions with Lara, four over Skype and five in-person at Shetler Studios in New York City. However, Lara was always an email, text, or phone call away and constantly willing to help me better understand the work I was doing beyond our set two-hour sessions. These sessions began on November 8, 2015 and my last session took place on April 27, 2016, four days before my final performance. Working with Lara allowed me to more deeply research this practice as I got to experience the precise thing I was reading and writing so much about. Going the extra step and making this a praxis-based research project allowed me to understand Self-Revelatory performance in a way I never would have been able to if I had only researched the practice through books and articles.

This chapter provides a general overview of the process. It is important to note that drama therapy and Self-Rev techniques were used throughout the entirety of the process from day one until the very end. For instance, as is evident in the discussion of my process, the Self-Rev

concept of working through was central to my own process and became a lot clearer to me after working extensively with Lara. As Lara discussed with me, working through begins on day one of the process because that is when the participant makes a commitment to themselves to go through with the process. The inherent healing begins with this intentional decision (L. Gold, personal communication, February, 19, 2016). The director/performer relationship is also critical to working through as it initiates the process of letting people in. As Lara witnessed me in a vulnerable position throughout the creation of my very personal, yet creative performance, she was preparing me to be witnessed by the bigger audience the day of my performance (L. Gold, personal communication, February, 19, 2016).

Lara also introduced me to the concept of the development of an observing ego, a form of working through I hadn't come across in my earlier research on Self-Rev. In fact, this method of 'working through' actually reflects one of the goals of drama therapy discussed in Chapter 2 called "the observing self" or "director within." This goal reflects the endeavor to create a part of ourselves that is able to reflect, witness, and comment on the other parts of ourselves. The development of an observing ego connects directly with this core goal of drama therapy because the observing ego helps give the participant both distance and perspective during the process of facing the selected life issue. Lara shared with me how she associates the development of an observing ego to working through:

The development comes I believe from the writing and editing process because you then read your writing and shape it as an art piece making decisions about how to heal yourself from an aesthetic point of view, which frees you up to make new choices about how to deal with it or 'work through it'. (L. Gold, personal communication, February 19, 2016)

As I utilized this working through method of the observing ego, Lara's ideas about the different levels and layers of Self-Rev became increasingly clear to me. On a personal note, I went into this process thinking my Self-Rev was going to be about my anxious tendencies. However, I found my real story one layer beneath that as I searched to find the one thing that was tying all my anxious tendencies together. So, while I thought my piece was going to have something to do with my anxiety, it was ultimately about this notion of not letting myself feel certain critical feelings, like fear, sadness, frustration, and self-doubt, by either judging, suppressing, or ignoring them which would present as anxiety in my everyday life. For me, anxiety was the effect of not letting myself feel or accept my true feelings.

It took me a bit of time to access what my Self-Rev was really about because it was hard for me to uncover what I really wanted out of this process. I was so wired and accustomed to rationalizing everything and doing what I think people expect of me. My tendency to be stuck in my head became evident in a lot of my early script work as I constantly wrote 'I think' before any sentence. Lara trained me to force myself to write 'I feel' instead whenever I was inclined to write 'I think' and encouraged me to explore when and why I became disconnected from my feelings. I began asking myself why I started believing my feelings were not legitimate enough. This question truly opened the door and allowed me to find the real story of my Self-Revelatory performance.

Yet, for me and all others who engage in Self-Rev, even once the real story becomes apparent, there is some serious working through that needs to take place between finding the real story and fully comprehending, conveying, and accepting it. In my experience, this is where Lara's method of using externalization as method of working through was fundamental to the

creation of my Self-Rev. Externalization is a form of working through that takes what is inside the participant and allows it be witnessed free of judgment. The simple act of being seen and supported creates room for transformation because the performer internalizes the feeling of being accepted for who they are and what they have to offer (L. Gold, personal communication, February 19, 2016).

Characterization, role theory, and embodiment are some of the many techniques I utilized to externalize my inner thoughts and feelings. By playing and embodying different characters (childhood Leah, parents, teachers, different parts of self) and embodying specific actions or desires, I was able to get out of my head and truly develop scenes. It was important that every scene in the Self-Rev had a purpose and something to actually work through in the moment. Externalization truly helped me show my inner processes in a theatrical way.

Early in the process, Lara explained that there is no one way the rehearsal/creation process of a Self-Rev occurs because the experience of creating one is completely unique depending on the participant and what they bring to every session. Lara, however, presented me with what she believes to be the general arc of the creative process, these seven stages of a Self-Revelatory performance:

1. Setting the Container
 2. Dreaming
 3. Eliciting Story
 4. Script Development
 5. Rehearsal and Staging Refinement
 6. Performance
 7. Reflection.
- (L. Gold, personal communication, September 25, 2015)

Setting the Container is primarily about building a trustful and continually deepening relationship between the performer and the director/drama therapist. Dreaming is the time in the

process when the participant keeps themselves open to any possibilities or inspiration that could feed into their Self-Rev. Inspiration can include fictional or personal stories, music, art, memories, emotional responses, etc. Eliciting Story is when the director and performer begin looking for, extracting, and creating specific personal stories based on what is revealed during the Dreaming stage. In the Script Development phase, the participant starts to create the actual script for the performance. To do this, the participant begins to think about how they would like to structure the selected stories into a script format and the director reads and edits many versions of this script and assists in pulling out the essentials of the story.

Rehearsal and Staging Refinement involves continuous fine-tuning of the script but also much like with any theatrical performance, working on the blocking to create a visually appealing story and performance for the audience. In the Performance stage, the participant, now officially an actor, performs their Self-Rev in front of an invited witnessing audience, often the professors, peers, friends, and family of the performer. During the performance, “the actor is hopefully able to expose and grapple with a theme or issue, usually vulnerable in nature, and be validated and applauded for their bravery and effort to strive for authenticity” (L. Gold, personal communication, November 1, 2015). The audience members play a major role in the performer’s healing and acceptance process with their attendance, attention and thoughtfulness. Finally, Reflection provides an opportunity for the performer to not only reflect and process what happened in both the rehearsal process and final performance but also to celebrate and integrate the discoveries into everyday life. Processing of insight or feelings occurs during this phase and it also provides closure for the actor/director relationship.

A crucial aspect of these seven stages is that they do not represent a linear process. Rather, the stages represent a cyclical method emphasizing this idea that as the performer repeatedly moves through the different stages, each time they are doing so with new knowledge and the possibility to discover or open up something entirely new (L. Gold, personal communication, April 23, 2016). Through an examination of these seven cyclical stages, reflection, journal entries, and an annotated script, this section chronicles my own process and experience creating and performing a Self-Revelatory performance.

I began the first stage, Setting the Container, and the entire Self-Rev process officially on September 25, 2015 when I travelled to New York City to attend a workshop on Self-Revelatory performance Lara presented at New York University sponsored by the Tri-State Chapter of the North American Drama Therapy Association. During this initial workshop, Lara had everyone in the workshop complete a free-writing exercise where we had to free write for 3 minutes straight. In the end Lara had everyone underline the words or phrases within our writing that stuck out to us. In those three minutes, I wrote:

I'm proud of myself for coming to this workshop. I think it would have been really easy to get the email about this and ignore it or say I'll come back to it and start this whole process at a later date--I'll be going into the city another time. It would have been easy to stay at school today, sleep in, catch up on work, hang out with friends (and not try to figure out driving and Metro North), but I think it reveals something in me that I chose to come to the city for this, alone, with aside from some reading on the subject of self-revelatory performance, little experience and knowledge. It excites me that I decided to come because I can see that I am passionate about this thesis and very curious. Coming today showed me I am excited for this thesis and the journey it is going to take me on. (L.Shapiro, journal entry, September 25, 2015)

I love looking back on this journal entry as a reminder of my mindset at the beginning of this project. I was nervous, excited, proud, curious, and passionate all at the same time. This initial workshop was such a useful starting place for me because it made everything that I had already

read about the subject come to life. It gave me a glimpse into how it is one thing to read about what you are studying in textbooks but another whole thing when it is happening live in front of you.

The experimental exercises Lara did with the group really solidified the notion that Self-Revelatory performance *is* a practice of drama therapy and many drama therapy exercises and techniques are used to help create this form of performance. For instance, during the session we embodied different versions of ourselves, free-wrote, and sculpted. It was also extremely useful to experience the Self-Revelatory work in a group. Being situated in Connecticut and not in New York City, working in a group was unfortunately something I would not really get the chance to do for my personal performance, so it was important to me that I at least had the opportunity to see how group Self-Revelatory performance workshops would be carried out. Even in the three short hours I was there, I already found myself deeply touched and moved by things other people in my workshop were going through and how open they were to using these drama therapy techniques to face them. Overall, I am so glad I not only had the opportunity to attend this workshop but that I took the chance in going. At the summer camp where I work, we talk a lot about the Hero's Journey, and saying "yes" to different calls of adventure. I view this thesis as a Hero's Journey of my own. Last spring, I came up with the idea and submitted the proposal, but attending this workshop in September, I truly felt for the first time I was saying "yes! I'm ready to fully commit to this process." I was also glad I attended this workshop in September because it gave me a concrete overview of Self-Revelatory performance as well as some tips and ideas to keep in mind as the year went on.

While my first encounter with Lara was in a group workshop, I do feel like it was the beginning of Setting the Container and building my relationship with her as my director. Setting the Container involves for us involved figuring out logistics such as meeting times and rates but it also involved meeting, getting to know each other, and building a bond. It is important to figure out in these initial meetings if the performer and drama therapist mesh and connect as humans and if they can work productively within the actor-director relationship. Since I was unable to travel to New York for every session with Lara as that was not cost effective, we did have several skype sessions in the beginning of the process to continue building our relationship. While the workshop was a useful introduction to the practice of Self-Rev, our initial skype session was when we truly began building our relationship.

In this session, Lara stated that she was going to take some time to get to know me and that she would be taking notes of our conversation in the event that something I expressed sparked something for her. I told her very generally about myself, my majors, my extracurricular activities, my family, and my background in theatre. I told her that one of the main reasons why I picked this topic for my thesis was because my parents put me in theatre as a child to increase my self-confidence. As I wrote about in the introduction, I was a bit shy and anxious and they thought theatre would help bring me out of my shell. I explained that theatre grew into something I loved to do. I loved that the simple act of doing theatre had made a noticeable difference in the way I carry myself and approach life. Thus, I had first-hand experience with the cathartic capacities of regular theatre and I was excited to explore what happens when one has more intentionality with this innately therapeutic art form.

During these early stages, I explained to Lara that I have anxious tendencies and often get worked up over things that are out of my control (not surprisingly, this trait of mine became the starting place for my Self-Rev). In return she expressed to me that Self-Rev, while very therapeutic, can also be anxiety provoking. She wanted to know if I had any coping strategies as going through a Self-Rev can at times open up a Pandora's box of things. It was important for her to know I had strategies and other people to talk to if the process began bringing out those more difficult emotional feeling in me. This reinforced a core aspect of Self-Revelatory performance: it should not be considered the same as being in therapy and the director in a Self-Rev, although trained in drama therapy, should not be viewed as one's therapist. Self-care and being aware of how we are able to take care of ourselves is all a part of the Self-Rev process.

Once Lara and I felt adequately acquainted, I entered the Dreaming phase. During this phase, Lara emphasized the importance of remaining open to everything in the beginning of the process because one should not go into the process having a set idea of what the final performance will be. Lara helped me better understand this stage by comparing the dreaming process to the brainstorming period of writing a paper. When writing, one should not go into the editing process too early so that everything that needs to be said can get out on the piece of paper before revising. This analogy really resonated with me because my writing style is exactly as Lara described; I have to get all of my ideas and words onto the paper, even if it is technically a mess, before I can start formatting and editing the paper (L. Gold, personal communication, November 8, 2015).

In this early stage, it was crucial to leave myself time to take walks, daydream and journal. Especially since we began having sessions well in advance of my final performance,

Lara emphasized that I should not be actively thinking about what exactly I wanted my piece to be about. Instead, she encouraged me to do things that would evoke my creative energy including looking at art, listening to music, or reading poetry. However, this could mean a multitude of things for different individuals, as humans tend to get their creative energies from different places (L. Gold, personal communication, November 8, 2015). Lara advised that collecting images, songs, music, patterns, and body positions that moved and/or impacted me as well as finding and gathering things I connected with would prove helpful in the long run as some of those things might help inspire aspects of the performance or even find their way into the final product (L. Gold, personal communication, September 25, 2015).

This type of Dreaming can be extremely helpful in the beginning because it allows ideas and images to bubble and live within the unconscious of the participant ultimately creating ideas that come less from a thinking place and more from an inspired one. The creative process does not always work when the participants wants it to or in the hour they have assigned themselves to work on the Self-Rev and so this phase allows participants to constantly be dreaming about the Self-Rev, both consciously and unconsciously. This phase highlights the unpredictable nature of Self-Rev that makes it such a unique and special form. It is not a performance that can be figured out from the beginning stages because often a person goes into the process thinking it is going to be about one thing and it frequently turns out to be something different, usually something deeper or an explanation or causation for the original idea. I will discuss why and how this happens later in this chapter. I had a relatively extended Dreaming phase as Lara and I had our first official session over skype in November but did not really begin finding the story or developing the script until after winter break in February.

After this point in the process, the phases really began to overlap. As I entered the Eliciting Story stage (where one begins to unearth specific stories from the Dreaming and journaling phase) and began utilizing different drama therapy techniques, I was still dreaming and also was beginning to develop my script. The Eliciting Story stage was all about trying to find out what my story was at this point in my life. It was helpful to remember that I did not need to have all the answers because my Self-Rev is just the beginning of exploring and asking these questions. I knew that whatever point I arrived at for the final Self-Rev would be acceptable because I would purely be revealing and letting the audience witness where I currently stood within my life story in that moment of time. In writing the script, it was helpful to remember that my story did not need to be a linear one. As a piece of art, it has an aesthetic quality, so it does not have to make the most sense chronologically. Also, some scenes will have text and others won't. The key is every single Self-Rev will look different. I started creating knowing that my Self-Rev could be more verbal or visual or physical depending on what gets me in a more spontaneous and emotional space as opposed to just a head space. As an actor and performer, I needed to figure out how my instrument best worked so that I could get into a more heightened, theatrical space and truly work through my story.

I also worked with metaphor as a way of finding and framing my personal story as well as the universal one. Finding the universal story within the personal was a key component in ensuring the audience would be able to relate to my Self-Rev. For this reason, many Self-Revs involve the breaking of the fourth wall because the performer wants the audience to be brought in and involved. As the performer, I am not trying to cater my story to fit audience members but they should be able to connect to it on a certain level.

Eliciting Story and Script Development often went hand-in-hand with the video diary technique Lara introduced to me. Once I was able to get into the mindset of the character I was trying to be or the feeling I was trying to evoke, I could speak freely as my computer recorded me. I then was able to re-watch these videos and write monologues or scenes based off of these video diary entries (L. Gold, personal communication, February 11, 2016). This technique made sure I was saying and expressing things I was feeling in the moment as opposed to trying to write scenes of what I thought I should be feeling. One of the most challenging parts of the Script Development phase was trying to create a script that felt like a collection of real moments as opposed to a college essay. I had to teach myself how to write from a place that was not concerned with someone reading and grading my work but rather from a deeper place that was riskier and raw because I wanted the audience to feel the genuine nature of my story.

The Script Development was also a lot about finding balance. In a Self-Rev, it is acceptable for the performer to take more time in any given moment of a scene or monologue than one would in a normal theatre performance because it is first and foremost for *them*. The script needed to be both compelling to play but also to watch so Script Development is a lot about finding that balance. Ideally, the audience should be able to feel what I'm talking about/showing them. In the final few sessions, Lara and I worked together a lot on the order of the script. Now that I had mostly determined what my story was, I had to find the best, most aesthetic and interesting way to present it. During this time, I cut down the amount of text I was including to ensure I would be showing and not telling my way through the Self-Rev. This progress is reflected in a post-session journal entry I wrote on the train home following my third-to-last session:

Tonight was really helpful. I can see a final draft in sight. A big thing Lara focuses on with me is how to physicalize, externalize, and theatricalize the things I'm feeling. It's about putting thinking into feeling and words into actions. I need to do things on stage to show how I'm feeling instead of always trying to articulate how I'm feeling. Lara helped me find a through-line—the one idea that I can keep coming back to, an idea that I can begin the performance with saying *this* is what I want to achieve. (L. Shapiro, journal entry, April 7, 2016)

About two weeks later, I was able to finalize the script, a week and a half before my May 1, 2016 performance.

The Rehearsal and Staging Refinement phase really took place in the final three weeks before my performance. During this time, I had two more sessions with Lara where I ran through the entire show with the sound cues (I was not able to work the lighting with Lara so I practiced with the lights on my own the week leading up to my performance). Lara and I discussed how these versions of the performance felt for me to perform. I emphasized that even though I was nearing the final draft of my script, the working through continued in every session. After my second to last session, I journaled:

Today was a huge step in my Self-Rev process. I really felt we were still working through some of the material. It took a lot of trial and error, listening to what my body wanted to do, and figuring out what actions I wanted to complete, as opposed to felt like I should. I realized my script also still had a lot of text in it and by working through some of the moments with the Self-Rev approach of 'trying something new,' I realized the piece became more powerful the more I was able to show what I was feeling instead of telling. I again cut down a significant amount of text. (L. Shapiro, journal entry, April 21, 2016)

This journal entry shows that despite being later in the arc of process in terms of rehearsal and refinement, the drama therapy did not stop.

I also took this time to familiarize myself with my script. However, due to the fact that this was a completely self-created piece of theatre, I was not that concerned about memorization because it truly did not feel like memorization. Instead, I was simply familiarizing myself with a

story I had already written and figuring how to live through this story on stage. Rather than being so set on learning every single line word-for-word, I approached this process by first learning what happened when in the script, knowing the language of the script would naturally follow. Finally, Lara and I blocked and rehearsed my performance just as a director and actor would do with any other piece of theater. For example, we worked on some of the monologues in the script to ensure I kept discovering something new in them, using fresh thoughts each time. We also worked on the characterization of different roles I was playing to make sure the audience would be able to tell I was playing roles different than myself. For these reasons, near the end of the process, despite the fact that I was still journaling about my experience and process, I felt like I was preparing for a genuine theatre performance as I would for any other show I have ever been in.

In total, besides working through, other drama therapy techniques I used included role theory (distinguishing and playing out different characters/parts-of-self), psychodrama and improvisation, Integrative Five Phase model, aesthetic distancing, authentic movement (a dance therapy technique) and sculpting. When comparing what I actually did in my own Self-Rev journey versus what I researched and wrote about, I see a common theme. While there were certain methods and techniques that I used a lot in my process, there were others I did not use at all. This made a lot of sense, however, within the context of creating a Self-Rev as every drama therapist/director and participant in the Self-Rev partnership is different. While the existing literature is immensely helpful in understanding Self-Rev, its history, and its connection with drama therapy, the reality of the form is that it will be a unique and different experience depending on the individuals involved. First, drama therapists have differing educational and

training backgrounds that will help determine their familiarity with the techniques and methods. Second, in Self-Rev, the performer is the one guiding the process depending on what they bring forward to every session. With these two integral components, it is clear to me that the process of going through a Self-Rev, while grounded in some core concepts and ideas, will be excitingly distinctive to every participating individual. In my experience, with Lara's guidance and support, I was able to create a genuine Self-Revelatory performance that allowed me to confront, reveal, and embrace parts of myself as well as gain much-needed clarity as to the way I have been approaching and living my life.

My Performance.

My Self-Revelatory performance took place on May 1, 2016 at 1 p.m. in Tansill Theater at Connecticut College. I arrived at the theater at 11 a.m. to start preparing for the performance. I took the time to put a post-show questionnaire and pen underneath every seat so that they would be available to the audience immediately after the performance. The only set pieces in my performance were four labeled chairs that I then set up in their pre-show positions. I also brought out the music stand that I was going to use for my presentation portion of my performance. After I set up all those components, I did a brief cue-to-cue with my light and soundboard operator to make sure all the technical components of the performance were running smoothly. We had been in theater two times early that week to write the cues and rehearse with them so this was just a final check. During this quick tech run-through, the Theater Department had a photographer come to take a few photos.

After this, Lara Gold, my director and drama therapist, arrived and I got her situated in her seat, talked her through the order of my performance, and introduced her to my thesis

advisor. 15 minutes before 1 p.m., I went to a back room in the theater to get in the performance mindset. I did some physical exercises to warm-up my body and some mental exercises to get in the right head space. I talked myself through what I wanted to achieve with this performance and that my goal was to feel lighter and more free and open after the performance. This type of mental preparation before the run of the performance was key in order to ensure the stakes were high enough when I began. Then, suddenly, it was 1 o'clock and time to begin.

My thesis advisor introduced me and then prior to my Self-Rev performance, I gave a 15-minute presentation designed to provide a brief overview of what I researched in my thesis and give audience members some context for Self-Revelatory performance. I then invited Lara up on stage to give final words of preparation to the audience about what their role was in this type of theatre performance, as active witnesses. Finally, Lara left the stage, the preshow music began, and it was time for my performance. I definitely had some nerves right before I went on stage as I realized that I was about to open up very personally to around 50 or more people but very soon into the performance I realized everyone in the room was there to support me and my nerves quickly disappeared. The whole performance flew by and before I knew it I was bowing in front of a cheering audience. The actual Self-Revelatory performance ran about 25 minutes.

My Script.¹³

Light Cue 1 house opens

Light Cue 2 presentation look

Sound Cue 1 preshow music: Lost Boy by Ruth B.

Light Cue 3 blackout

¹³ See Appendix C for a link and password to view the video recording of this performance. Due to the nature of Self-Rev, this script might vary slightly from the actual performance as the performer has the freedom to change some things in the moment.

*It's Okay Not to be Okay*¹⁴

A Self-Revelatory performance by Leah Shapiro

SCENE 1

*Leah enters and takes place on chair labeled fear.***LIGHT CUE 4** *Lights up warm emphasis.*

*There are four chairs on stage, they each have their own label. **FEAR, SADNESS, SELF-DOUBT, and FRUSTRATION**¹⁵. Leah is standing on the chair labeled fear. She looks at the audience and speaks directly to them. She doesn't move but it is almost as if she is in a different world and she is trying to take in as much of it as possible. There's a sense of happiness and wonder being in this place.*

Leah: Can you feel that? (*deep breath*)
 There is something so sacred in this moment—
 Right now,
 Right in this very instant. (*deep breath*)
 I'm standing before you, not moving.
 And there you all are, simply sitting before me. (*deep breath*)
 The world continues to go on and turn around us outside of here.
 People are dying,
 Getting their hearts broken,
 Falling ill,
 There's a natural disaster somewhere and a terrorist attack somewhere else---but
 right here? (*deep breath*)
 Right here, in this very moment, there's none of that. We're just here. (*deep
 breath*)
 Suspended in this moment...
 And something about that feels good, right?
 Safe... (*deep breath*)

She needs to explain. Gets a bit more excited.

Because I can't take a step back,

¹⁴ I decided on this as the title for my Self-Revelatory performance after listening to this mash-up of Pretty Hurts/Try/Who You Are by Louisa Wendorff and hearing the phrase "it's okay not to be okay." This phrase was a broader encapsulation of a phrase I journaled earlier on in the process "it's okay to be afraid." It just clicked as a big part of my performance is about accepting those parts of self that sometimes make us "not ok" as constructed by society. Although it may evoke associations of the book, *I'm OK—You're OK* by Thomas Anthony Harris, in fact, it is unrelated.

¹⁵ These chairs represent a barricade; these are the feelings I don't let myself feel/accept. This became my metaphor for the performance.

And I can't move forward,
 So I can't do something wrong, can't let anyone down,
 Can't disappoint anyone, can't *be* disappointed
 Right here, in this moment, I'm comfortable. (*deep breath*)
 Here, I'm good enough
 This is my favorite spot.
 No decisions to make,
 No consequences or failures to face.
 This is my perfect equilibrium. (*deep breath*)
 This is Safe.¹⁶

SOUND CUE 2 *the beating heart and voices*

All of the sudden voices start to interject and the audience realizes Leah is struggling to make "a jump." The lights shift as we're brought down to reality. Different voices are yelling... a fast heartbeat¹⁷ is heard simultaneously. She's nervous. Anxious. She can respond to the voices if she feels like it.

"What are you waiting for?"

LIGHT CUE 5 *cold emphasis*

"Just jump or I'm going to push you!"

"Oh my god, this is getting ridiculous"

"What? Are you scared?!"

"You're such a baby!"

"Pull the trigger!"

"Are you a little scardey cat?!"

"Please take longer, I *dare* you"

¹⁶ This monologue came to be after I was trying to understand what fear felt like in my body. I realized that moments of fear paralyze me and I get into this mindset of not wanting to move in any direction because I don't know what will happen and so I get comfortable in staying in my exact spot. I then decided to write a monologue about what it would feel like to be *in* that moment of comfortable paralysis. If I don't make a choice, nothing can go wrong and I wanted to have the audience understand what that felt like for me through this monologue. This was also a section in which we really focused on the theatrical component and Lara, as my director, coached me through the monologue as an acting instructor would.

¹⁷ When I do get anxious, I often feel it in my heart. I know I'm anxious when I'm aware my heart exists because it feels heavier than usual. When I'm not anxious, I feel freer and lighter and I don't notice my heart. With the fast heartbeat sound effect, I wanted the audience to realize I was aware of my heart.

“Just GO already!”¹⁸

The yelling gradually turns into a collective chanting:

“Leah! Leah! Leah”

Leah finally musters up enough courage to speak:

Leah: STOP IT. JUST STOP. OKAY!? Just give me a minute to think about it. I just need a minute to think. Okay?...

Realizes she forgot to THINK. She speaks to the audience.

Oh! Thinking. I should think, that could help...

She gets down from the chair and runs off stage left exit, excited that thinking may help her make the jump.

LIGHT CUE 6 *cold with house up*

SCENE 2

Thinker¹⁹ enters stage right excited, energized, and unapologetic. She's hilariously²⁰ nasally and patronizing.

Thinker: Hi excuse me, is this Leah's Self-Rev? Yeah? Oh okay, good, good, good.

Thinker looks around.

¹⁸ Fear is very physical and fear is irrational. This scene represents how in the thought process surrounding fear, there is a judgment I inflict on myself, the idea that I should be able to do it/conquer whatever I am fearful of.

¹⁹ For a while, this role was cast as the student/scholar/thinker who would explain the research component of my thesis but I ultimately decided that to have that as a part of the Self-Rev was preventing me from completely immersing myself in the Self-Rev experience. This notion of a “Thinker” character manifested in a number of different ways in my piece throughout the process. I continuously liked this idea of having a character who was either a researcher, a thinker, a student—a character who was able to serve as an onlooker to the situation and explain what was happening. I settled on the Thinker when Lara pointed out I needed a character to represent the immense amounts of thinking I put into every thought, feeling, decision I have, which often leaves me stressed, anxious or fearful. This is a sensitive subject for me so having a character/role outside of myself that could reveal this tendency was a way for me to create more distance from a touchy subject.

²⁰ This character ended up being quite humorous in the final performance, receiving many laughs. This exemplified how humor can be used as way to create some overdistance to reveal the actor has a grasp on the heavy material they are dealing with.

I'm not *that* late right?! Phew. Thank god. I made it just in time. I have some really important safety announcements before we begin.

Pulls list out of pocket.

Okay, so first thing is: cell phones! They should be off. You all know they could ring or ding or whatever they do and really ruin the performance. Also, I don't know if you guys were aware but cell phones actually give off this horrible radiation that's quite dangerous to the human body so I would just turn it off and then toss 'em, it's probably for the best.

Thinker walks into the audience.

Don't mind me, I'm just going to walk through here to make sure you guys aren't hiding anything under your seats...no pets!!... alright ... looks pretty good...I don't trust you guys, but looks pretty good.

Walks back to stage.

Please just remember that literally anything could happen at any given moment...we just don't know. I know I must seem a little neurotic, but I'm only doing this for Leah's best interest. Someone has to be on guard ... It's my job to make sure she makes good, practical, well-informed choices. No rash decisions ever. We need to always be thinking because if we don't, something bad *will* happen. Let's just say Leah is *really* lucky to have me in her life. Alright Leah! You can get back up there—the stage is yours! Everyone: make good choices, enjoy the show, and please be careful!

Thinker exits stage right.

LIGHT CUE 7 *cold with house lights down.*

SCENE 3

Leah enters stage left. She tentatively walks towards her chair. She is scared to get back up—the thinker has gotten to her. Thinking didn't help just made her more nervous. She looks down at what's below—jumping means jumping into all those feelings she frequently shuts out.

Leah: Okay okay. (*thinks*).

If I jump, I'd feel so free, but I could also get hurt and that's scary²¹, but I can't walk away...you're all watching me²²... I'd be a failure...

Ha. Of course I'm thinking about this. Right thinker!? I'm *so* lucky to have you in my life...isn't that what you said? Yeah, I'm so lucky that I can't even make one *freaking* decision. I can't just choose to do something or say something or feel something because of *you*. Because of you I have to think of every single possibility of every situation. No! Screw you. I'm going to make a choice.

She can't make it on her own. Begins to plead towards thinker.

Just let me make ONE confident choice!! PLEASE...Even if it's the wrong one.

Leah begins quietly whisper- singing, trying to convince herself she's not afraid, she can make this jump, but she still sings very uneasily about the situation she's in:

***I'm not afraid of anything
Be it mountains, water, dragons, dark or sky
I'm not afraid of anything
Tell me where's the challenge if you never try
So watch me fly
I'm not afraid²³***

She prepares to jump. Looks down. She still can't bring herself to do it. She can't make the jump. She's disappointed. She asks herself if she's still afraid? She takes her time.

I'm still afraid.

LIGHT CUE 8 *lights out blackout.*

LIGHT CUE 9 *lights up normal light*

²¹ This scene represents this set dichotomy I've set for myself, that if I make one wrong move I could go down in flames. I created this difficulty in my life and as uncomfortable as it is, I'm used to it. A goal of this piece was to gain a different mindset where there is no good or bad, just perspective and feelings in the moment. This scene represents a disconnect from my feelings and this feeds into why in the ending I am so adamant about listening to my feelings.

²² This line represents how the audience can be there as support but in many ways, they also represent the masses and that pressure and in this moment I project that onto my audience.

²³ This is an excerpt of the song "I'm Not Afraid of Anything" from the musical *Song for a New World* written and composed by Jason Robert Brown.

SCENE 4

SOUND CUE 3 *recorded letter*

*Leah stands center stage. She stretches and points out what she's headed for. She begins lightly jogging in place. A voiceover comes over the theater. Throughout the letter, Leah is pushed to run faster and harder. She is trying to reach something ahead of her, she **cannot** give up.*

Dear Mr. and Mrs. Shapiro,

It really is such a pleasure to have Leah in class. We absolutely adore her. As you know, Leah is a happy, vivacious, and independent child. However, we'd love for her to have more security and confidence in who she is. In school, she frequently stammers under pressure. She really seems anxious about contributing to class discussions. We want Leah to work on that so that she can become more confident in the knowledge she has. She is very friendly with her peers but when she gets into the classroom she freezes up a bit. When she is unsure of something, she simply doesn't speak up. We just want to hear from her more and for her to be less afraid of being wrong. Being wrong is okay, that's how we as humans learn, Leah just hasn't seemed to grasp that yet. Please don't worry, Leah is on a good path, we just want her to work on some things now before they get worse.²⁴

The voice stops and Leah collapses with her hands on her knees. Eventually, fully collapsing to the ground.

Leah: I'm tired. I just want to sit. I'm tired of thinking so goddamn much. I'm tired of trying. I just want to stop trying so hard. What's the worst that could happen? Can't I just stop?

Turns her questions on the audience

What would you think if I stopped?

Points to an audience member.

You'd think I'm lazy.

Points to an audience member.

²⁴ This "letter" is a compilation of real report cards my parents kept from my childhood. When I looked to my parents for stories and memories during the Dreaming phase, my mom read me some of the report cards and I just knew they were going to end up in my final piece somehow. I also decided to have my mother record herself reading this letter as if she was reading my report card. This was intentional as I knew it would fuel me in the moment to hear it in her voice as it is not uncommon to internalize the things our parents say even if it isn't actually coming from them directly.

You would think I'm entitled.

Points to an audience member.

And you'd probably think I just don't care enough. *(Pause)* But would you care? You'd still love me if I stopped trying so hard, right? If I stopped getting good grades, you still love me? You'd still love me if I showed when I was feeling sad or upset, right?²⁵ Isn't just being alive enough? Shouldn't just *being* be enough? *(Scoffs)* No. Of course it's not. It's never enough. I have to keep trying.

She gets up and starts running again.

SOUND CUE 4 *mash-up*

*"Pretty Hurts/Try/Who You Are Mash-up" begins playing. She gets up and starts sprinting again but Leah **feels** this song deep down in her core. As she continues to take the song in, maybe even singing along, her sprint turns into a jog, and then eventually she is just walking in place. She looks at her feet.*

LIGHT CUE 10 *cold emphasis*

*She starts walking around the space and really notices the four chairs, representing her four obstacles/the things she doesn't let herself feel. She touches them, looks at them, taking her time deciding what to do with them. The urge to knock, kick, push, pull etc. the chairs labeled **SADNESS**, **SELF-DOUBT**, and **FRUSTRATION** away is pervasive. She does something different with each one. At the end of the song, only the chair labeled **FEAR** remains upright.²⁶*

She sits in chair.

SOUND CUE 5 *fade music*

She thinks about the last line of the song "It's okay not to be okay." She begins to ask the audience the same question.

Leah: Is it? Is it okay not to be okay?

She waits for a response from the audience. If they don't answer, ask again until they do.

²⁵ For a while I didn't want to include specific examples of what "stopping" meant. However, in figuring out how to balance the personal with the universal, Lara and I realized it would ultimately resonate with the audience more if was clearer about what I was referring to in this section.

²⁶ The idea to knock these chairs over came to me in a working through session when we were just trying something new and not following my set script. Lara played the song for me and when I stopped running and started walking around the space and noticed these chairs, this urge to get rid of them overcame me and I realized I needed to listen to that instinct. Later, I realized knocking down the chairs came to me because in this moment I *think* I want to get rid of those feelings. However, ultimately the piece becomes about accepting and embracing those feelings instead of closing myself off to them.

Leah: No, I'm really asking you. Is it okay not to be okay?

If anyone says no: "well, I need it to be." She wants/needs to hear it is. She's looking for validation.²⁷

Leah: Would you all try something with me?

LIGHT CUE 11 *normal and house up*

Great. Okay I'm going to split you all into two groups. (*Splits audience down the middle. Points to the left side*) You guys are going to be "It's okay" and (*points to the right side*) "Not to be okay." Okay? *She tests them.* Okay! So when I point to your side I want you all to say your phrase.

Points back and forth with the audience—mixes up the orders. This is not celebratory but a convincing tactic. She can ask them to get louder and more confident. Maybe gets everyone to say whole thing together.

Leah: Okay just a few more times!!

SOUND CUE 6 *critical voices begin*

She begins hearing voices. She shushes the crowd, uses her hands to get them to quiet down. The lights shift back to the stage.

Leah: Do you guys hear that?

The voices of her inner-director (Princess) and inner-critic, two distinct voices fill the space. The voices are repeatedly saying:

P: "Are you kidding me?"

C: "Please just tell me this is a joke"

P: "I cannot believe you're doing this in front of all these people"

C: "What could you feel bad about?"

P: "It's not okay not to be okay"

C: "What could possibly be wrong with your life?"

P: "chop chop we have work to do"

C: "Why are you even having these feelings they're not legitimate"

P: "This is so unproductive"

C: "you are so self-indulgent"

P: "You have no reason to be here"

C: "get out of here"

²⁷ Not one audience member said no.

*P: "This is a waste of all our time."*²⁸

Leah: No no no no no, this can't be happening right now. I was getting so close...

LIGHT CUE 12 house lights down.

She stands center stage with her hands over her ears and eyes closed, trying to block out and ignore what they are saying. The voices are just looping. When she can't take it anymore, she yells:

Leah: ENOUGH! STOP IT!

SOUND CUE 7 fade critical voices

Leah: JUST STOP IT YOU TWO. I can't take it.

*She goes to sit in the **FEAR** chair in the middle. She puts her hand on her chest.*

Leah: I can't breathe when you do that.

Directed towards invisible inner-director on the left

Leah: I can't breathe when you stress me out like that or...

Directed towards inner-critic on the right

Leah: When you don't let me listen to myself.

She sits in chair trying to figure out her next move.

Leah: I need to confront them, dismantle them, take them down—I need to show them I'm in charge.²⁹

²⁸ In earlier versions of my script, I actually fully played out the roles of Princess and the inner-critic. They represent how I do not let myself get away with certain things and the harsh judgment I often have of myself. These characters are what prevent me from feeling and accepting FEAR, FRUSTRATION, SADNESS & SELF-DOUBT. However, their presence shifted in the piece over time until they just became voiceovers and I was able to focus on being me in those moments really taking in what they were saying to me and preparing to confront them. This made it more powerful for me.

²⁹ This scene came out of an exercise to write a scene about getting rid of this inner-director (Princess) and critic. I had to figure out what I wanted to say to each of them, what I want and where I want them to go and I had to differentiate what I said to each of them. The goal was that in speaking to them and calling out what they do to me, I would be able to dismantle their power over me. In scripting and rehearsing this scene, I would practice telling them off until I felt truly empowered and that's when I knew I had gotten it right. In doing this, I embody the role of the truth teller/Sunshine. Sunshine is a character I had explored earlier but didn't need to be a part of the final script because I (as Leah) become that healthier version of self.

She starts with the inner-critic. Really looks at where critic is on stage right so the audience can see the critic too.

Leah: You! You're so tall and big and mean—you think that makes it okay to criticize my every move!? I know my problems and fears and insecurities aren't always monumental or life changing but they are *my* feelings and so I need to listen to them and accept and legitimize them. If I don't I just bottle them up and they suffocate me and I become mean. And I don't want to be mean to the people I love!³⁰

So what to do with you...

She walks around the tall critic, looking the critic up and down.

How am I going to take you down...Ha! I'm going to make you feel small—you always make me feel small and unworthy and now it's your turn.

She reaches up to grab him and pulls him all the way down to the ground. Then she stomps and jumps on the critic, until the critic is nothing but sand. Finally, she scoops what is left of the critic into her hands and makes her way over to an imaginary trash can at the corner of the stage.

Leah: I'm going to throw you away because I don't need you anymore.

Empties hand of sand into the trash—miming the sand falling out of her hands. When she's done, wipes them together to make sure she got all of the sand. She sighs. Then she turns to face stage left to address the inner-director (Princess).

Leah: And you! You princess! You prissy little miss perfect—what to do with you. You set up these unnecessary and ridiculous expectations of who I should be and nobody cares except for you! It's too much pressure!

Finally, she picks Princess up around the waist and sits her down on one of the chairs.

Leah: Stop kicking me! Okay you sit here. Now listen, I do not need you telling me what I can and cannot do anymore. But I know a lot of times you are just trying to do what's best for me because you want me to succeed. So you can stay, but you have to lower the expectations and the pressure, can you do that?!

Leah sits in the chair and briefly embodies Princess. Princess has her legs crossed and an "air" to her.

³⁰ This is related to the idea that how our own personal issues impact the greater world. We want ourselves to be happy but we also want to be good people to our friends and family and the people we interact with. If I can be more accepting of my feelings, than I am kinder to myself, more loving, and then ultimately a kinder person to others as well.

Princess: *Sighs.* Fine. If it will make you happy, I will try my very hardest.

Stands up and becomes Leah again.

Leah: Great! Okay, why don't you take a seat in the audience and you can watch the rest of the show and support me from there. Let's go let's go.

Leah escorts and walks Princess to her seat.

She sighs and wipes her hands clean of them.

Leah: I did it.

She returns to the fear chair and takes a seat but not putting her legs down.

LIGHT CUE 13 *warm emphasis*

During the next monologue, she is ultra-focused to circle her body on the chair, all the way around, but with her feet in the air. Below her are all those feelings. This is actually hard in real life to do. It's clear it's a struggle. She is not focused on what she is saying but rather, completing the task successfully.

Leah: It's scary to not have your feet on the ground.
 To not know what is going to happen
 To not know the future.
 To know you might fail
 Or have your heartbroken
 Or lose someone you love
 Those are real fears and honestly, I don't always know what to do with them.

It's all part the unknown and it's terrifying...but that's not going to go away... So, I just want to embrace it instead.

I want to *allow* myself to let those things out.³¹

I want to admit what I am feeling and accept those feelings as all natural parts of me.

I am going to choose to listen to myself...to my thoughts, my feelings, my instincts, my intuitions and I'm choosing to accept them no matter what they may

³¹ I love this final monologue because they have lines from my journals from my very first sessions with Lara. To me these lines represent my initial goals that I was finally able to reach or at least understand by the end of this process.

be because those are all things that show me that I care so deeply about the life I'm living.³²

Finally speaking only to myself

You have permission to listen to yourself. Do it.

She very slowly lowers her feet to the ground, accepting the feelings that are down there. Her feet touch the ground.

LIGHT CUE 14- *warmer light look*

She picks up the knocked over chairs and places them in a circle. Once she does that she begins to sing, the same song as earlier but with much more comfort and clarity than earlier.

***I'm not afraid of anything
Be it mountains, water, dragons, dark or sky
I'm not afraid of anything
Tell me where's the challenge if you never try
So watch me fly
I'm not afraid***

*One by one she sits in each chair, starting in **FEAR**, and takes in what each chair makes her feel. At the last line of the song, she sits back in **FEAR** and sings last line to audience. At the end, she stands up and walks away from the chairs. Exits stage right and lights fade on the chairs.*

LIGHT CUE 15 *blackout*

End of show.

Immediate Post-Show Reflection.

Directly after taking my bow and being greeted by the audience's applause, I walked off stage and went back to the room where I prepared for my performance. I took out my phone and recorded a voice memo to capture my immediate post-show reactions:

I just did my Self-Revelatory Performance and it was such an incredible and freeing

³² The final monologue captures the essence of what I discovered in this process: that expression and acceptance decrease fear and anxiety.

experience to be able to openly share my story in front of all those people. I feel like I reached a level of catharsis as I was able to expose and release certain suppressed thoughts, feelings, and emotions. I was definitely nervous before I started but just the love and support that was pouring out of the audience made me feel so comfortable in that this was my time to share. I could do whatever I needed to do on that stage and it would have been *okay*. I was confident in my script and what I had worked on in all my sessions so it was truly my time to sit in the piece and be fully present in it and tell my story. It was great to hear the audience respond to certain moments (cry, laugh, or through other verbal responses) that I didn't know if anyone would respond to. I now wonder if they were responding because it was funny or if they related to the material and those are all questions that I'm hoping to get answered from their responses. It made me realize how the witnessing is really key to Self-Rev; to be able to interact with the audience and see them nod or hear them grunt with agreement, that is what made the piece all the more important and come alive for me. Also, the cheers and the standing ovation at the end, those also affirmed and validated what I was doing and my intention for the piece. I was so evidently supported in what I was doing and that was a great feeling. I couldn't have asked for a better audience. It made me understand why Self-Revelatory performances have invited audiences because I felt like I had exactly the right people in the audience to witness what I was doing. I truly felt like I could live and be in the moment of my performance with an audience that was supporting and rooting for me the whole time. (L. Shapiro, voice memo, May 1, 2016)

Listening back to this recording I get chills every time as I can hear both the excitement and emotionality in my voice. I'm still breathing heavily and I am struggling to find the right words to describe what I just experienced. It was a moment of pure elation. I entered that back room feeling as though I had truly accomplished something significant. I had a goal to feel freer and I did, exiting the stage I felt like a weight had been lifted from my shoulders. While some of that probably had to do with the fact that I just finished presenting my thesis, a year's worth of work, I also felt a true sense of release at having some of my inner-most thoughts not only witnessed but also supported by an audience.

After that initial moment of reflection, I rejoined the audience to greet those who had come to see my show. When I was done talking to everyone, I took another brief moment to record a few more post-show thoughts:

The love that I'm getting after this performance is so incredible. People keep coming up to me saying how beautiful and moving it was and how the performance really captured my essence. It was really at the end when I looked up during my bow and saw everyone else tearing that just said to me that while I was telling my story and this was first and foremost about me, it also gets to that universal story and has the potential to touch, move, and relate to the audience. People can relate to it and they understand what I'm saying, so while it is my story, it can also be anyone else's. That is what is so special about Self-Rev. To see my family, fellow peers and professors so impacted by what they experienced will forever be an unforgettable memory for me. (L. Shapiro, voice memo, May 1, 2016)

This voice memo highlights the validation and feelings of acceptance and love that came after I performed my Self-Rev. It was crucial for me to capture these initial thoughts before reading all the questionnaire responses and thinking more deeply about what I truly got out of this experience. With these recordings, I was able to capture my raw, unfiltered, and immediate responses to performing my Self-Rev in front of a witnessing audience.

Findings

Audience Response.

My audience was comprised of friends, peers, family, professors and a few people I did not know. While I do not have a final count of how many people attended, I received 49 completed questionnaires about the experience. My questionnaire (see Appendix D) included three open ended questions about feelings evoked by the performance, an inquiry as to whether people would be interested in going through the Self-Rev process, and a space for any final thoughts and/or questions. I then asked the audience to rate how "Moving (emotionally)" and "Relevant" and "Satisfying" the performance was on a scale from "Not at all" to "Somewhat" to "Well" to "Very Well." I came up with these specific questions by discussing with Lara what open-ended questions could help me assess the potential of Self-Rev from the audience's point-

of-view. I also found a similar questionnaire in David-Jan Jurasek's Master's Thesis on drama therapy, "Guide? Me: A Self-revelatory Research Inquiry into becoming a Drama Therapist," that helped shape the format of mine.

The majority of all categories got rated either "Well" and "Very Well" with only seven instances of "Somewhat" and no responses of "Not at all." These quantitative responses, combined with many qualitative comments on how beautifully done and put together the performance was with both funny, moving, and relatable moments, made me feel the piece was very successful in terms of all three categories. Comments such as "artistically profound, staged beautifully, and sincerely" made me feel that I also succeeded in making an aesthetically pleasing piece of theatre.

The many responses I received from audience members sharing how they have struggled with similar issues brought up in my performance confirmed I succeeded in touching on a collective story. I was so glad that there was universality in my performance; while people noted the story was specific to my life, audience members also saw a lot of similarities and connections with their own lives, a major goal of Self-Rev. Several people commented that they wanted to see and hear more of my story ("I wanted more! I wanted to hear more from Leah. I could've watched for an hour. Or more!" and "I wanted to see more, to hear more of the specific things that bother you" and "Wished to learn more.") This was honest feedback that I appreciated and revealed that I did not get even close to the danger point of self-indulgence as people were open to hearing even more of my personal experiences. Another interesting response was that the story was so relevant it took the audience member out of my performance ("I related to a lot of it which made me think about my own life so then I wasn't fully present"). This was fascinating to

me. When creating my performance, I was very cognizant of the length to ensure people would not get bored and of how much personal detail to include before it became too self-pitying. These comments relate back to the idea that it is tricky to balance the personal story with the universal one and it is possible to not get it perfectly right.

The question of whether it matters who is in the audience came up on several questionnaires. Several people who were incredibly moved by the performance were curious how strangers versus close friends or family would witness such a performance. Seeing the emotional response and tears of close friends, professors, and family during the performance clarified for me why an invited audience is crucial in Self-Revelatory performance because those are the people who will be most affected by the piece. Although I publicized my performance around campus, the audience ended up being exactly who I needed and wanted in the room. Their response in the room, supplemented by their questionnaire responses, proved to me everyone in that room wanted me to succeed and was so full of pride and admiration that I went through this process and revealed such personal information on stage.

One of my favorite responses stated that my performance was “relevant in that it talks to ‘perfection as the disease of a nation’ as one of the songs in the performance says. We all feel insecure but it is socially not really acceptable to show that. Performances such as Leah’s today can change that by simply showing that we all have these emotions within us and that it’s okay to let them out and accept them as part of who we are.” A response like this is all I could have ever hoped for and so much more. To get this type of validation that people not only understood what I was trying to work through but also agreed with it was extremely cathartic. To see the compilation of all 49 audience questionnaire responses, see Appendix E. In all, I could not have

hoped for more affirming feedback. I was overwhelmed by the positive responses to my Self-Revelatory performance.

How Self-Revelatory Performance was Therapeutic for Me.

The main goal of Self-Revelatory performance is to find healing or therapeutic exploration and because of my praxis-based research, I am able to talk about what that actually meant for me. To be honest, Self-Revelatory performance did more for me than I ever expected and the therapeutic benefits manifested in a multitude of ways throughout the process, the actual performance, and reflection period. On the train ride back from my second to last session with Lara, I journaled:

This process has made me realize Self-Rev isn't so cut and dry. There are tools and techniques but what will come out of the process and the progression of the steps and phases will be dependent on the individual. For someone like me who always wants to over explain, the writing instinct often takes over but I bet for others it would be difficult to put anything into words. I think that is what makes Self-Rev so unique and worthwhile. There is no wrong answer or right way. It's about feeling better, working through, over-coming, accepting, or whatever is necessary for any given person in whatever way is best... I will admit that I have even surprised myself at how real and invested I got in my Self-Rev and how much I am genuinely learning about myself. After every session with Lara, I have these moments of: "wow this is working, yes of course I'm doing my thesis and research on this but this is real stuff... what I'm exploring is legitimate. (L. Shapiro, journal entry, April 7, 2016)

This journal entry highlighted that going into this process, I was simply hoping to get a better understanding of the practice and I could never have imagined the extent of therapeutic benefits I would ultimately reap from this process.

I initially thought I was going to create a Self-Rev about anxiety but as I got further along in the process, the performance became about a lot more than just anxiety. The process began revealing the causes behind my anxiety. Through the drama therapy techniques utilized in Self-

Revelatory performance, I was able to illuminate and open myself up to feelings that I never used to let myself feel that would manifest in anxious and stressed tendencies in my everyday life. The Self-Rev process truly helped provide clarity about the way I was approaching and living my life. I also gained a sense of emotional freedom, increased self-confidence, self-awareness, and personal growth, connection to my authentic self, control over my feelings, an acceptance of difficult parts of myself, empathy for other people with similar experiences, and finally feelings of pride, accomplishment, empowerment and acceptance.

While these are all true therapeutic benefits of Self-Revelatory performance, the reality is these are not all changes that become permanent overnight. I see Self-Revelatory performance as just the beginning of my change and transformation. Going through the Self-Rev process simply began the momentum but true integration and transformation of the issue revealed will happen over subsequent days, months, and years. I do feel as though I have made some key discoveries about myself that will serve me well in my coming years. The ending of a Self-Rev performance does not always finish with clear answers or understanding but there is an exciting new element of wonder in how the performer will now live and be in the world with these new discoveries.

It is crucial to note that I could have researched this field of study without praxis but I never would have truly understood what it was unless I had gone through it myself. Through creating my own performance, I helped a theory come to life by experiencing first-hand the drama therapy techniques and different steps and methods utilized in Self-Revelatory performance. I associate my experience with that of baking a cake. There is a set recipe for how the cake is supposed to turn out on paper, but one will truly never know how cake will turn out or taste until they have made it themselves. The experiential component of my thesis allowed me

to assess the different practices as well as the whole field from a personal perspective because I brought the techniques to life, essentially taking Self-Rev out of just the textbook.

Experiencing Self-Rev first hand also allowed me to conclude that this is a form of drama therapy for anyone and why that is will be explained in the following section where I answer my research question. Since Self-Rev is an experiential practice in itself, going through the process seemed the best way to make trustworthy and valid claims instead of restating and reemphasizing the existing limited research. If I had not gone through it personally, I could have easily taken the very little existing research about Self-Rev at face value without taking it a step further through my own claims. The praxis-based research gave me a deep and honest understanding of what Self-Revelatory performance has to offer. Thus, after going through the whole process, I feel exceedingly confident in stating these findings knowing they are from my personal understanding.

Interestingly enough, this also rang true for one of my audience members who wrote, “I think witnessing a Self-Rev really made me understand (finally) its distinction: how the role of the audience plays in this performance versus other performances.” Both that audience member’s response and my own understanding made me realize that Self-Revelatory performance is a form of drama therapy that needs to be either experienced or witnessed in order to truly understand its inner workings. I read and wrote about witnessing too many times to count this year but I can now say I was not able to fully comprehend what that true capabilities of witnessing were until I was actually doing my piece in front of audience, reading and hearing the responses, and discovering how many people found the piece relevant. Seeing other people moved was really so special and increasingly therapeutic for me because it made me realize what I worked on all year

was not just for me but also for my audience. Receiving feedback really helped me view this form of drama therapy through other people's eyes and helped me assess the potential from a point of view other than my own.

Finally, something that came up in one of my sessions with Lara is that I am a pretty healthy and happy 22-year-old but that did not mean I couldn't benefit from Self-Rev. Based on my findings, even if the issues being addressed are not life or death, every person has something in their life that they feel they could work on and as long as one can approach that thing with a sense of urgency, Self-Rev is a form of drama therapy that can provide healing for a range of different life issues.

Chapter 4: Epilogue

Potential: Who is Self-Revelatory performance for?

Earlier in this paper I introduced two different opinions on who Self-Rev is best suited for. While Emunah (2015) argues that Self-Rev is best suited for those who have theater experience and pursuing a career in drama therapy, Bailey (2009) declares Self-Rev to be a drama therapy technique for anyone who is ready to open themselves up publicly. So which is it? While I do agree with Emunah (2015) that Self-Revelatory performance has the ability to become a new genre of theatre, I do not think that claim should restrict “non-theatre” folk from ever partaking in or going through the Self-Rev process.

Self-Revelatory performance is often referred to as a ritualized performance experience, with some even claiming Self-Rev could be considered a ‘rite of passage’ (Doughty, 2000). Just as in many cultures and religions ‘rites of passage’ incorporate ritual and performance before a witnessing audience, the existing literature on Self-Rev stresses the imperative of a witnessing audience. This idea of Self-Rev as a ‘rite of passage’ supports the notion that a Self-Revelatory performance is something everyone could experience, regardless of background or even regardless of theatrical background. While I had performance experience, Lara said to me many times this only made the process easier for me, not impossible for others. Therefore, I believe the answer to my research question is Self-Revelatory performance can be for everyone. It is true that some of the components may come more easily to people with theatrical experience, but anyone can benefit from the discoveries made about oneself during a Self-Rev.

While the director of a Self-Rev needs to be a trained drama therapist, additional research on drama therapy supports the idea that going through the Self-Rev process can be accessible

and helpful to anyone interested. The possibilities within a Self-Rev are too special and unique to restrict to people with theatre experience. The externalization that is key to Self-Rev is so specific to drama therapy that I would be surprised if any traditional talking-based therapy could yield the same results. Bailey (2006) argues that while many people who were originally drawn to drama therapy were theatre artists discovering the healing capabilities of their own theatre work, there has been an increasing number of counselors and social workers who are “discovering that talk therapy is not enough; that there is a need for insight and change to be effective for clients” (p.221). Humans are born with an innate tendency towards storytelling as a fundamental way of expressing themselves and attempting to understand each other’s experiences and stories (Ciona, 2001). Further, Rubin (1996) affirms that “becoming aware of one’s personal narrative can help a person develop a sense of self, and gain perspective and a deeper sense of meaning” (p. 15 as cited in Ciona, 2001, p.5). Given what may be gained by opening up Self-Revelatory performance to other individuals and communities and allowing people to therapeutically explore their personal stories and narratives, I wholeheartedly hope that Self-Revelatory performance will come to be used in all types of therapeutic settings with people from all different backgrounds.

Thus, I put forth that Self-Revelatory performance is a drama therapy technique for any person who is looking to make a significant change in their lives, to better understand themselves, and/or to get a clearer idea of their place in the world. This shift can take place in the form of an acceptance, a letting go, a better understanding, or purely a working through of any current life issue in a creative manner. There is no one “right” theme or person for the Self-Revelatory performance process. Rather it is an opportunity for any person, with any level of a

life issue, to physically, externally, and theatrically to tell their story and have it witnessed, a liberating, clarifying, and often life-altering experience.

Limitations and Suggestions for Future Research

As a researcher of my own personal experience, the biggest limitation of this study is a susceptibility to bias in my findings and conclusions. However, working with my thesis advisor and my drama therapist, Lara Gold, was very helpful in reducing the possibility of bias as they both made sure I was continuously thinking about the collective, universal experience and bigger picture when putting together this thesis. While the performance I created was about me, throughout the process I was constantly reminded that I was assessing the potential of Self-Revelatory performance for anyone, not just those coming from my background and I thought about that distinction a lot when writing and before making my final claims.

A smaller limitation I faced lies in the imperfect relationship between therapy and theater. There is no set formula for perfectly balancing the therapeutic and theatrical components of Self-Revelatory performance and so at times it can be a bit difficult to navigate all the overlapping, intersecting, and occasionally conflicting goals. I can only hope that this paper is helpful in clarifying the connection and intersection of theatre and therapy in Self-Rev.

Finally, to restate, a crucial limitation of this study is that Self-Revelatory performance is a very new field in which much of the existing research has been undertaken by a single scholar. While this limitation is important to note, it also made Self-Rev an extremely exciting topic to research, especially given the potential for my research to contribute to the future of this work.

As to suggestions for the future research, I wish to further explore the link between ritual and Self-Rev. While I touch on this connection in my paper, I believe that further illumination of the relationship between ritual and performance and Self-Rev could have the ability to increase people's understanding of why this is a form of drama therapy accessible to anyone.

Self-Rev also occurs in workshop settings where a group of individuals will work together for six to eight weeks in both group and individual sessions with a director and then present their performances in front of an invited audience at the end. I believe an interesting future research project could be to go through the Self-Rev process as part of a group to see how it differs from the solo experience and to have the opportunity to interview the other participants in order to get a broader perspective of the practice. Similarly, it could be interesting to track the progress of a workshop like this without personally participating. Rather, the full study would involve observing the sessions, interviewing the participants, and witnessing the final performances as well as interviewing other audience members. While one would not get the opportunity to understand personally what it means to go through a Self-Rev, this version of the research would be useful in eliminating personal bias, perhaps making it a more methodically-sound study.

Finally, in the future, I hope that Self-Revelatory performance is picked up and researched by many more people (students, academics, researchers, etc.) Future research is needed to continue assessing who can benefit from Self-Rev, in what settings it is most effective (personal vs. group sessions), and how to best support those who are going through this therapeutic process. I truly believe that the more people who experience and understand this

form of drama therapy the better, as I feel like I have only reached the tip of the iceberg in terms of identifying and articulating the full possibilities and potential of Self-Revelatory performance.

Conclusion

This project has been enormously satisfying to engage in as I feel like gained knowledge and experience beyond my initial goals. I have attained a strong understanding of the history and development of drama therapy and Self-Revelatory performance, experienced first-hand how performance can be intentionally therapeutic through the creation of my own Self Revelatory performance (*It's Okay Not to be Okay*), and assessed who I believe this form of drama therapy can serve. I continually wonder if I will become a drama therapist. I remain uncertain as there are some other paths I want to pursue and I am intrigued to see how the field will grow and evolve in the coming years.

In some post-show conversations, questions arose surrounding the discoveries I made during the process and performance and if those breakthroughs could categorize Self-Rev as therapy, especially since existing research explicitly states going through the Self-Rev process should not be considered equivalent to being in therapy. These were not surprising responses as what I went through and experienced was without a doubt therapeutic. This question: “is Self-Rev therapy?” was something I had to think extensively about. However, further reflection and conversations with the Lara clarified that the key to answering this question was to not look at what could make Self-Rev therapy but what made it specifically not therapy. Therapy has a very specific definition: the idea that there is specific treatment used to relieve, fix, or heal a disorder. Therefore, what is considered therapy is specific, while what is considered therapeutic, which Self-Rev no doubt is, can encompass many more and different methods.

Lara also stressed two other factors that clarified how Self-Rev is not therapy. First off, the relationship between the director and the client is very different than a therapist to patient relationship because it is not clinical. Thus, Lara explained to me that she would refer her client to a clinical therapist if they got triggered by the material. Further, Lara required a certain stability of her clients in order to feel comfortable as a drama therapist to put them on stage (L. Gold, personal communication, May 3, 2016). Therefore, while Self-Revelatory performance is therapeutic and will reveal many similar things that are discovered in therapy, that does not mean it fits into the clinical definition and structure of therapy.

These curiosities, however, create some room to think more critically about this new form of drama therapy. Due to its novelty, it is important to acknowledge a vagueness and lack of clear understanding of what Self-Revelatory performance constitutes. While I do not believe the imprecision of Self-Rev is a flaw, as that is natural of any new discovery, the problem lies in people's tendency to not trust new ideas with little research. I know that Self-Revelatory performance benefitted me in more ways than I could have imagined but there is this evident lack of trust in the form of drama therapy until it is either experienced or witnessed. This comes down to the fact that Self-Revelatory performance is a hybrid, a form of drama therapy that is breaking barriers and existing understandings in both theatre and therapy, all while creating a moving experience for both participant and audience. The only way to discourage distrust and encourage clarification is to urge future research that involves praxis-based research, a way to directly interact with the form.

I am grateful to have been introduced to and immersed in a whole new way of looking at both the potential of theater and of therapy and I am excited to share my discoveries with others

through this study. Wherever my own path takes me, I am eager to see what the future of drama therapy and more specifically, Self-Revelatory performance will be, and I truly hope this research will serve as a helpful resource to the (hopefully) many others who will become invested in the growth of Self-Revelatory performance.

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Appendix A
Drama Therapy Timeline

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Bailey, S. (2006). ‘Ancient and modern roots of drama therapy’ in S. L. Brooke (ed.), *Creative arts therapies manual: A guide to the history, theoretical approaches, assessment, and work with special populations of art, play, dance, music, drama, and poetry therapies*. (pp. 214-22). Springfield, Ill: Charles C Thomas.

Table 22.1.
Drama Therapy Time Line

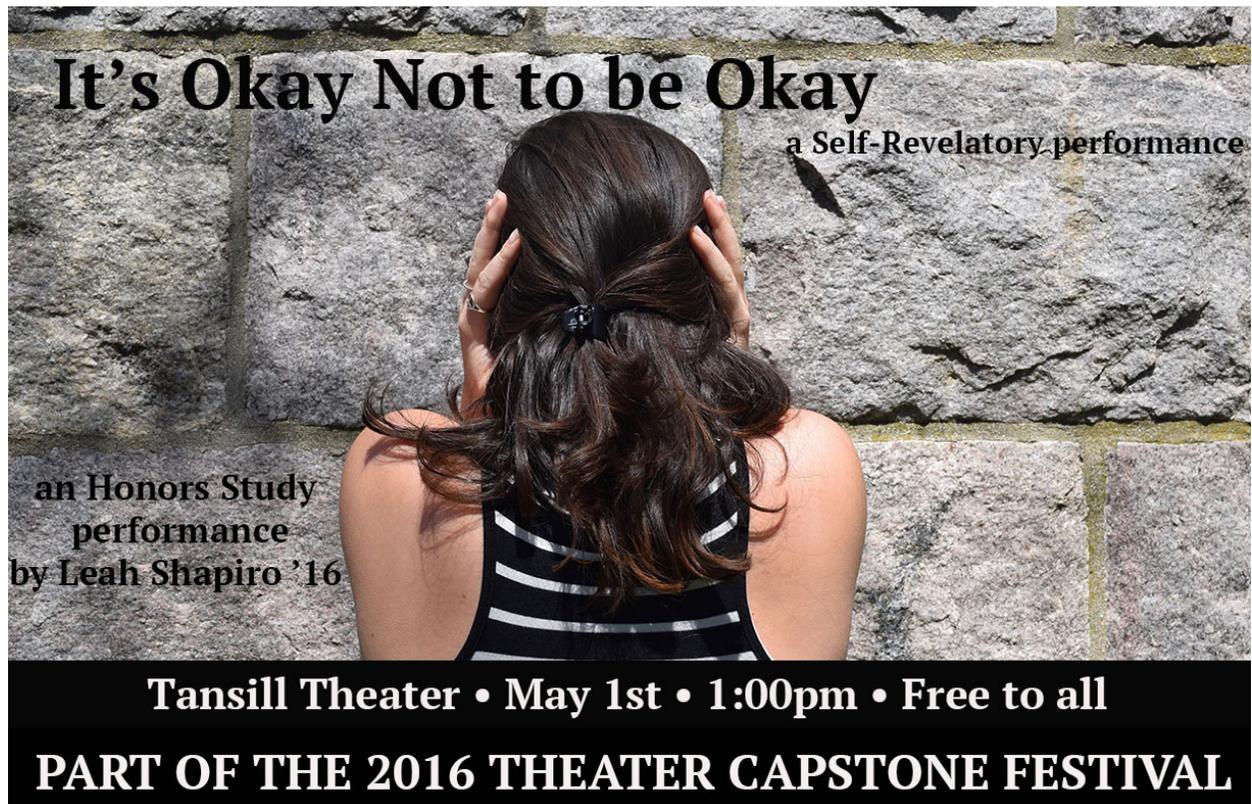
TIME	EUROPE	RUSSIA	NORTH AMERICA
43,000 BC–33,000 BC	<i>Homo sapiens</i> begin thinking symbolically and creating arts (painting, sculpting, dance, drama)		
400–500 BCE	<i>Greece</i> : Origins of Greek Theatre		
534 BCE	<i>Greece</i> : Prize for Best Tragedy established at City Dionysia Festival.		
c. 560 BCE	<i>Greece</i> : Thespis steps out of Greek Chorus to become first actor.		
c. 335–323 BCE	<i>Greece</i> : Aristotle writes <i>The Poetics</i> .		
100–200 ACE	<i>Rome</i> : Soranus has mentally ill patients reading and performing plays.		
c. 500 ACE	<i>Rome</i> : Caelius Aurelius writes <i>On Acute Diseases and on Chronic Diseases</i> .		
1789	<i>Paris</i> : Moral Therapy reforms begun by Phillippe Pinel and continued by others in Europe.		Moral Therapy continued by others in America.
1889–1900			<i>Hull House, Chicago</i> : Theatre and theatre games with immigrants by Edith de Nancrede and Neva Boyd.
1900–1930		<i>Moscow</i> : Constantin Stanislavsky develops his psychological acting method at Moscow Art Theatre.	
1908–1917	<i>Vienna</i> : Jacob Moreno develops sociometry. (1917)		<i>Kiev</i> : Vladimir Iljine develops Therapeutic Theatre.
1920–24	<i>Vienna</i> : Moreno creates the Theatre of Spontaneity.	<i>St. Petersburg</i> : Nicholai Evreinov develops Theatrotheatre.	
1925			<i>Chicago</i> : Winifred Ward begins educational drama movement; Neva Boyd begins therapeutic recreation movement.
1926–40			<i>New York</i> : Jacob Moreno developing psychodrama in prisons/hospitals.
1930’s	<i>UK</i> : Peter Slade begins working with children.		Occupational therapists using drama with residents in psychiatric hospitals. <i>Chicago</i> : Viola Spolin is developing her improvisation methods.
1940– 47	<i>Switzerland</i> : Gertrud Schattner works with refugees in Swiss sanitarium.		

Appendix A (Continued)

Table 22.1.
continued

TIME	EUROPE	RUSSIA	NORTH AMERICA
1942			<i>New York:</i> Moreno founds American Society for Group Psychotherapy & Psychodrama (ASGPP).
1947			<i>New York:</i> Schattner and Moreno work in schools & hospitals.
1950-70	<i>UK:</i> Peter Slade writes <i>Child Drama</i> (1954). <i>UK:</i> Peter Slade writes <i>Dramatherapy as an Aid to becoming a Person</i> (1959). <i>UK:</i> Sue Jennings begins doing "remedial drama" (1960). <i>The Netherlands:</i> The Netherlands Society for Expressive Therapy formed (1960).	<i>St. Petersburg:</i> Nikolai Govorov develops his drama therapy techniques.	<i>New York:</i> Schattner and Moreno work in schools & hospitals.
1964	<i>UK:</i> Marian Lindkvist opens The Sesame Institute (1964).		<i>New York:</i> Schattner teaches 1st DT training program at Turtle Bay Music Institute.
1975			<i>Chicago:</i> Toddy Richman founds The Institute for Therapy Through the Arts.
1976	<i>UK:</i> British Association for Dramatherapy (BADth) founded.		
1979			National Association for Drama Therapy (NADT) founded. National Coalition for Creative Arts Therapies (NCCATA) founded.
1981	<i>The Netherlands:</i> Drama Therapy Branch formed in The Netherlands Society for Creative Expressive Therapy		<i>Drama in Therapy, Vols. I and II,</i> published, edited by Schattner and Richard Courtney.
1982			<i>Pittsburgh, PA:</i> First Registered Drama Therapist: Eleanor Irwin. <i>New York:</i> 1st DT MA Program approved at NYU, created by Robert Landy.
1983			<i>California:</i> 2nd DT MA Program approved, created by Renee Emunah.
1999			<i>Montreal:</i> 3rd DT MA Program approved at Concordia University, created by Stephen Snow.

Appendix B
Self-Revelatory Performance Poster



Appendix C
Self-Revelatory Performance Video Link and Password

Link: <https://vimeo.com/user51802514/selfrev>

Password: LeahSelfRev2016

Feel free to email me at l.shapiro323@gmail.com if there are any issues with the link or password or to receive access to a higher-quality version of the video.

A higher-quality version will also be available in DVD format through the Connecticut College archive.

Appendix D
Audience Post-Show Questionnaire

It's Okay Not to be Okay

Thank you for sharing your thoughts, impressions & reflections with me.

1. What feelings did this performance evoke for you?

Please rate the following categories:

2. As a witnessing audience member, was this performance...
(please circle)

MOVING (emotionally)

Not at all Somewhat Well Very Well

Please elaborate:

RELEVANT

Not at all Somewhat Well Very Well

Please elaborate:

SATISFYING

Not at all Somewhat Well Very Well

Please elaborate:

3. Did this make you want to go through a Self-Rev yourself?

4. Questions or Final Thoughts?

Appendix E
Audience Post-Show Questionnaire Compiled Responses

Audience Post-Show Questionnaire: *It's Okay Not to be Okay* Responses

1. What feelings did this performance evoke for you?

- | | |
|---|--|
| 1. Pride. Self-reflection. Identification. Connection. Sadness. | 25. Feelings of happiness for you! That you got a catharsis, it seems. Watching this also gave me a catharsis. It evoked my own fears and similar anxieties. |
| 2. Connectivity with Leah. Sadness. Hope. Love | 26. So proud of you! Really identified with your need to be perfect. |
| 3. Empathy. Happiness. Judgment. Rooting for you. | 27. Calm, anxiety, fear, frustration |
| 4. Relatability. Compassion. | 28. N/A |
| 5. I went through a journey with you. I could feel & empathize the whole way. Fantastic. | 29. Discomfort, happiness, confusion, nostalgia |
| 6. Empathy. Respect. | 30. Nostalgia, regret |
| 7. Empathy, comfort in knowing that I'm not the only one who feels similarly to this, powerful. <u>IMPRESSED</u> . | 31. Anxiety, lightness, fullness, excitement, anticipation |
| 8. A lot of this made me feel validation and relief of similar issues. It was really powerful viewing vulnerability as strength. | 32. Admiration |
| 9. Reflectiveness. Awareness. | 33. Admiration. Empathy. |
| 10. I could relate to this tremendously. It confronted my own feelings and made me feel confident in my experiences. | 34. Happiness, sadness, anxiety |
| 11. Searching in myself for the same fears and self-doubt | 35. Wow so many—I relate and am in awe of your ability to talk/walk an audience through all that |
| 12. Empathy-Connection | 36. Sadness, empathy, pride (in Leah), curiosity, compassion, hope |
| 13. Pride, sadness, vulnerability, understanding | 37. Fear of unknown |
| 14. Self-realization, laughs, admiration | 38. So, so relevant and you just <u>shined</u> . So clear, so expressive. So beautiful—your heart & mind & self |
| 15. The performance was very relatable and I could definitely understand and identify with the feelings expressed by Leah. | 39. Comical moments very funny—relief from heavy material, relatable, teared up often |
| 16. Nostalgia, empathy, gratefulness | 40. The performer is brave to share her more personal experience |
| 17. Joy, pride, empathy, sympathy, delight, pensiveness | 41. Empathy, recognition, solidarity, self-doubt, sadness |
| 18. It made me so incredibly proud to know you and proud of you. Also, I felt scared at times and elated at others. | 42. Anxiety, at ease, sense of relief |
| 19. Compassion, inspiration, bravery | 43. Pride (for Leah), sadness, a feeling of connection and identification |
| 20. Proud of you, love, sadness, extremely relatable, intrigue, awe, I feel for you, amazement | 44. Admiration, honor. Thank you Leah for sharing all these intimate emotions with us! |
| 21. So much <u>recognition</u> . I saw myself in Leah, and I saw the person I've come to know and love so much over the last few years. | 45. Pride, clarity, love, tears (not a feeling, but I had lots of them ☺), connection, overwhelmed |
| 22. Curious, empathetic, hopeful | 46. Pride (proudness in you) |
| 23. Everyone struggles within themselves. <u>It's Okay Not to be Okay!</u> | 47. Sadness, empathy, compassion, triumph, peace |
| 24. Overthinking, racing and anxious thoughts, what it feels like to second guess yourself all the time. | 48. Emotional experience. I could very much relate. |
| | 49. Sadness, fulfilling |

Appendix E (Continued)

2. Please rate the following categories: As a witnessing audience member, was this performance...
MOVING (emotionally)

Not at all Somewhat 4 Well 15 Very Well 30

Please elaborate:

- | | |
|---|---|
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. N/A 2. N/A 3. N/A 4. N/A 5. N/A 6. So easy to connect to 7. N/A 8. Although these issues are dealt with by everyone, it is entirely different for each individual and it was beautifully personal 9. N/A 10. I've seen myself in this spot before, so it's comforting to see someone else explore 11. N/A 12. I know the actor so feel emotionally connected 13. Able to connect well to all of the emotions portrayed—fear, doubt, humor, perfectionism, empathy 14. Vulnerable and honest 15. I found that a lot of Leah's thoughts were thoughts I've had in the past. It was powerful to see her work through them. 16. I related to a lot of it which made me think about my own life so then I wasn't fully present 17. I connected to your personal subject matter. I have versions of similar struggles. 18. Watching you go through this and knowing the work was enough...then hearing you so honestly speak your words 19. N/A 20. You took me through a variety of emotions. Watching you be so vulnerable really amazed me because you truly showed me how OK it is to not be OK. 21. N/A 22. You took a risk. You were bold. 23. N/A 24. I sympathized, but also totally empathized and wanted to fight for Leah. 25. I sobbed so yes. | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 26. You made me tear up during the running moment! 27. It took me on an emotional journey 28. N/A 29. Not a lot of specifics, so it was hard for me to connect emotionally 30. I was excited to learn more about Leah's life, not just voices in head 31. I was moving <u>with</u> you 32. The performer allowed herself to be vulnerable and in the moment 33. Seeing you be so honest and open, as well as funny, was moving. 34. N/A 35. I cried nearly the whole time 36. I found myself tearing up during the first half, in part out of sadness, in part out of empathy, in part out of appreciation for the insights that Leah has at this point in her life. 37. N/A 38. N/A 39. N/A 40. N/A 41. N/A 42. N/A 43. I was able to feel the pain and vulnerability Leah was aiming to evoke 44. The performance was so raw which made it incredibly powerful. The choice of "core emotions" (sadness, fear, frustration, self-doubt) resonated a lot with me. In daily life, it often feels as if we need to put on mask and be happy, funny, cheerful. I wish there was more space to truly be ourselves with all our facets. 45. See tears comment above; they wouldn't stop! The words, accompanying music, my personal connections to what you were sharing 46. Oh I almost cried while you were running. Your pure emotion was so moving. 47. N/A 48. N/A 49. Personal narrative was interesting and engaging |
|---|---|

Appendix E (Continued)

RELEVANT

Not at all

Somewhat

Well 10

Very Well 39

Please elaborate:

- | | |
|--|---|
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. N/A 2. N/A 3. N/A 4. N/A 5. To my life, very much so. Same struggles, different names. 6. Expressed things that are very universal but aren't often expressed 7. N/A 8. N/A 9. N/A 10. At some point, everyone is not ok, but admitting that is never easy. 11. N/A 12. Some of the issues I identify with myself 13. everyone goes through these emotions. Some are able to accept and integrate them better than others. Great to see Leah show how she learned to accept her feelings. 14. These are feelings we can all relate to. For you to be the one to point it out with such humor, elegance, and emotion was awesome. 15. N/A 16. There's nobody who's always okay 17. Yes, I think you address struggles that others can relate to. Additionally, the act of giving this performance gives validity to such therapeutic processes. Literally, you are saying it's okay to not be okay. 18. I know these thoughts that you were verbalizing and performing. Struck by your courage to be so honest. 19. N/A 20. I feel all of the things you talked about. Very relevant to my life. 21. These feelings are so very real and Leah is not alone. While each of us is unique and has our reasons for fear, sadness, frustration, and self-doubt, we <u>share</u> in her own unique experiences. Amazingly relevant. 22. Relevant to who? Very relevant to you. 23. N/A 24. These are issues that are a major part of mental health and should be discussed 25. These feelings happen for me all of the time and wanting to be in control is so hard and facing your insecurities and fears is so hard. | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 26. I totally feel like I need to be perfect 27. Especially frustration and the thinker 28. N/A 29. The feelings on the chairs are <u>so</u> relevant. 30. End of college appropriate 31. I trusted fully that it was relevant for you, so it was relevant for me. 32. Fear—the fear trap is always lying in wait 33. I think many people, young and old, identify with the issues that you tackled 34. N/A 35. I think so many of us feel the crippling fear, sadness, self-doubt, frustration you fight 36. All of us can learn from Leah's Self-Rev process whether or not our issues are the same 37. N/A 38. N/A 39. N/A 40. N/A 41. N/A 42. N/A 43. The emotions and fears Leah discussed were all ones I could identify with 44. Relevant in that it talks to "perfection as the disease of a nation" as one of the songs in the performance says. We all feel insecure but it is socially not really acceptable to show that. Performances such as Leah's today can change that by simply showing that we all have these emotions within us and that it's okay to let them out and accept them as part of who we are 45. This was a powerful experience for me, as someone who knows (or feels like she knows) you so well 46. These are all things I deal with every day. The performance was so relatable. 47. I changed my answer [from Somewhat to Well] after giving myself several moments to reflect on Leah's performance realizing that it was indeed relevant 48. N/A 49. As your peer, I think a lot of people feel this way. Easily relatable. |
|--|---|
-

Appendix E (Continued)

SATISFYING

Not at all

Somewhat 3

Well 12

Very Well 34

Please elaborate:

- | | |
|---|---|
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. N/A 2. N/A 3. N/A 4. N/A 5. N/A 6. It was very interesting & well done 7. Movement of the chairs was very powerful 8. N/A 9. N/A 10. N/A 11. N/A 12. Understand better how such an experience could be useful and therapeutic to anyone willing to go through this exercise 13. Could see Leah move through the experience and what she learned 14. It felt right. 15. N/A 16. We got to applaud and come together in appreciating it 17. Witnessing your processing as it happened on stage was beautiful. You are a stunning performer and engaged us as you shared your personal subject matter. Beautiful and entertaining! 18. As a final product for you, it was what it was, and that filled me. 19. N/A 20. Overthinking is a big problem for me and it was cool to physically see that 21. This was artistically profound, staged beautifully, and sincerely. 22. It was interesting in that I wondered when you were acting and when it was real. 23. N/A 24. I loved watching every moment, it took me on a journey. | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 25. It was so satisfying to see you take control. To see you acknowledge and to see that it's <u>okay</u> to acknowledge. 26. I wanted to see more → to hear more of the specific things that bother you. 27. Good to see feelings dealt with this way 28. N/A 29. I wanted more! I wanted to hear more from Leah. I could've watched for an hour. Or more! 30. Wished to learn more 31. There was closure 32. The performance was fully realized and honest 33. Because we know you, we support you. I wondered how this would work with an audience of strangers. 34. N/A 35. You're doing great and you make me hopeful 36. It felt very cathartic for me to go through this process. That brought me happiness/joy and hope for her. 37. N/A 38. N/A 39. N/A 40. N/A 41. N/A 42. N/A 43. Acted as a catharsis, allowed me to find these vulnerabilities in myself 44. Really personal and at the same time universal! 45. N/A 46. The song you sang created a through-line for the piece 47. N/A 48. N/A 49. Good storyline that came full circle |
|---|---|

Appendix E (Continued)

3. Did this make you want to go through a Self-Rev yourself?

General count:

Yes 27

Maybe 15

No 7

Explanations:

1. Yes!
2. Yes
3. Yes
4. Somewhat
5. Very much so seriously. I think I will at some point.
6. I don't think I'm open enough to do so, but theoretically, yes.
7. Potentially but I don't know how I would. Definitely better understand of the power it can have.
8. Yes
9. In my own way, sort of
10. Yes!
11. No- but certainly to think about my own fear, sadness, self-doubt and frustration
12. Yes!
13. Maybe?
14. Sort of... Yeah
15. Yes
16. Yes
17. Potentially, it made me think about the revelation and self-growth inherent in performing. I have many experiences through dances rehearsals and performances where I noticed my own growth and change.
18. Yes, absolutely
19. Yes!
20. Yes, it did actually. I had never heard of this type of theater but it seems very healing.
21. Yes, although I'm almost nervous about what I'd discover.
22. No—I would never reveal myself on stage—just not me.
23. No. I would never be able to do a performance in front of others.
24. I would definitely try it out.
25. Yes
26. YES! Such a great idea.
27. Yes
28. Yes!!
29. It made me realize that theater I've written and performed had elements of Self-Rev and that I want to continue to explore it.
30. Drama therapy maybe, not Self-Rev
31. Yes!
32. Not sure.
33. No
34. A little bit, but I'm also terrified of performing, so maybe not. ☹️
35. Absolutely!
36. I related to her experience from my own life journey and felt my own sense of catharsis through her experience/process.
37. Yes
38. Yes! It was so you, it such a personal experience. A gift.
39. No
40. A little bit.
41. Hell yes.
42. Not particularly though the concept is awesome
43. I'd be open to it!
44. Yes!
45. I don't know
46. Yes!
47. Yes! I really would love the opportunity to go through Self-Rev myself to introspect
48. I don't think I have the guts to! You killed it though.
49. Not necessarily, but I can definitely see its relevance and importance.

Appendix E (Continued)

4. Questions or Final Thoughts?

1. Are there follow-up sessions with your drama therapist after your performance? What kind of processing is there?
2. That was awesome xoxo
3. I loved the structure of the piece
4. Well done- so brave!
5. N/A
6. N/A
7. You're incredible
8. Love you Leah <3
9. Brave
10. Excellent job! Very relatable 😊
11. Performer's beautiful voice is a gift!
12. Would more personal details of frustration, self-doubt, fear, and sadness be useful for actor and audience?
13. Well-portrayed! Very moving.
14. Congratulations, you should be proud. Loved the characters.
15. It was wonderful.
16. Thanks for putting yourself out there, it helped me to hear such similar experiences to mine spoken aloud.
17. The act of declaring something to witnesses has a beautiful power and importance. Stating yourself in that way can cause personal change through empowerment in my experience.
18. I think witnessing a Self-Rev really made me understand (finally) it's distinction: how the role of the audience plays in this performance versus other performances. You are performing to be witnessed and we are here not for us but solely for you.
19. N/A
20. Really well done, Leah <3. Very put together, funny at times, well thought out.
21. This was beyond inspiring. The perfect blend of artistry, reflection and research. I know today will make a difference to many people. It has to me.
22. I hope it was meaningful to you. I wonder if the performance felt like you | thought it would.
23. N/A
24. You rock, Leah!
25. You're a star. Congrats.
26. I hope this experience is everything you were hoping for Leah—Transformation. Exploration. Discoveries.
27. Makes me wonder what other types of drama therapy there are
28. Very moving and inspired me to have some conversations in my life
29. Leah is a courageous person. No doubt about it.
30. I want to know more about the sessions.
31. How did it feel for you?
32. Honest! Real! Daring!
33. Can the performative aspect be developed without losing Self-Rev?
34. So proud of you! Do you feel better/different having experienced it?
35. You're amazing, beautiful, brave, and an inspiration
36. Two words: brilliant and beautiful
37. N/A
38. You should be so proud <3
39. N/A
40. N/A
41. That was insanely brave; well done 😊 Thank you for sharing.
42. Can more than one person do it at a time?
43. Beautiful job Leah! <3
44. Again, thank you for sharing and presenting yourself in such an honest and vulnerable way!
45. I'd be curious to know if people have explored the differences in audience experience (family members vs. close friend vs. stranger, etc.)
46. You're a rock star. What an accomplishment. Congratulations!
47. N/A
48. You're amazing!
49. You're amazing!