

A turn to arts-based research methodology in psychodrama research

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Abstract A tendency in psychodrama research is the focus on proving effectiveness. This article in the *Zeitschrift für Psychodrama und Soziometrie* aims to propose arts-based research (ABR) methodology through a theoretical approach by a brief literature review of psychodrama research, a glimpse into discourses in applied theatre research and an introduction to arts-based research (ABR) methodology. How moments of participation and self-identified significant experiences by the participants from a psychodrama group can be investigated through ABR methodology will be exemplified through performative inquiry (Fels 2012), inspired by poetic inquiry (Faulkner 2018). In this way, the article aims to shed light on the question: *How might arts-based research methodology in combination with qualitative research methodology contribute to the psychodrama research field?* The article also presents empirical and ontological perspectives relating to the pilot study and give a discussion of the advantages and disadvantages of applying ABR methodology exemplified in the article. This way, the paper aims to illuminate how ABR methodologies can be applied together with qualitative research methodology to contribute to psychodrama research.

Keywords Psychodrama · Psychodrama research · Arts-based research · Performative research · Subjective experiences · Phenomenology of the body

Remarks The pilot study presented in the article is part of a Ph.D.-project pursued 2019–2022 as a research fellow at the University of Agder, Faculty of Fine Arts, Ph.D.-programme Art in Context, theatre.

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Eine Hinwendung zur kunstbasierten Forschungsmethodik in der Psychodramaforschung

Zusammenfassung Eine Tendenz in der Psychodramaforschung ist der Fokus auf einen Effektstärkennachweis. Dieser Artikel der Zeitschrift für Psychodrama und Soziometrie zielt darauf ab, eine Methodik der kunstbasierten Forschung (ABR) durch eine theoretische Annäherung anhand einer kurzen Literaturübersicht der Psychodramaforschung, einen Einblick in Diskurse in der angewandten Theaterforschung und eine Einführung in die kunstbasierte Forschungsmethodik (ABR) vorzustellen. Wie Momente der Teilnahme und selbst identifizierte signifikante Erfahrungen der Teilnehmer einer Psychodrama-Gruppe mithilfe der ABR-Methodik untersucht werden können, wird anhand einer performativen Untersuchung (Fels 2012) veranschaulicht, die von einer poetischen Untersuchung inspiriert ist (Faulkner 2018). Auf diese Weise soll der Artikel die Frage beleuchten: Wie könnte eine kunstbasierte Forschungsmethodik in Kombination mit einer qualitativen Forschungsmethodik zum Forschungsfeld Psychodrama beitragen? Der Artikel präsentiert auch empirische und ontologische Perspektiven in Bezug auf die Pilotstudie und diskutiert die Vor- und Nachteile der Anwendung der in diesem Artikel veranschaulichten ABR-Methodik. Auf diese Weise soll beleuchtet werden, wie ABR-Methoden zusammen mit qualitativen Forschungsmethoden angewendet werden können, um zur Psychodrama-Forschung beizutragen.

Schlüsselwörter Psychodrama · Psychodramaforschung · Kunstbasierte Forschung · Performative Forschung · Subjektive Erfahrungen · Phänomenologie des Körpers

1 Psychodrama and psychodrama research—between therapy and theatre

Based on four major systematic reviews of psychodrama research (P.F. Kellermann 1987; Kipper and Ritchie 2003; Orkibi and Feniger-Schaal 2019; Wieser 2007) and research presented in Stadler et al. (2016), it seems like proving the effect of psychodrama interventions and validation of the psychodrama method have been a research trend in psychodrama research.

Baim (2018) directs the focus towards psychodrama as a theatre of personal stories and the term *theatre of personal stories* covers what he calls “the myriad forms of theatre that make use of people’s personal stories” (Baim 2018, p. 3). Baim (2018) shed light on how psychodrama “in most countries where it is practiced it has to a large extent lost sight of its theatrical roots and is mainly confined to the mental health professions” (Baim 2018, p. 55). The separation from the theatre Baim argues that exist for the psychodrama method has historical roots derived from Moreno’s time. Moreno saw psychodrama as a method both necessary for the psychiatric clinic and mental health field, and as a method for society and theatre (Moreno, 1972/1994). According to Baim “This has led to some countries seeing psychodrama as the exclusive territory of medicine and psychology” (Baim 2018,

p. 55). Following Baim, this is as he writes “a very regrettable turn of events, with far-reaching consequences and lost opportunities” (Baim 2018, p. 55). Psychodrama needs to rediscover its theatrical roots and be reclaimed by theatre artists because “there are many insights and practical approaches that can be of mutual benefit to both fields if they rediscover their common heritage” (Baim 2018, p. 56). Perhaps a potential lost opportunity is *what* and *how* other forms of research methodology might contribute to psychodrama research. A massive project funded by the European Research Council grants at Freie University Berlin (2012–2017); *The Aesthetics of Applied Theatre*, with the subproject *Theatre as therapy*, representing both psychodrama and dramatherapy, would in this matter be interesting to look into. The overall project aim was to show how aesthetic, political, and ethical aspects interact in the practice of theatre (Freie Universität 2020). Since contributions relating to this project is in German (Warstat et al. 2017, 2015), the project is not so accessible for a non-fluent German reader.

1.1 Brief overview of research relevant to Ph.D.-project

Search in the databases Academic Search Complete (ASC) and ERIC on the search words *psychodrama* and *participation* and *experience* generated 9 results in June 2020. Menichetti et al. (2016) conducted a study where they explored the subjective experience of cancer patients joining sessions of psychodramatic psychotherapy. Search on *psychodrama* and *research* in ASC and ERIC generated 252 results in June 2020. Adding the search word *experience* narrowed the search down to 59 results—some of the studies mentioned in section section 1. Other studies I find relevant to the Ph.D.-project is Rossi (2010) who conducted a phenomenological exploration of the experiences of Master level’s counsellor trainees in Expressive Arts Group supervision. Scheiffle (2001) who gives insight to the subjective experiences during the altered state of acting using the notions from the field Psychology of Consciousness, and McVea et al. (2011) who conducted a comprehensive process analysis of significant therapeutic events from psychodrama group therapy. They sought to address the gap in the research literature on the relationship between in-session processes during a psychodrama enactment, and therapeutic outcomes they state has not yet been examined (McVea et al., 2011, p. 417). The events investigated was the events that the protagonists identified as therapeutically helpful.

1.2 The presence of arts-based research in psychodrama research

For the notion of the presence of arts-based research in psychodrama research within ASC and ERIC, I will mention that on the search *psychodrama* and “*arts-based research*” the result was 0, and *psychodrama* and *arts-based research* generated 2 results (Balfour et al. 2014; Savage 2020). The research design in Savage (2020) is inspiring, she explored experience through the arts-based methodology, and composed data for analysis through portraiture, i-poems, and the three-dimensional enquiry. Comparing to searches on *psychodrama* and *research* that generated 252 results, *psychodrama* and “*qualitative research*” that generated 20 results, and *psychodrama* and “*quantitative research*” that generated 3 results in ASC and ERIC, it indicates

that arts-based research is less present in the research literature on psychodrama research. A more thorough and broader literature review would potentially generate a different impression.

2 Discourses in research

Applied and participatory theatre is a field that might be beneficial to explore for psychodramatists (Baim 2018, p. 192). The terms *applied drama*, *applied theatre* and *applied performance* emerged in the 1990s, “to describe forms of dramatic activity that are specifically intended to benefit individuals, communities and societies” (Nicholson 2005, p. 3). Applied theatre is an umbrella term gathering a diverse crowd of theatre and drama practices, where drama is applied with the intentionality and aspiration to create better lives of individuals and create better societies (Ackroyd 2000). In a discourse analysis of applied theatre research, I find the legitimation discourse and effect discourse most relevant regarding psychodrama research (Gjørøum 2014). Gjørøum found it hard to discover researchers who use negative terms in their research on Applied theatre projects. Referring to Ackroyd, it is highlighted that: “I noted the overwhelmingly positive descriptions of the work on the web and in conference papers, and I called for vigilance, since a powerful medium can be used for dubious as well as humanitarian ends” (Ackroyd 2007, p. 3). The effect discourse is enormous in applied theatre research and present here is the discussion on effect and affect in applied theatre practices, represented among others by Thompson (2009). Researchers who are dealing with questions concerning the impact of Applied Theatre (AT) on society and participants are focused on the function, the effect and the affect AT can have on people. The impact is investigated through the terms evaluate, assess and measure (Gjørøum 2014, p. 354).

A trend in psychodrama research on proving the effect of psychodrama interventions and legitimating psychodrama as a method, has parallels to the effect and the legitimation discourse in applied theatre research (Gjørøum 2014). Kirk (2016) highlights aspects that also could be seen as part of a trend in psychodrama research in health and social care the past decades; the push towards evidence-based practice. Kirk points out how “as a qualitative researcher it is phenomenally difficult to gain acceptance and legitimacy in this scientific, positivist and, largely, quantitative world of research” (Kirk 2016, p. 324). She states that there is a move towards constructionism and that in this ‘new paradigm’ of research there is “a search for meaning, a capturing of the essence of human experience. The focus is on meaning not measurement” (Kirk 2016, p. 324).

The presence of arts-based research (ABR) approaches to psychodrama seems less present among psychodrama research, as indicated earlier. The seemingly small presence of performative research and ABR approaches to psychodrama are probably not so strange since the field of arts-based research is relatively young. Malchiodi (2018) also confirms this, pointing at that despite advances and emerging literature in ABR “there is still a relatively small number of actual published ABR reports among the major professional creative arts fields of therapy, music therapy, and dance/movement therapy” (Malchiodi 2018, p. 76). She also adds that since arts in general

and the creative arts often are marginalized in terms of funding, resources, and priority in the society, “it is understandable that the creative arts therapies community seeks to align with what may appear to be the more legitimate authorities on research design and analysis” (Malchiodi 2018, p. 77). Nonetheless, she underlines how ABR is one way to support recognition of the creative arts therapies. An indication of this trend to align with more legitimate authorities on research design and analysis can also be found in a recent WHO report which through a scoping review addressed the question “What is the evidence on the role of the arts in improving health and well-being?” (Fancourt and Finn 2019). It is written that the report “did not aim to discriminate between different research methodologies or methods but instead includes a diverse range of evidence in order to highlight both the depth and the breadth of research in this field” (Fancourt and Finn 2019, p. 6). However, it is hard to find arts-based methodologies included in the report, the study of Macduff et al. (2014) is an exception. Psychodrama is mentioned in the report (Fancourt and Finn 2019, p. 27) by the study of Dogan (2018).

2.1 Rediscovering theatrical roots—a turn to arts-based research

The turn to arts-based research (ABR) methodology and Sauter’s theory of the theatrical event (Sauter 2000), can be understood as a way to rediscover some of the theatrical roots Baim (2018) writes that psychodrama needs to rediscover. Sauter’s concept of the theatrical event (Sauter 2000) informs my research. Sauter points to the essential feature of the concept theatrical event which is “the communicative mutuality of performer and spectator, the elements of play, and their dependence on the surrounding contexts” (Sauter 2000, p. 14). The theatrical event identifies the interrelation of performance and reception and the dependence on the surrounding context, which is a focus point in my research. Arts-based research methodology might address dimensions of context, process and perception within the enactments and participation in psychodrama practice. The performative and arts-based research is emerging in the art and art education field (Leavy 2018b; Østern and Knudsen 2019), but also in the social research and social science (K. J. Gergen and Gergen 2018; Mary M Gergen and Gergen 2011; Gullion and Schäfer 2018).

3 Pilot study

Through an example from a pilot study related to the Ph.D.-project¹ I am pursuing, I will exemplify how ABR methodology can be concretised through performative inquiry (Fels 2012) and inspirations from poetic inquiry (Faulkner 2018). The pilot study took place in 2020, and I co-operated with two other psychodramatists who were responsible for the psychodrama group. The group was focused on personal

¹ Ph.D.-project pursued (2019–2022), at the University of Agder. The Ph.D.-project will focus on researching participation among adults in psychodrama groups from a non-clinical setting in Norway. The working title is Moments of participation – an investigation of the intersection between participant, psychodrama and psychodramatist, with an emphasis on the participants’ experiential dimension.

development and embodied aspects and called *Body, Voice and Psychodrama*. I took part in the psychodrama group as a participatory observer and took field notes in the breaks and after the group was finished. The psychodrama group lasted a full weekend. In the pilot study I was drawing on inspiration from ABR methodology besides participatory observation, and methods such as writing poems and making drawings of events the participants experienced as essential for them, was conducted in connection with the closure of the group Sunday afternoon.

3.1 Ethical aspects

The Ph.D.-project project has been reported to the Norwegian Centre for Research Data (NSD) and complies with ethical guidelines. The participation in the research project is voluntarily, and the participants in the pilot study signed a letter of consent approved by NSD before the participatory observation started. This letter of consent informed the participants that being part of the study includes that material which safeguards the confidentiality of the participants, will be published in articles as part of the article-based Ph.D.-thesis. They were also informed both verbally and written that they could withdraw from the research project at any time. Participatory observation contains ethical aspects and considerations. The proximity from this observation might imply challenges from the double roles I will function in as a researcher. As a participatory observer, being present and taking part in the group as a researcher-participant together with the participants might foster trust and social relations from the shared space and the shared personal stories in the group. The trust potentially promoted from participatory observation could be regarded both as a source of possibility and of challenge in the phase with creating empirical material through the poems and the drawings. The same challenge might appear in conducting individual interviews with the participants because the promoted trust might lead participants into sharing too much or too personal material in the interview (Brinkmann 2015, p. 476). It requires a great deal of ethical responsibility in the role as a participatory observer, and the continuous assessment on the balancing in this double researcher role is crucial. Being the reflective practitioner (Schön 1995), and reflexive methodology (Alvesson and Sköldberg 2018) will be of importance in this process of respect to the participants and to what is possible to make public while safeguarding the confidentiality.

4 Epistemological and ontological perspectives

Epistemological and ontological perspectives in my Ph.D.-project and pilot study are in the landscape of phenomenology and especially phenomenology of the body. Phenomenology, studies structures of conscious experience as experienced from the first-person point of view, along with the relevant conditions of experience. The central structure of an experience is its intentionality, the way it is directed through its content or meaning toward a particular object in the world (Smith 2018). According to Husserl, our consciousness always directs towards something. Through intentionality, we gain access to different phenomena which we can describe through

the meaning it has for our consciousness. That is to say; one investigates how different phenomena appear and present itself for one's consciousness (Jacobsen et al. 2015). Phenomenology is the making explicit of our own experience. Merleau-Ponty explores the nature of perception and establishes embodiment at the heart of existential and phenomenological philosophy (Merleau-Ponty, 1945/2014, p. xxx). "To see is always to see from somewhere, is it not?" (Merleau-Ponty, 1945/2014, p. 69). Merleau-Ponty puts the body in the centre as the subject of recognition. The body with its perceptual history is the viewpoint from which we relate, see, meet and experience the world *through* our body. The body is a part of one's perceptual field and from where one meets and perceives the world. According to Merleau-Ponty, the human being has a relation to the world that is more basic than our reflection. The body is in the world, and the world is in the body. The body inhabits space and time (Merleau-Ponty, 1945/2014, p. 140). There is no ontological divide between me and the body according to the ontology of Merleau-Ponty's philosophy of the body. The body is intentional and engaged in the world. From this, we can sum up that the body is expressive, and the movements of the body are filled with intentionality and meaning. Hence subjectivity is not something hidden, but it manifests in our external actions.

4.1 Methodological implications

Subjective experiences described through poems and explored through performative inquiry (Fels 2012) inspired by poetic inquiry (Faulkner 2018), could assist in diving into the events trying to unfold some of the embodied and affective dimensions of *why* the event was experienced as significant for the participant. Safeguarding that the chosen research methodology will help to address the aims in my project, an awareness concerning how different concrete methods work to access and collect empirical data is essential. When moments of participation from the psychodrama session, and how they appear for the participant is an object of study, then it is also of importance *how* these moments are being allowed to exist in the empirical material. When the moment is filled with intentionality, meaning and embodied lived experience, it is not fair to force the description of the experience solely into discursive text and categories.

5 Arts-based research (ABR) methodology

For space considerations this section mainly focuses on arts-based research methodology. Even though the performative research paradigm, which is claimed by Haseman (2006) to be a new research paradigm besides the qualitative research paradigm would also be interesting to include. The distinction Haseman makes between qualitative and performative research is that performative research chooses to express its findings in non-numeric data, "as symbolic forms other than in the words of discursive text" (Haseman 2006, p. 5). Research findings are made as presentational forms they; "deploy symbolic data in the material forms of practice; forms of still and moving images; forms of music and sound; forms of live action and digital

code” (Haseman 2006, p. 5). Haseman points out that there also has been a movement like this among several qualitative researchers in the past decade, including the “performance turn” in qualitative research (Mary M. Gergen and Gergen 2003; Lincoln and Denzin 2003).

It can be discussed whether the performative research paradigm is a new research paradigm or just a new field within the qualitative research field. Leavy (2018b) points to a similar discourse in the research community concerning arts-based research (ABR), and whether ABR is a research paradigm or a methodological field within the qualitative paradigm. She has come to understand ABR as a paradigm (Leavy 2018a, p. 4). There are several equally valid terms existing to describe different artistic forms of research (Leavy 2018a, p. 5), and Leavy applies arts-based research to categorise these research activities. The diversity of terms covering various research methodologies based in or inspired by the arts can be seen as a challenge (Rasmussen and Gjørnum 2012). Referring to previous books by herself and McNiff (2018), Leavy writes: “ABR is a transdisciplinary approach to knowledge building that combines the tenets of the creative arts in research context” (Leavy 2018a, p. 4). ABR is methodological tools used by researchers across the disciplines during any or all phases of research, problem generation, data or content generation, analysis, interpretation and representation. “These tools adapt the tenets of creative arts in order to address research questions holistically” (Leavy 2018a, p. 4). “Epistemologically, ABR assumes the arts can create and convey meaning (Barone and Eisner 2012). ABR is based on aesthetic knowing” (Leavy 2018a, p. 5). The philosophy ABR is grounded in stems from creative arts therapy, art therapy and a paradigm called “aesthetic intersubjective paradigm” (Leavy 2018a, pp. 5–6; Malchiodi 2018; McNiff 2018). ABR philosophy is also influenced by philosophical understandings of “the body”, especially embodiment theory and phenomenology (Leavy 2018a, pp. 5–6). McNiff makes the image of ABR and psychology as two dance partners: “ABR contributes to a more reciprocal partnership, complementing the use of psychology to study art with the use of art to study psychology” (McNiff 2018, p. 23). He highlights that within ABR, art leads in the dance. McNiff experienced a paradigm conflict between psychiatric theories and methods, and the arts, and highlights how this paradigm conflict “underscores how perceptions of reality are shaped by particular conceptual frameworks and methods of inquiry, including ABR” (McNiff 2018, p. 25). Following McNiff, who argues that the logical extension of this dynamic is; “the recognition of different ways of perceiving and examining experience, and encouraging them to complement each other in creative ways” (McNiff 2018, p. 25), how to examine experience through the ABR methodology performative inquiry inspired by poetic inquiry, in combination with qualitative research methodology, will be the focus for the last part of the article.

5.1 Example of examining experience through ABR methodology

The research question central for the exemplified material from the pilot study is: *How can participants’ descriptions of self-identified significant moments and experiences from a psychodrama group be examined with a combination of ABR and qualitative research methodology?*

The parts concerning the ABR methodology performative inquiry (Fels 2012) will be the main focus in the presentation of the example. In the research project, also qualitative research will be central for collecting empirical data through individual interviews, field notes, and seen holistically together with empirical data collected with ABR methodology. By initiating responses from the participants' experiences from their self-identified important moments of participation through a poem or a drawing, the research outputs and claims to knowledge concerning the participants' experiences can be created and presented in a more visual, expressive, and performative way. Poetic inquiry attempts to express human experiences more authentically, helps in highlighting slippery identity negotiation processes and to demonstrate embodiment (Faulkner 2018, p. 210). Faulkner adopts the term "poetic inquiry" from Prendergast (2009) and writes that poetic inquiry is;

(...) the use of poetry crafted from research endeavors, either before a project analysis, as a project analysis, and/or poetry that is a part of or that constitutes an entire research project. The key feature of poetic inquiry is the use of poetry as/in/for inquiry; poetic inquiry is both a method and product of research activity. (Faulkner 2018, p. 210)

Inspirations from poetic inquiry is applied together with performative inquiry. In art therapy, the images can be regarded as a bridge between the internal world and the external world (Peterson 2003, p. 81). The drawing together with interview transcripts, fieldwork and poems, might serve as a way of bridging the internal experience world to the external world. Symbolic, visual data can be found in the drawing and embodied data in the poem (Faulkner 2018, p. 210).

5.1.1 Performative inquiry—embodied data in the stop moments

Inspired by Fels (2012) and the stop moments in performative inquiry, the events and the moments that appear in the participants' descriptions of significant moments from the psychodrama group, can be understood as such stop moments. A performative inquiry does not provide a method or steps to follow, but rather "offers researchers and educators a way of inquiring into what matters as we engage in drama or theatre activities, or indeed any creative process or activity that is an action site of inquiry" (Fels 2012, p. 52). Performative inquiry can reflect on the stops in our everyday lives or in drama activity, "in terms of how we perform and are performed by our environment, our roles, our contexts, our relationships with others and the 'scripts' that we create" (Fels 2012, p. 51). Exploring what those stop moments reveal and listening to the embodied data that calls us to attention is making a performative inquiry. By diving into these stop moments, and descriptions of the participants self-identified significant moments from the psychodrama event the dimensions concerning the perception and embodiment in these moments can be visualised and discussed. Fels writes that performative inquiry requires of its practitioners four key things: "to listen deeply, to be present in the moment, to identify stops that interrupt or illuminate our practice or understanding, and to reflect on those stops, in terms of their significance, implications, and why they matter" (Fels 2012, p. 53). Fels has based her term *stop moment* from a philosopher's

concept of *the stop*: “A stop according to Appelbaum (1995), is a *moment of risk, a moment of opportunity*” (Fels 2012, p. 53). The stop makes us stop, be awakened to the moment, and have an internal dialogue with ourselves. “A stop tugs on our sleeve, and says, *listen, there is another way to engage, to respond, to interact*” (Fels 2012, p. 53). During the action phase in psychodrama, this might happen in the role as the protagonist, auxiliary ego or as a group member. The significant events the participants report immediately after the psychodrama group in the poem or the drawing, then turns in to a performative expression of the stop moment, and accessible for inquiry. In the action site of inquiry in the psychodrama, and often in the psychodramatic technique role reversal, there is a possibility to see from a different perspective which might lead to new understandings (P.F. Kellermann 1992, p. 86). In the site of action, stop moments can appear, and in the stop is embodied data (Fels 2012, p. 54). Putting the spotlight on these stops make them into a lense of inquiry.

5.1.2 *The spotlight on the stop moment of the participant*

The making of a drawing and a poem of an essential event relating to the participants’ experience from the psychodrama group, is a way to inscribe and visualise a stop moment in a performative expression for the participant. In the drawing of an essential moment of participation, participating as the auxiliary ego in another participants psychodrama, became central in the drawing of one participant from the pilot study. The drawing showed how Sarah (fictional name) sat on a blue silk carpet, representing the snow, outside the house of the Protagonist (*P*), acting the *P* as a child. How Sarah’s own perceptual experiences from her personal story are actualised and become vivid through the staging of another participants story in the psychodrama is made visible here. This moment is expressed both in the drawing and poem of Sarah. In the poem (translated from Norwegian) Sarah wrote;

In the middle of your story was my story
 Close by the scared and lonely child in you
 Was the scared and lonely child in me
 A tear had room for both

I was not gone
 I became less alone in my feelings
 —that was what I came here for
 (Written by a participant in a psychodrama group)

From this poem a description of Sarah’s subjective experience is unfolded, and the poem conveys embodied data concerning Sarah’s perceptual and personal history. Sarah is engaged in the moment as auxiliary ego in the *P*’s psychodrama. Sarah listens with her senses to what is being moved in the action phase in the psychodrama scene, and she is being personally moved.

5.1.3 *Performative inquiry and qualitative research methods*

Performative inquiry can be applied in combination with other qualitative methods, such as qualitative individual semi-structured interview (Kvale and Brinkmann 2015), field notes, sound and/or video recordings of the moments identified by the participants. In this way “thick descriptions” (Denzin and Lincoln 2008, p. 24), can be constructed to gain a holistically picture and answer to the research questions. In the individual interview, the immediate performative expression of subjective experience expressed through a poem and a drawing can be applied dialectically as an impulse into questioning on essential experiences and *why* these moments mattered for the participants. The dialectics between the poem and drawing, which identifies significant moments from the psychodrama group, and the individual interview might, in this way, position the participant as a co-researcher in the research project. Through the different empirical data parts collected and co-created with the participants, it could be said that I’m working as a bricolage or quiltmaker (Denzin and Lincoln 2008, p. 5). Through this an image of subjective experiences from participation in psychodrama can be constructed consisting of poems, drawings, interview transcripts, transcripts from the sound or video to better understand the complexity and meaning of the subjective experiences of the participants from the psychodrama group. The descriptions of how embodied aspects appeared for the participants in connection with reflections on why these events mattered and appeared in their meaning-making processes can be highlighted and discussed.

5.1.4 *Interpretations*

Interpretations of this bricolage of empirical material might be pursued through a thinking with theory, where the data is viewed across various theoretical perspectives (Jackson and Mazzei 2012). In addition to Sauter (2000), Foucault and his theory on power and knowledge (Foucault et al. 2001; Foucault and Gordon 1980) might be a relevant theoretical perspective which by *thinking with power/knowledge* could illuminate how power relations in the psychodrama practice might influence the subjectivity and subjective experiences.

Merleau-Ponty’s concept of the chiasm (Merleau-Ponty 1968) is another theoretical perspective that can be applied for a theoretical reading and thinking with theory of the stop moment identified by Sarah. The chiasm is a concept which demonstrates the ontological continuity between body and world. Merleau-Ponty describes the body as a “chiasm” or crossing in this concept. About the relationship between the visible and invisible, between the sensible and the sense and how looking palpates visible things, or touch palpates the tangible Merleau-Ponty writes:

This can happen only if my hand, while it is felt from within, is also accessible from without, itself tangible, for my other hand, for example, if it takes its place among the things it touches, is in a sense one of them, opens finally upon a tangible being of which it is also a part. Through this crisscrossing within it of the touching and the tangible, its own movements incorporate themselves into the universe they interrogate, are recorded on the same map as it; the two

systems are applied upon one another, as the two halves of an orange. (Merleau-Ponty 1968, p. 133)

“The intertwining of sensible and sensing is best exhibited in the reversibility of the human body, such as when one hand touches another” (Toadvine 2009, p. 107). Interpreted with the concept of the chiasm, what being created in the moment of participation in the psychodrama, also touches into Sarah’s perceptual history. The essence of the chiasm is that you cannot touch another person’s hand without yourself being touched back, and in this event described by Sarah in the drawing and the poem, this is actualized through how parts of her personal story become vivid and present injunction with the story of the P. Merleau-Ponty writes that the body can be compared to an art work, because the body is a junction of living meanings (Merleau-Ponty 1994, p. 109). Embodied knowledge and perceptions regarding how it, at times, felt to be a child are put to the fore in the stop moment identified by the participant. In Sarah’s case the feeling of being alone and loneliness, turns vivid in the role as the auxiliary ego. In the second part of the poem it can be interpreted that being a part of the psychodrama group gave her a community feeling regarding her own feelings, which was soothing in some way. This could have been explored further on by asking Sarah to describe why this event was an essential event for her, and the interview transcript of this response could then be one part of the bricolage of the subjective experience of Sarah. When embodied learning, fragments of perceptual history is put into play and made vivid like this through moments of participation in the psychodrama, it demands a psychodramatist managing the different expected professional roles (P. F. Kellermann 1992, p. 46).

5.1.5 *Advantages and disadvantages*

The participants have more options than written or verbal text for expressing their experiences in an approach combining ABR with qualitative methods, which is an advantage. The dialectics between the performative expression in the drawing and the poem, with the written text from a questionnaire and verbal text in the interview, might illuminate more dimensions of the significant events identified by the participants. In this way, the complexity of human experience might be described in a holistic and subjective way. These dimensions and aspects might potentially not appear if solely written or verbal text was applied to collect and express empirical data. Also, advantages of an ABR approach is that it might forge micro and macro connections between the individual lives of the participants and the broader contexts in which they live their lives and “make connections and interconnections of the processes that are otherwise out of reach” (Leavy 2018a, p. 9). A disadvantage is that the ABR approach, combined with qualitative methods exemplified here, is less applicable for proving the effect of psychodrama interventions. This might lead to challenges on argumenting for the relevance of the study. The purpose of the research project is not to point to causalities or prove effect, but to create thick descriptions of the experiential dimensions of some participants from a psychodrama session, and to contribute with critical perspectives. Another disadvantage is that the approach could create a picture of psychodrama purely as a method that gener-

ates positive experiences. This might give the impression of psychodrama solely as a healing agent or a panacea, and this is a disadvantage. ABR methodology, here exemplified with performative inquiry inspired by poetic inquiry, opens up for a wide array of subjectivity and positive descriptions. This could be seen in line with what Gjørnum found as a tendency in applied theatre research Gjørnum (2014), that it was hard to find researchers who use negative terms in their research. In my impression, this also exist in psychodrama research. By focusing on the participants' self-identified significant moments from the psychodrama group, the critical dimensions and reflections towards this action method are potentially left out. Therefore, the overall research design for the Ph.D.-project would also include an approach where the dramaturgical strategies in the psychodrama will be emphasized in order to give a more nuanced picture of the moments of participation in the psychodrama method. The purpose is that this will contribute with a more balanced knowledge on *how* the performative actions in the psychodrama works (both in positive and negative wordings), and also point to critical dimension concerning ethical issues and power relations.

6 Conclusion

Research through ABR methodology will not generate proof of the effect of the psychodrama method, but it could potentially give a different understanding of the performative actions in the psychodrama and of how things work performatively and affectively in psychodrama practice. Descriptions of *how* the site of action in psychodrama generates experiences that initiate essential affects within the participants can be conveyed through ABR. This is in line with the effect and affect discussion found in applied theatre research (Thompson 2009). Following Thompson (2009, p. 7), I believe that a movement towards affect instead of effect as a focus and aim for the research, would also benefit psychodrama research. Recognizing affect, bodily responses and sensations from performances in the psychodrama is important for acknowledging the powers in the psychodrama method, both in positive and negative wordings. This is already done in much psychodrama research, but I think that ABR methodology can convey affects and embodied dimensions of the lived experiences of the participants in an aesthetic, vivid and performative way, so a greater understanding of the subjective experiences from participation in psychodrama can be achieved. This might also illuminate experiences within the participants concerning relationships, intentionality and the surrounding context within the psychodrama practice in new ways. By listening to the stop moments (Fels 2012) identified and described by the participants, the research might open up for new understandings of what is happening in the intersection between psychodrama, participant and psychodramatist when a social, relational and interpersonal world is inscribed in this temporarily social reality created through the psychodrama.

In addition to outcome studies and studies to prove the effect of psychodramatic interventions in psychodrama research, why not do as McNiff suggests (McNiff 2018, p. 23), and let art lead from time to time?

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