"We Are All Here to Support Each Other."

A Narrative Inquiry of High School Drama Teacher Experience

Supporting Student Well-Being

by

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ABSTRACT

This research scrutinizes theatre teaching practice through a teacher perspective to find mechanisms that enable health promotion and quality theatre-making skills for students. The critical investigations conducted are twofold. First, I examine the intersection of my 18 years of experience teaching high school drama for connections to theatre and health research. I employ a narrative inquiry method to analyze lived experience to create an initial health promotion framework. And second, I interrogate that framework investigating the experience of a focus group of other high school drama teachers, a high school counselor, and a psychologist. This study reveals that drama teachers perceive their drama programs as psychologically, socially, and emotionally health-promoting for involved students. Furthermore, this study identifies the complex processes, relationships, and components of the theatre-making that the teachers pinpoint as preconditions and mechanisms that enhance and enable student flourishing. The teachers describe themselves as key to health promotion by modeling the artistry of theatre and the art form's social and emotional skills. Their narratives demonstrate that flexible time, their students, and the relationships they build with them as preconditions to maximize health promotion. Specifically, they identify the creation of a safe, supportive environment as foundational to the process.

DEDICATION

I gratefully dedicate this dissertation to each and every drama student I taught at Yuma

and Kofa High School during my 18 years teaching in Yuma, Arizona. Thank you for the

theatre-making we lived together that inspired this research.

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INTRODUCTION

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In each drama class that I instruct, I invite my high school students to reflect on what they learned, asking them to enhance their writing and reflecting skills by sharing how they have grown as budding theatre-makers.

As I read the papers, the students explain that theatre-making is not about learning to perform as much as it is about the human experience, relationships, and community.

"I may not have many friends, but I do have my drama family."

"Your class and auditorium are the places I feel more comfortable being in."

"Everything about the stage makes me happy."

I am moved by how intimately they reach out about their struggle and insecurity.

"I had no confidence and no motivation and no hope."

"I'm one of those people that does everything differently from everyone else."

Repeatedly they point out how theatre-making provides them with opportunities to overcome challenges and experience confidence, resilience, and joy.

"I have the courage to stand on stage and perform for hundreds of people."

"I'll never forget what we did on stage and in that shop."

"Your class really helped me overcome a lot of things because I knew I would always find a laugh in there."

When I first gave this assignment, I hoped the responses might provide me with insight into successful and less-than-successful drama lessons and strategies I used. But

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over time, I realized that the most critical point my students were teaching me is that

drama class is not solely about theatre-making; drama class is about much more. One

student said it best, "I think that's why Drama matters to me. It taught me so much more

than just how to act." *As a drama teacher, I thought I taught theatre-making in my*

classes. Still, as my students keep teaching me, maybe high school theatre is also about

the human experience, relationships, community, struggle, confidence, and well-being.

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These high school teacher musings illustrate the narrative beginning of my

interest in theatre education as it intersects with student well-being. But only more

recently have I become aware of the growing need to augment supports for high school

student health. Current research shows a rise in social, emotional, and psychological

challenges reported by young people in schools and classrooms across the nation. Studies

on adolescent flourishing note that young peoples' perceived well-being declines as they

age into high school (Casas and González-Carrasco 2019; Witten, Savahl, and Adams

2019). This decline is influenced by the fact that high school students report wider

variation in daily emotion and more intense emotional encounters than adults (Gilbert

2012). And current data suggests that mental health challenges (e.g. depression, anxiety)

are reported by one in six young people in the US (Whinnery 2019). Researchers observe

that "…a substantial increase in psycho-social disorders of children has taken place in

most developed countries over the past half-century, including suicide and para-suicide,

self-injurious behavior, eating disorders and depression" (Newman 2002, 6). As

educators and policymakers observe escalating student challenges, they respond with an

increased focus to support students not just academically but socially, emotionally, and mentally.

Across the nation, educational leaders and school districts are becoming more focused on and concerned about the implications of social, emotional, and mental health for the young people they serve. According to an educational policy brief, a total of 323 bills from 42 states related to improving supports and services for students were proposed to the legislature in 2019. Many of the proposed bills suggest teacher training in adverse childhood events, trauma-informed care, and school-based prevention and intervention policies are the answer (Whinnery 2019). The brief discusses the prime importance of teachers in providing supports to students in these areas. Teachers can be the first adult to notice changes in student learning and behavior that indicates mental challenges and guide students to the professional help they need. While teachers are not trained counselors nor equivalent to competent medical and psychological workers, they are recognized by school districts and states to occupy a front-line, first-responder role for students. Teachers connect students to mental, emotional, and social health supports and guidance. It is becoming increasingly important to support teachers who support students in promoting health and well-being. This research aims to provide supports to high school drama teachers.

The arts have long been recognized in society as providing health benefits, more distinctly, social and emotional health benefits (Fancourt and Finn 2019; Thalia R Goldstein, Lerner, and Winner 2017; De Neve et al. 2020). Art, music, and drama therapists and therapies are well-established in psychological treatment and practice. However, as stated before, schoolteachers are not professionally trained psychologists or

counselors even in their front-line role in student health. Because of this, considering

health-promoting aspects of high school education that already exist in classrooms and

schools across the country is worthwhile. Understanding how theatre participation

promotes health enables high school drama teachers to utilize strength-based health

promotion in their curriculum and teaching practice.

In arts and medicine research, community health is a growing focus (Sonke et al.

2019), and much research exists on the impact of theatre participation on health and well-

being for young people. These studies are facilitated by community directors and actors,

teaching artists, and schoolteachers and include young people from elementary through

high school. They cover topics like suicide and suicidal ideation (Keller and Wilkinson

2017), peer interaction and social skills (Daykin et al. 2008; Walsh-Bowers and Basso

1999), personality development (Yassa 1999), confidence, sense of achievement

(Bungay and Vella-Burrows 2013), and empathy (Thalia R. Goldstein and Winner 2012).

Research in educational theatre has investigated the role of theatre participation on

individual health and well-being as a system (Etheridge Woodson et al. 2017) and the

lifelong impact of high school theatre (McCammon et al. 2012). Like these researchers,

my students examined and expressed how high school drama enabled them to flourish

and inspired me to begin this journey. Improving understanding about health-promoting

curriculum design and teaching practice in high school theatre programs supports

teachers as they meet their students' mental, emotional, and social needs.

Research Question

My research question arises from my experience with my students in drama class who

connected theatre-making to their health and well-being as they described flourishing.

Thus, broadly defined, I investigate the ways in which theatre participation in high school promotes positive psychological, social, and emotional health. Under this umbrella, I analyze the intersection between theatre and health based on teacher practices that occur in theatre spaces in high school. My research question is:

- How do drama teachers identify positive student psychological, social, and emotional health promotion in their teaching practice and curriculum?

I examine this question in two distinct ways using qualitative data gathered through narrative inquiry methods. First, I investigate autobiographical narratives of my own 18 years teaching drama and layer that with educational theatre and arts and health research to develop a framework of drama teaching practice connected to evidence-based health promotion. And then, I examine the research question again by interrogating that framework in focus group sessions through narratives with other high school drama teachers, a high school counselor, and a psychologist. In this research, I center the drama teacher and other educators as expert voices in revealing the complex, layered world of high school drama and student well-being.

I scrutinize quality theatre teaching practices that enable both theatre-making and well-being for students as they manifest through teacher narratives. I hope to extend the work of theatre education researcher Laura McCammon who asserted that high school speech and drama participation "not only influence but even accelerate adolescent development and provide residual, positive, lifelong impacts" (McCammon et al. 2012, 5). Studies that investigate theatre teaching practice often extend to include additional elements like teacher identity (Wales 2009), teacher resilience (McLauchlan 2016), arts encounters for students (Steedly 2003), and teaching creativity (McCammon et al. 2010).

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In my research, I extend the study of theatre teaching practice by investigating how teachers experience, witness, and design aspects of health promotion.

The World of High School Theatre

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Every morning as I entered room 3203, I would find a vast spectrum of personalities in that space lounging in or on top of desks, some with earbuds in and hoodies up avoiding the world, one with a sketchbook and charcoal in hand designing the next anime character, several talking and laughing about last nights' escapades, a few finishing homework or journaling, many are oblivious to the world around them engrossed in YouTube, Snapchat, Twitter, or the current social platform. In contrast, others remain in the hall to prolong the time spent in a romantic embrace. Room 3203 is the drama room. I am a drama teacher. And in 55-minute classes, five times a day, a wide range of utterly unique students would engage with me in theatre-making.

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An examination of the specific context of high school theatre, including drama class and curriculum, is necessary to understand teacher narratives about ways theatre participation can be health-promoting. Theatre in high school is unique in many ways from professional theatre contexts. Focused on education, high school drama teachers operate within a complex world of teenage angst and celebration, high-stakes school reform movements, and "best practice" teaching strategies. Students may or may not want to be in a class where performance is central to a passing grade. As noted previously, adolescence is an emotionally fraught time, and performance pressure adds to the load. Family, community, religious, and school leaders attend student performances

in a unique situation where the audience is intimately connected to the performers. Drama teachers constantly navigate between the school, the community, and the students, all while teaching theatre.

How a drama teacher organizes their class, how they act, communicate, help their students, and what they believe about their practice can impact student well-being. Many arts and health studies do not provide details about theatre interventions or who is leading them. However, in this study, where the drama teacher and the high school theatre space are central, identifying what quality theatre teaching looks like is essential. Research studies in theatre education often examine how drama teachers navigate this world of student needs and learning to determine how theatre teaching is understood and practiced (Jensen and Lazarus 2014; Wales 2009; Brown and Urice 2003; Lazarus 2015; O'Neill 1991; Steedly 2003). In their research, *Theatre Teacher Beliefs About Quality Practice in the Secondary Theatre Classroom: An Ethnographic Study,* theatre education scholars Amy Petersen Jensen and Joan Lazarus interview and observe 22 drama teachers to develop a list of five elements drama teachers believe about high-quality theatre teaching practice.

1. Teachers communicate passion and enthusiasm for their work.
2. Teachers act as mentors and collaborators.
3. Classroom settings allow for student choices.
4. Teachers help students to assess their own work and the work of their peers.
5. Teachers believe in authentic theatre practice and in giving students duties and leadership opportunities. (Jensen and Lazarus 2014, 47).

In my own teaching experience and based on the narratives of the drama teachers in the

focus group, these five elements are part of quality theatre teaching practice that is also

health-promoting. Using these five elements, I examine the unique world of high school

theatre while digging into each belief manifested in a drama classroom (see Figure 1) to

provide a rich context for the teacher narratives in this study.

Figure 1: High School Theatre-Making Process

The High School Theatre-Making Process
1-Drama teachers communicate passion that inspires and invites students.
2-Drama teachers mentor and collaborate with students.
3- Drama teachers ensure an environment of student choice, assessment, and leadership.

Co-creating wiith students inspires teachers to ensure an environment that includes,

Student Choice:
* where creativity can flourish
* students take responsible risks

Student Assesment:
* where mistakes become learning expereiences
* where students perform for family and peers

Student Leadership:
* where students mentor other students in club leadership, production, and auditorium work
* where students are leaders on campus who are recognized and utilzed by school administraion and other adults

Drama teachers mentor and collaborate with students because:
* they work to develop students' writing, performance, and design skills to realize multiple live performances for audiences of peers and family
* theatre is embodied and hands-on
* they use side-coaching to teach performance skills
* they cannot produce a play without student support and vice versa

Drama teachers communicate passion to invite students because:
* they often teach alone
*drama is an elective class and not required
*they must maintian a significant workload teaching multiple preps
*they cannot do their work without the students

Teachers Communicate Passion and Enthusiasm for their Work

The quality teaching practice of communicating passion and enthusiasm for their

work is how drama teachers build supportive relationships with students, maintain

sufficient enrollment, and sustain a tremendous workload. There are several reasons why

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quality drama teachers communicate passion and enthusiasm for their work. The first is because drama teachers tend to teach in isolation as the *only* drama teacher at the high school. I taught high school drama for a total of 18 years. During that time, I taught at two different high schools in the same district in the border town of Yuma, Arizona. And like all the drama teachers who participated in the focus group, I was the only drama teacher at my school. Drama teachers represent the drama program; if students sign up for a class or audition for a play, they work with this teacher. And students prefer to work with teachers who love what they do, which helps build supportive teacher-student relationships.

Quality drama teachers communicate passion and enthusiasm because drama class is an elective class (not required for high school graduation). While one year of fine arts is a graduation requirement in some states, that is not the case in Arizona. So, unlike required classes that the counseling office fills automatically, drama classes only fill up if the teacher recruits enough students into the program. Less than 25 students in a class is often grounds for cutting a course from the master schedule entirely. Recruiting students requires high levels of involvement to get noticed. School assemblies, parent nights, homecoming parades, service, and clubs expose the entire campus to the theatre program. As students are exposed to theatre events or meet drama students, they choose to be involved. Passion sustains all this extra effort and activity.

Enthusiasm helps drama teachers maintain a significant workload. Because they teach alone, drama teachers teach all the elements of drama (e.g. acting, design, and production). High school drama teachers teach multiple preps. For example, a sophomore English teacher teaches five sophomore English classes in a day. They

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prepare for one class and then teach the same lesson five times. As a drama teacher, I taught five classes, but I had to prepare for four different ones. A typical school-day would consist of teaching two Beginning Drama classes, one Advanced Drama class, one Production and Performance class, one Technical Theatre class, and one planning period.

- Beginning Drama is a class open to any student, freshman to senior. Typically, this is a big class with 40+ students. I covered the basics of acting, playwriting, theatre history, and design in this course.

- Advanced Drama could only be taken after Beginning Drama and covered acting and design in more depth, creating a devised performance piece in the second semester.

- Production Performance class was only open to students who had auditioned and were cast, either tech or acting. This class was smaller, with about 30 students. We put on four plays a year, two of which were written and directed by the students. This class often toured shows to elementary and junior high schools.

- Technical Theatre class covered design and production elements and ran the auditorium for the school, including school assemblies and community works.

Members of the focus group also taught film editing and TV production. Quality drama teachers communicate passion and enthusiasm for their work to create the momentum necessary to maintain a drama program at their school singlehandedly.

Teachers Act as Mentors and Collaborators

Diving further into supportive teacher-student relationships, instead of traditional educational models where the content is *for* the student to "teach" them, the drama

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teacher operates as a "mentor and collaborator," making theatre *with* the students (Woodson 2004, 26). This co-creative practice includes students in ownership of the program. Drama teachers rely on and work with students to create theatre. Drama games, warm-ups, and rehearsal are staples of the theatre-making process, and the students are not the only ones participating. Drama teachers use a mentoring tactic developed by Viola Spolin called "side-coaching," which allows them to guide a performance process through suggestion and encouragement without giving direct commands. Spolin explained further, "...teachers and students meet as fellow players, involved with one another, ready to connect, to communicate, to experience, to respond, and to experiment and discover" (1986, 2). In my class, I played the games, did the warm-ups, and built the set together with the students. The first time we played a game or a new warm-up, I led the class. After that, the students led. Collaboration is key to theatre-making, and as the only drama teacher, I needed the students as much as they needed me. This level of responsibility and trust is supported best in environments where students can exercise autonomy and choice, promoting self-confidence and self-efficacy.

Classroom Settings Allow for Student Choices

Since drama teachers co-create with students, an essential part of the drama class curriculum is designing a trust-enabling environment, often referred to as a safe environment. A safe environment encourages responsible risk-taking and is not a place to be protected and coddled. Performing for peers at any age induces anxiety, but during the teenage years, when being accepted is essential, acting is a significant challenge. The drama teaching text, *Structuring Drama Work,* expresses this challenge by saying, "Because theatre uses the whole person for expression, there is a considerable risk for

participants who cannot, without feeling threatened, let go of their concerns and pressures in the *real* dimension in order to move into the exposure of the *symbolic* dimension" (Neelands and Goode 2015, 163). Because students face these challenges in drama work, teachers have identified structures that mitigate the risk and fear of participation. For me, every school year began with a unit focused on creating and maintaining an environment where collaboration could empower, where mistakes could transform into learning experiences, and where creativity could flourish.

Teachers Help Students to Assess Their Own Work and the Work of Their Peers

I continue this examination of high school theatre's context through quality teaching practice; two essential theatre-making skills are giving and taking thoughtful, critical feedback to assess performance work. In drama class, students learn how to critique each other thoughtfully with a focus on performance skills. They learn to identify critical performance skills within their work as well as that of other students. Thoughtful critique focused on skill development is a powerful tool in a theatre classroom. Discussions about respect, risks, valuing uniqueness, and agreeing to disagree remind students that everyone can improve and is welcome in drama, promoting student well-being as they learn to accept and work with everyone.

Beyond the classroom, high school drama lives in the school and the community too. Drama teacher narratives include not only the students but parents and the community as well. The pressure of performance in high school drama is unique in the respect that drama students perform for their peers in class and then for fellow students, teachers, friends, and family on the stage. High school drama students perform for people they know and who know them. They perform for multi-generational audiences,

from their baby sister to grandma. They perform for their girlfriend and the kid who picks on them at lunch. They perform for people invested in their lives and who even control their lives since they are minors. High school theatre audiences are connected to the student and, by extension, the drama teacher.

Teachers Believe in Authentic Theatre Practice and in Giving Students Duties and Leadership Opportunities

Drama teachers' work also extends into the community through touring shows and hosting community productions in the high school auditorium. So much work goes into these endeavors that students routinely participate in duties and leadership opportunities. The teachers in the focus group share narratives of tech students, club trips, and production work. My extra-curricular load after school at both schools consisted of three primary responsibilities, drama and Thespian club, after-school plays and musicals, and managing the auditorium.

- Drama/Thespian Club. All the focus group drama teachers ran a drama club and an affiliation with Arizona Thespian chapters (see Table 1), with one of them Willy, a member of the State Board. Thespians is an international organization for high school students run by the Educational Theatre Association. Membership requires dues, and students can receive awards and recognition for their work in theatre. Arizona Thespians also hosts a conference and competitions for students, which we attended. Student officers ran Drama/Thespian club and met after school once a week. The club activities ranged from small informal improv games in the classroom to trips to see Broadway touring shows in Phoenix. The club sponsored service projects and hosted an annual all-city theatre day for five local

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high schools. Students organized, led, designed, and marketed these events. The drama club officers were such a presence on campus that the administration would ask them to represent the school at parent night tours and other community-facing events.

- After School Productions. I list the afterschool productions of each drama teacher in the focus group in their biographies. I produced four smaller shows from classes I taught, and one play, and a musical from the entire student body. Rehearsals took place from 3-6 pm Monday- Friday and several all-day set build days on Saturday. Students constructed and painted the sets, designed and ran lights and sound, stage-managed, organized costumes, makeup, hair, and props, and acted in these performances.

- Auditorium Management. Many other clubs and organizations used the auditorium space for recitals, performances, assemblies, and awards programs. Having a technical staff in place to run these events was my responsibility. That staff consisted of student workers from the technical theatre class. I maintained a team of 5-6 student workers for community dance groups, touring shows, and even community church events in the auditorium. Students earned minimum wage for their time working events outside of school.

Between club leadership, play production work, and staffing the auditorium, students in drama at high school maintained essential duties that inspired adults in the school and community to trust and rely on their expertise. The teacher narratives that follow are born from this high school drama context and display quality theatre teaching linked to

student well-being through passion and enthusiasm, mentorship, student choice, critical feedback, authentic practice, and student leadership.

Theatre-Making Defined

The above learning and teaching inside a classroom or on a stage, whether performing for peers, parents, or community, during the school day or after, traveling, competing, or meeting as a club, is what I mean when I refer to educational theatre and theatre-making. This is the context and world of high school drama in this study as it represents my embodied experience as well as the experience of the drama teachers in the focus group. Teaching and learning how to act, direct, write, design, and crew, a classroom scene, a local dance show, a touring play, or the department musical is all theatre-making. Theatre-making encompasses all the diverse theatre production areas that the drama teachers in the focus group and I taught students, from writing a script, to performing a scene, to building a set, to selling tickets, to critiquing a performance. The world of educational theatre is a unique context of training and growing theatre skills while also performing theatre for an audience. In high school drama, we are making theatre, and we are learning theatre simultaneously, and I refer to all of this as theatre-making.

Social-Emotional Learning

<p style="text-align:center">***</p>

School administrators regularly entered my classroom to conduct teacher observations. Sometimes these were formal observations to be included in my teacher file, and more frequently, they were short 10-minute check-ins. To an administrators' untrained eye, a drama class might appear to be "complete chaos." Students span the

room out of their desks, often in small groups talking, laughing, arguing, and planning. The teacher can be hard to spot since she is roaming the room, never at her desk. One day my principal walked into this shifting, loud environment to assess student learning and specifically let me know that my class was "complete chaos." Judgments like that never fail to sting a little. As a drama teacher, I intentionally create a collaborative, student-centered, product-based learning environment built on formative assessment, self-regulation, and high levels of student engagement—not "chaos."

Determined to clarify quality drama instruction for my principal, I invited him back to my classroom for a special guided tour. I met him at the door and handed him the performance rubric previously presented to the students to understand the scope of the assignment. Then, I invited him to follow me around the room as I engaged with each group about their current progress and challenges. He witnessed for himself the student collaboration, leadership, problem-solving, and creativity happening in the room. After visiting with several groups, and with some surprise in his voice, he acknowledged that though the room was loud and busy, it was not chaotic. Taking my principal on a tour of my room to see what collaborative, student-centered, product-based learning looks like changed his mind about the learning that happens in drama class. Drama class may look different than rows of desks and sound different than scratching pencils because embodied, social and emotional learning requires activities that might look a bit like "chaos."

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In the broader educational context of theatre education, Social Emotional Learning (SEL) provides a relevant current educational framework that aligns with

quality theatre education practice. There is a lack of capacity building in social and emotional skills in the high stakes testing trends of education today, and SEL theorizes against that trend. While content knowledge is essential, students also benefit from competencies like problem-solving, working with others, and empathy. SEL emphasizes learning that includes and moves beyond the cognitive to competencies that are useful beyond the classroom. There are several SEL frameworks (e.g., 21st Century Competencies, Noncognitive Factors), but perhaps the most recognized is the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) (Hagen 2013, 4). CASEL defines SEL as "the process through which children and adults understand and manage emotions, set and achieve positive goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain positive relationships, and make responsible decisions" ("CASEL" 2020). CASEL identifies five competencies in the SEL framework, self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision making (Yoder 2014, 3-4). Within these competencies are overlapping elements of high-quality theatre teaching and health promotion: recognizing and regulating emotions, self-efficacy, empathy, respect for others, problem-solving, working with others, and negotiating conflict. Current education frames tend to emphasize more than just cognition as a learning modality and incorporate social and emotional learning elements, thereby supporting the whole student.

Research aligning theatre education to SEL through student well-being practice further strengthens theatre's position in education. Scholars of theatre education often articulate how arts programs and art education policies in the United States must defend their existence to survive (Woodson 2004, 24; Duffy 2016, 37; Brown and Urice 2003,

25). This battle makes access to the arts in US public schools uneven in advantaged areas and often non-existent for underrepresented groups (Duffy 2016, 37-38). Theatre education scholar Peter Duffy notes, "it was rare to encounter full-time theatre teachers in disadvantaged communities" (Duffy 2016, 38). The struggle for a recognized place in public education is real for theatre educators. CASEL has developed a robust body of research linking SEL to a variety of topics, evidence-based instruction (Dusenbury et al. 2015), alignment to teacher evaluations (Yoder 2014) standards, pre-school through high school (Zinsser, Weissberg, and Dusenbury 2013), and high school case studies (Hamedani and Darling-Hammond 2015). This robust research on SEL adds to the literature making a stronger case for arts in education.

SEL is a lens I use along with the World Health Organization (WHO) definition of health in this dissertation to interrogate and investigate health promotion in theatre class. As I examine my teaching experience through these lenses, I am not searching for how theatre heals everyone. Theatre is not medicinal. In fact, theatre participation can have potential of harm for students. I am not saying theatre is the only class that promotes health in the high school context. Instead, this study seeks the health-promoting aspects of theatre participation to enable high school drama teachers and students to utilize a latent potential of theatre education in intentional ways.

Definition of Health

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I stand in a circle on the auditorium stage, with 32 of my high school drama students participating in an opening night ritual. After warm-ups, the entire cast, crew, and I form a circle holding hands, with the right arm over the left arm, and celebrate that

tonight we have our first audience. This is a moment where we recognize our collective work, dedication, and artistic achievement. This is also a moment giddy with anticipation and excitement. As a fitting part of our opening night circle, each senior in the production offers advice and encouragement to the rest of the company. The seniors approach this moment with great seriousness and weight, and they tend to share their perception of how participation in the drama program has impacted their lives. This is a vulnerable and exciting moment. The air is thick with meaning and emotion. Tears are shed, and laughter is present, often in the same sentence. The seniors witness to the underclassmen how drama helps them cope with personal challenges, build meaningful relationships, better understand themselves and others, and build their confidence and sense of belonging. I stand silently in the circle and listen to the students' personal experience and wisdom, supporting flourishing and resilience born of drama participation.

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This research uses a strength-based approach to health linked to positive psychology, focusing on flourishing and human potential.   And it is valuable to note that modern medicine has tended to take a deficit approach to health, focusing on illness, disease, or maladaptive behavior. However, in 1948, the constitution of the World Health Organization (WHO) positively framed the definition of "health," stating, "Health is a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity" (2019). Though this definition has been in force for 70 years, implying a positive lens on what health should look like for individuals, many critical

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movements that define physical, mental, and social well-being have not risen until more recent times.

Today, the biopsychosocial model of health is the dominant theoretical model that considers the whole person when looking at health and well-being (Fancourt 2017, 29). This positively focused look at health, as more than the absence of disease and more than physical health, is the frame I use in this dissertation extending to mental health models based on flourishing. In 1996, Martin Seligman, a noted positive psychologist, and scholar defined the study of positive psychology as "the scientific study of positive human functioning and flourishing on multiple levels that include the biological, personal, relational, institutional, cultural, and global dimensions of life" (Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi 2000, 5). Flourishing includes and moves beyond biological health to recognize the complex interconnection of lived experience in the mental, social, and emotional realms. Positive psychology recognizes that people derive holistic health benefits by fulfilling their internal human potential (Fancourt 2017, 31). Flourishing, happiness, and other positive psychological health components relate to what I saw students experience in my classroom with theatre-making. Theatre-making does not cure or heal students from disease; instead, it appears to have the capacity to promote well-being, allowing them to flourish despite insecurities and challenges.

Focusing on flourishing instead of eradicating disease could lend itself to overlooking problem areas of societal implications that contribute to a lack of health. And I see this as a challenge of my asset-based approach. The truths of these realities should not be overlooked or reframed to a neo-liberal way of thinking. An asset-based approach does not erase harm, place the responsibility solely on the individual, or imply that a life

free of challenge is the goal. Instead, a focus on flourishing investigates the day-to-day

processes of living, where challenge fits in that process, and how personal and social

resources combine to address those challenges.

How Theatre Promotes Health and Well-being

In 2019, A World Health Organization report titled *What is the evidence on the*

role of the arts in improving health and well-being? A scoping review, Daisy Fancourt

Figure 2: A Logic Model Linking Arts to Health

Components

- Aesthetic engagement
- Involvement of the imagination
- Sensory activation
- Evocation of emotion
- Cognitive stimulation
- Social interaction
- Physical activity
- Engagement with themes of health
- Interaction with health-care settings

Responses

- **Psychological** (e.g. enhanced self-efficacy, coping and emotional regulation)
- **Physiological** (e.g. lower stress hormone response, enhanced immune function and higher cardiovascular reactivity)
- **Social** (e.g. reduced loneliness and isolation, enhanced social support and improved social behaviours)
- **Behavioural** (e.g. increased exercise, adoption of healthier behaviours, skills development)

Outcomes

- Prevention
- Management
- Promotion
- Treatment

Source (Fancourt and Finn 2019)

and Saoirse Finn outlined a logic model (see Figure 2) linking arts activities to health promotion through seven components: aesthetic engagement, involvement of the imagination, sensory activation, evocation of emotion, cognitive stimulation, social interaction, and physical activity (Fancourt and Finn 2019, 2). I do not include engagement with themes of health or interaction with health-care settings since my high school drama classes and the focus group member classes do not address performances in healthcare settings or maintain a focus on healthcare topics. Each of these seven components "are causually (sic) linked to health benefits" (Fancourt and Finn 2019, 2). The health benefits are physiological, psychological, social, and behavioral. And the authors highlight the multimodal aspect of arts activities, noting that a single art activity can provide multiple health benefits.

Theatre-making provides multiple layered health benefits, which are particularly valuable for adolescent flourishing. Recently an increasing number of studies have been generated on the topic of adolescent flourishing, identifying a "decreasing-with-age tendency" among adolescents (Casas and González-Carrasco 2019; Witten, Savahl, and Adams 2019). In the study, *Subjective Well-Being Decreasing With Age: New Research on Children Over 8,* Ferran Casas and Monica Gonzalez-Carrasco review publications from 15 countries to document an alarming trend. Starting at age ten, children's subjective well-being decreases and continues decreasing into the high school years (386). The authors note that though the decreasing-with-age tendency is clearly documented, theorizing the causes is not clear. Most explanations for the decrease come from adult flourishing theory, and "whether their tenets apply to children is, therefore, a major test of their validity" (378). Adolescents' experience of flourishing or not

flourishing varies widely across different developmental ages and across a variety of cultures and places and, while under-theorized, can be positively supported by the multimodality of the health-promoting aspects of theatre-making. Theatre-making is layered, complex, and individual impacting tenets of adolescent flourishing such as behavior (e.g. coping, avoidance), internal buffers (e.g. self-esteem, optimism), and external buffers (e.g. relationships, social support) (Casas and González-Carrasco 2019, 379).

Using the logic model combined with the frame of flourishing, here are several evidence-based health benefits to theatre-making in high school. For example, in a drama classroom, students use imagination and cognitive stimulation to engage in drama games and activities, improvisation, and design work which develops skills that are highly supportive of complex health-promoting responses connected to mental health and depression (Kaser, Zaman, and Sahakian 2017, 987). Emotion and aesthetic elements of drama class like character development, scene work, playwriting, and directing provide opportunities for emotional identification and regulation and stress reduction. Regulating emotions is a key factor in mental health management and coping strategies (Thalia R Goldstein, Lerner, and Winner 2017, 2) and supports autonomy, competence, and relatedness. And stress is a known risk factor (i.e., childhood trauma and toxic stress) in the development and progression of many health conditions like heart disease or cancer. Drama work supports conflict resolution by developing cognitive, emotional, and social skills and supporting empathy, trust, and prosocial behavior (Fancourt and Finn 4). Drama class curriculum enhances collaboration and the development of ensemble building skills, which builds social support, increases social capital, and reduces

discrimination. Lack of social support and social capital is linked to mental illness,

functional and motor decline, and even chronic pain (Pascoe and Richman 2009). Drama

class can support young people's health and well-being by reducing the impact of trauma,

building positive relationships, relationship skills, social cohesion, and educational

attainment (Fancourt and Finn 2019, 4). Arts and health literature robustly outline

various components and mechanisms of theatre-making in high school drama that address

student flourishing. In the next chapter, I demonstrate how narrative inquiry and

narratives of teacher experience connect lived experience to arts and health research.

CHAPTER 2

METHODS

Narrative Inquiry Method

Using a narrative inquiry methodology, my dissertation research is conducted in two stages. First, I use narrative methods autobiographically to collect and analyze stories of my 18 years of lived experience teaching theatre. That narrative is then layered with evidence-based research from arts and health and theatre education scholars to construct a framework of how quality theatre teaching connects to health promotion and well-being for young people. Second, I use narrative methods to collect and analyze stories from a focus group consisting of four high school drama teachers (with expertise in theatre teaching), a school counselor, and a psychologist (with expertise in young people and health) to interrogate, reconstruct, and validate the framework I created.

Since teacher and educator stories comprise this study's data, an examination of narrative inquiry as a methodology is useful. Narrative inquiry focuses on stories of lived experience and acts of telling, retelling, and listening. Narrative refers to a group of stories, and a story is a single one, and this methodology investigates stories told by various people (Taylor 2013, 100). Narrative inquiry recognizes experience as a valid way of knowing and learning, as telling stories impacts ourselves and others. Narrative scholars in qualitative health sciences note three dominant elements used in narrative inquiry (Taylor 2013, 243).

- First, the story is a representation of lived experience.
- Second, the storyteller establishes "meaning for themselves and their audiences" through narrative delivery (Taylor 2013, 243).

- And third, the listeners "sometimes find deeper meaning by aligning themselves experientially within participants' stories" (Taylor 2013, 243).

A narrative is not static; a story is not the same with each telling, as new insights and understandings of the story come to light in the retellings and the listening. Foundational narrative inquiry researchers Connelly and Clandinin state, "A person is, at once, engaged in living, telling, retelling, and reliving stories" (Connelly and Clandinin 1990, 4). Sharing my own autobiographical narrative with the focus group members allows for multiple retellings and invites deeper meaning for myself and the participants.

Thus, collecting narratives about theatre-making and health promotion as data for this research achieves a robust investigation of the study of experience. Clandinin and Connelly connect narrative inquiry to the realm of education, leaning heavily on the work of educational philosopher John Dewey. "For Dewey, education, life, and experience are one and the same. Education is life, and life is education, and to study life, is to study education, is to study experience" (Huber et al. 2013, 220). Narrative inquiry as a methodology creates a community of shared storytelling experience and resists measurable, evidence-based, scientific research that views the relationship between researcher and researched as distanced and objective. Latta and Kim note, "Narratives manifest the creating, responding, and relating teaching and learning movement of thinking with other(s)…" (Latta and Kim 2009, 144). Because this research scrutinizes "how" or the "the way in which" theatre participation promotes health and well-being for young people, an investigation of the variety of experience rather than a typical experience provides the "thick description" (Tracy 2013, 3-4) sought by this study. A thick description with rich detail, contradiction, and nuance are also essential, creating a

space for the reader to make their own meaning as they listen and make connections to the stories told. Through narrative, I investigate my experience and then share and compare that with the experience of other educators providing for a nuanced, intricate examination of theatre education and health promotion.

Autobiographical Narrative Inquiry

According to Taylor and Francis, narrative researchers may include their own stories in the research (Taylor and Francis 2013, 106).   And in educational research, teachers often carry out research in their practice (Bullough and Pinnegar 2001; Hamilton, Smith, and Worthington 2008). Researchers Vanassche and Kelchtermans discuss practitioner-focused research noting that these studies "…share the assumption that educational quality hinges on the knowledgeability of practitioners and that practitioners actively studying their own schools and classrooms is a valuable approach to improve that knowledgeability" (2015, 508). Because I was a drama teacher and taught in drama class and on stage, my past high school drama teaching experience provides a robust "insider-outsider" knowledge to the research (Dwyer and Buckle 2009, 60). My insider status as a drama teacher and my outsider status as a researcher provides a broad perspective. For practitioner-focused educational research to resonate, it must "contain and articulate" moments "central to teaching and learning to teach" (Bullough and Pinnegar 2001, 16). As a drama teacher talking to drama teachers, the group can support each other in discovering and articulating those moments. Debra McLauchlan, a theatre scholar who was a high school teacher previously, notes the potential of this approach, citing several other educational theatre researchers who have contributed "considerable literature in school-based drama" after being high school teachers (McLauchlan 2016,

172). Because of my experience as a drama teacher, I am passionate about young people, drama praxis, and theatre-making. Working in this unique way, I hope to join their ranks and add to their body of research.

Since my lived experience is central to this study, I start by collecting my autobiographical narrative of memories of my 18 years as a drama teacher. I analyze memories of lived classroom experiences where I witnessed the promotion of students' health and well-being. Many memories were of students sharing their life stories with me, and many memories were of teaching practices I used to design a theatre space where students could and did take responsible risks and create theatre. I use health literature layered with my stories to build a framework of four elements of high school participation that I posit promote health and well-being for young people. This layering style is "a juxtaposition between the authors' experience and relevant literature" (Kim 2015, 209). Layering lived experience with academic research allows both ways of knowing to sit together in my dissertation in a way that is both artistic and analytic, building a "ridge" between educational theatre experience and health literature to augment my transdisciplinary approach. Layering also invites the reader into space where their personal connections to the story and research are also meaning-making.

Focus Group Narrative Inquiry

Since the intent of the research in the second part of my study is to investigate and interrogate the framework I constructed from my own stories of theatre and health promotion, a focus group format fits my research intention. The focus group interview invites a group of people with similar experiences to talk together on a specific or focused topic and is usually conducted following significant prior research (Tracy 2013,

167). A strength of focus groups is the interaction of the group, otherwise known as "group effect" (Carey 1994). This effect creates a research space where group participants feel more comfortable to share because "participants' experiences are validated, extended, and supported by similar others" (Tracy 2013, 167). As the participants share stories and experiences, a "collective sense-making" (Kurtz 2014, 67) occurs that enables a collective conversation that "play[s] with the uncertainties and potentials of collective life" (Kurtz 2014, 67). Using a focus group method to collect narratives of lived teacher experience allows for a robust and ethical investigation of my framework assisted by and valuing teacher experience and expertise.

Beyond the benefits to the study, this focus group also benefits the participants as a connection between life, education, and experience through stories enhances practice. Teachers primarily instruct in isolation, meaning they are the only teacher in a classroom full of students. Teacher stories are "secret" stories that remain untold or told to other teachers who teach similar classes in other secret spaces (Clandinin and Connelly 1996, 25). Drama teachers tend to be even more isolated and often the only person teaching drama at their entire school. Drama teachers may have no one else on their campus who shares their particular teaching experience. Fine arts departments are a collection of utterly unique subjects (e.g. ceramics, dance, choir, art, and drama). Their commonality is that they are all art and do not fit well anywhere else, making them each instructionally isolated. Because of this isolation, drama teachers do not receive robust feedback on their teaching practice or an opportunity to collaborate with other teachers. In their article, *Narrative Inquiry Invites Professional Development: Educators Claim the Creative Space of Praxis,* Margaret Latta and Jeong-Hee Kim investigate the potential of

teachers sharing stories for professional development, stating, "As educators share their personal narratives and attend to the narratives of others, an individual and collective movement of thinking takes shape" (2009, 143). Teachers use stories to connect life to education to experience and create an educational thinking community in the process. In this community, teachers develop how they think about their practice and how they do their practice. Narrative inquiry and telling stories enable teachers to share, critique, and expand on teaching practices with other teachers.

Participants

 I recruited a team of four high school drama teachers, one high school counselor, and one high school psychologist from the state of Arizona to interrogate my framework in a focus group format. Working with drama teachers, a school psychologist, and a school counselor on this work aligns with my research in two ways.

> 1- Examining the complexity of ways in which theatre class promotes health and well-being from the perspective of both a counselor and teacher.
>
> 2- Inviting the voices of drama teachers and school counselors to be present in the research.

Using narrative from my 18 years of teaching and arts and health literature, the team investigated my framework's four elements. This investigation allowed me a chance to interrogate, challenge, or reconstruct my conclusions with a group of public education professionals in close contact with young people.

Though many studies on theatre and well-being focus on brief theatre interventions with young people, for this study, I chose to focus on the narratives of the teachers instead. I consider drama teachers to be the experts in the room, yet I noted a

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general lack of conversation with them in theatre and well-being studies. Drama teachers have vast experience with implementing and refining supportive instructional intentions and choices. They also work with hundreds of young people from many walks of life over years of teaching and directing experience. I wanted this broad, nuanced perspective on theatre and health to be present in this work.

I used the internet to recruit the participants, searching out drama teachers in Phoenix, Mesa, Tucson, and Yuma, Arizona. I sent email invitations to be a part of a high school theatre and health study. From the 20 invitations I sent out, four drama teachers responded and signed the consent form. To recruit counselors and psychologists, I reached out to a counselor I knew from Yuma from my years as a drama teacher and asked her to participate in the study and recruit others. She recruited two others through snowball sampling, a counselor from another high school and a school psychologist. However, when it came time to start the focus groups, one of the counselors contracted COVID-19 and dropped out.

Data Collection

Since the study participants live all across the state of Arizona, and because of strict travel limitations due to the COVID-19 pandemic, I used email and Zoom to interact with them. After recruitment, as outlined above, I asked each participant to send me a signed consent form via email (see Appendix A). Then, I conducted a 30-minute introductory interview with each participant to get to know them and for them to get to know me and my research. Each participant answered 19 semi-structured interview questions (see Appendix B) to collect demographic information, including drama program and school data. These interviews were recorded on Zoom and later transcribed.

The focus groups were conducted and recorded via Zoom. Each session lasted 90-minutes with four total sessions, each one focused on a different topic of my framework.

1. Drama class habits of mind that create an environment of play.

2. Building capacity to negotiate social relationships through creative collaboration

3. Embodied storytelling that enables emotional identification and regulation

4. Supportive teacher-student relationships that stem from a co-creative process

I designed a focus group protocol for each session with scripted guidelines, questions, stories, and research included (see Appendix C). I wanted to hear various voices in the same space talking about the narrative and research in complex ways. Each focus group began with a story from my teaching experience, followed by an invitation for participants to share stories. Then, a PowerPoint slide presentation of some arts and health research and semi-structured focus group questions intended to bring out more stories to explore and interrogate the framework.

Because I wanted to facilitate group effect and encourage the participants to feel comfortable, the way I interacted with them has important ethical implications. I took thoughtful care of the impact of the questions asked. In Dillon's *Practice of Questioning,* he outlines various presumptions elicited by different questions (1990, 131-136). I used his guidelines to evaluate the questions I planned for each focus group to maximize participants' efficacy and agency in the process. Probing and follow-up questions were used to encourage thick description (Tracy 2013, 50-51). I encouraged empathetic interaction with and between the participants as well as rapport and trust. Using my own stories and experience as mutual disclosure was one way I sought to be

ethical and encouraging (Tracy 2013, 111). Patient listening and fostering a frame of

"serious play" created a space where participants could feel safe and respected (Lindlof

2002, 187).

Data Analysis

Narrative scholar Jeong-Hee Kim refers to narrative analysis as "aesthetic play,"

observing the "playful and serious" attitude necessary to this type of research (Kim 2015,

187). Since narrative inquiry is one of the primary methodologies of my dissertation, it is

valuable to take a moment to investigate what stories are (their form) and what stories do

(their function(s)) to aid in this playful analysis.

To begin, when I talk about a story, I am mainly focused on a story as a memory.

I use my own memories of 18 years of teaching drama and the memories shared with me

by the four drama teachers, the high school counselor, and the high school psychologist.

All six of my focus group participants responded to my stories about each of my

framework elements with multiple stories of their own. All these stories are memories of

lived experience.

According to narrative researcher Cynthia F. Kurtz, there are three "essential

dimensions" of a story: form, function, and phenomenon (Kurtz 2014, 15). Within the

narrative inquiry of my dissertation, Kurtz's essential dimensions of a story aid in

understanding how stories can be analyzed.

1- <u>Form</u> relates to elements like the plot, characters, setting, conflict, and theme.
   These elements create a mutually recognized structure the story can take that the
   teller uses to convey a message to the listener.

2- <u>Function</u> focuses on connection, specifically connections the listener makes between characters in a story, between this story and other stories, and between the "situation in the story and analogous situation in our lives" (Kurtz 2014, 15).

3- <u>Phenomenon</u> links to the life of the story over time, where the story was told first, where it was retold, and how the story changed in the retellings. The storytellers and audiences over time and the purposes for telling the story.

Examining the form, function, and phenomenon of the narratives is one lens I used to begin coding the stories. An iterative analysis was conducted on the data collected from my stories and the focus groups' stories. An iterative analysis is "... a reflexive process in which the researcher visits and revisits the data connects them to emerging insights and progressively refines focus and understandings" (Tracy 2013, 184). Iteratively connecting data to research questions and theory and then refining and collecting more data serves the purpose of this transdisciplinary research. Since stories are the data of analysis in this study, stories were iteratively analyzed for codes, categories, patterns, and themes (Kim 2015, 188).

The second lens I use to begin coding looks at what stories do. Again, narrative researcher Cynthia Kurtz outlines four purposes of telling stories,

1- We use stories as maps of our lived experience to inform ourselves and others of "opportunity and danger" (Kurtz 2014, 26).

2- We use stories to help us make decisions about what to believe about the world around us.

3- We use stories as objects of play where we can simulate experience before we act. Brian Boyd identifies simulated experience as "a partial suspension of the rules of

the real" (Kurtz 2014, 30) a space where all the consequences are not enforced, allowing for autonomy and problem-solving.

4- We use stories to wrap up our experience's meaning into small, concise packages that can travel through time and space and connect to others (Kurtz 2014, 33).

This complex interconnection of relationships, play, and meaning-making allows me, as the researcher, to find patterns in the stories and ultimately provide jointly constructed interpretations connected to arts and health literature through an iterative analysis.

Coding

Each focus group was topically based on one of the four framework elements, so I collected all the stories for each focus group separately told by all the members, including myself. I began by narratively coding the data "to understand the human condition" through "personal participant experience" (Saldaña 2015, 154). After narrative coding, I applied values coding to examine participants' values, attitudes, and beliefs. Then, I applied in vivo codes to document participant voices and perspectives (Saldaña 2015). While moving through each successive level of coding, I used analytic memos (Saldaña 2015) to guide my synthesis of the focus group data into a structure representing the group's complex identification of how they enact health promotion in their drama classrooms.

Limitations

There are several significant limitations to this research. The findings do not indicate a causal relationship between theatre participation and health promotion for high school students. Instead, the findings present "key assertions" or statements that "propose a summative interpretive observation of the local contexts of a study" (Saldaña 2015, 15)

drawn from the focus group participants outlining their lived experience aligned with academic research. Transfer of findings can be inferred from this group of teachers to the practice of other drama teachers, but the sample size is too small to make any generalizable connections. Patterns of the process of the lived experience of these teachers can be used to predict what might be practiced by other drama teachers in different locations "in present and future contexts" (Saldaña 2015, 15). But due to the snowball volunteer sampling used in this study, all the drama teachers had a positive, open perspective to the idea that high school drama promotes health. A different group of teachers, especially ones who disagreed with this idea, might provide significantly different answers. In my years of experience, I have not talked to a high school drama teacher who disagreed with the idea, but I have spoken to some who expressed the view that theatre is an art form only; and to apply theatre to anything outside of art reduces its aesthetic impact and corrupts the art form to some level.

Another significant limitation is while the findings robustly share the drama teacher experience, there are no student voices present in the study. Student perception would add valuable insights to this work, as is the case with theatre educator Laura McCammon's student-centered work, *Lifelong Impact: Adult Perceptions of Their High School Speech and/or Theatre Participation*, which investigates adults' perception of their time in high school drama. Including students engaged in theatre-work would add to this study with their personal experience of health-promotion or lack thereof.

A Transdisciplinary Approach

Examining the connections between educational theatre and health and well-being for young people through narrative inquiry lends itself to a transdisciplinary approach.

Outlined by scholars as having the strengths of a problem focus, evolving methodology, and relying on collaboration, a transdisciplinary approach aligns with research processes that examine connections between multiple disciplines (Wickson, Carew, and Russell 2006, 1047). The methodologies that I have chosen to use for my research and analysis in this dissertation and why I have chosen them reflect a transdisciplinary frame.

Problem Focus. Investigating the real-world question I had as a teacher of how health promotion and well-being happened in my drama class when I only intended to teach theatre-making is grounded in a problem that exists in the world rather than ideas that exist in theory (Wickson, Carew, and Russell 2006, 1048). My research question is a problem arising from my lived experience as a high school drama teacher.

Evolving Methodology. A transdisciplinary approach encourages combining the methodologies and epistemologies of the disciplines studied in a dynamic and iterative process (Wickson, Carew, and Russell 2006, 1052). Basarab Nicolescu, president and founder of the International Center for Transdisciplinary Research and Studies, defines transdisciplinary research as "the science and art of discovering ridges between different areas of knowledge" (Klein 2004, 516). When two disciplines like high school theatre teaching and student health and well-being bump into each other, just like two landmasses bumping into each other, ridges push up, altering the landscape. Narrative scholar Janice Huber notes three potential ridges that can benefit teachers and teaching practice, "the narrative study of schooling has potential for freeing education from a language of the technical, for ensuring that understandings link with fundamental qualities of human experience; and for establishing bonds in method and meaning between education and other fields of endeavor" (Huber et al. 2013, 385). I use the

participant narratives to intentionally bump theatre education into health and well-being and then reveal the ridges that stand out in the data to understand the possibilities for educators and students.

Collaboration. A transdisciplinary approach relies on collaboration, specifically between researchers and stakeholders. The voices of those impacted by high school theatre and health and well-being are part of the research process. Thus, I included my lived experience of teaching drama for 18 years with multiple focus group sessions with drama teachers, a high school counselor, and a high school psychologist to re-evaluate circumstances I think I understand (Huber et al. 2013, 216). I collaborate with drama teachers, a counselor, and a psychologist to include voices beyond my own and to experience complex perspectives about how theatre participation promotes health and well-being for young people.

A transdisciplinary approach has two specific limitations in the work that needs to be thoughtfully addressed. They are integration and paradox. Integrating "ridges" (Klein 2004, 516) between epistemologies of health and theatre is a challenge to integrate effectively when the epistemologies of each discipline are as different as health and theatre. Arts and health scholars address this challenge in a recent white paper calling for cross-sector collaborations between arts and culture and public health organizations (Sonke et al. 2019). The authors invite "the missing power of their combined strengths" and plead for "collaboration that draws on the histories, strengths, and knowledge…as well as on the communities these sectors are designed to serve" (Sonke et al. 2019, 7). In my research, the history, strength, and knowledge of drama teachers can come together

with a school counselor, psychologist, and health promotion research to interrogate and examine those ridges.

Integrating the two disciplines through classroom practice and teaching theory will give me a chance to reimagine health promotion and theatre education theory (Wickson, Carew, and Russell 2006, 1053). However, this also presents a challenge as I am myself integrated into the research as a former teacher. In the next chapter, I use my teaching expertise to inform the arts and health research and, at the same time, use the arts and health research to maintain enough critical distance to engage in fresh ways (Tracy 2013, 75-77).

CHAPTER 3

MY HEALTH PROMOTION FRAMEWORK

I began my dissertation process with an autobiographical narrative examination of my past as a high school drama teacher analyzing theatre-making experiences that I perceived as promoting students' health.   I layer these stories with arts and health research to create a framework for how theatre participation can enhance well-being. This evidence-based framework is a ridge between high school theatre and health disciplines, magnifying a perception of how they meet. To investigate my memories of 18 years of teaching high school drama, I asked myself the questions:

- In what ways have I witnessed positive psychological, social, and emotional health promotion for students in my 18 years of teaching drama?

- How have I consciously or unconsciously designed theatre classroom curricula and experiences that promoted positive psychological, social, and emotional health for students?

These questions elicited a flood of memories from my past. Stories of one-on-one conversations with students, letters or notes I read from students, and memories of course, unit, and lesson design to support well-being. I remembered moments of vulnerability, grief, anger, frustration, fear, and failure both from my students and myself none of which on the surface appear positive or health-promoting. Yet, as I continued to examine these stories, I recognized that they often lead from challenge to flourishing. In an effort to categorize and organize my thoughts, I turned to my teaching practice. As a drama teacher I recognize that there is a drama game for everything, and I decided to use one to organize this flood of narrative.

This activity is one I have played with students many times in class. "Meaning Making." Used by drama teachers to deepen collaborative relationships and reflect on important moments, "Meaning Making" is a drama game that invites students to share meaningful, silly, and even unpleasant memories of events that happened in a specific space, often the auditorium. Students begin to share those memories with others signaling with the line "My memory is…" Everyone gathers around to listen to the memory and adds any affirmations or insights they may have about that experience. All comments are acknowledged and accepted by the group as part of the theatre's space and the identities and relationships of those present within the space. Students share both positive and negative memories, which often leads to compelling insights and connections for the participants. Using my archive of lived experience teaching high school drama for 18 years, I dug into connections between quality educational theatre practice by teachers and the promotion of health and wellness for students.

Using a well-known drama game to investigate my personal stories parallels the aim of narrative meaning theory, as explained by scholar Donald Polkinghorne. "Meaning Making" as a drama game seeks to identify meaningful memories, and for Polkinghorne, the study of narrative meaning theory "draw[s] out the implications this meaning has for understanding human existence" (Polkinghorne 1988, 6). In other words, as other scholars have noted, narrative meaning theory is an act of "meaning-finding" (Kim 2015, 190). In essence, Meaning Making is a drama game of narrative inquiry as students in my class told stories to find meaning in our lived experience and now, I organize my personal narrative to find meaning around well-being.

It is essential to recognize that in the Meaning Making drama game, sharing stories in the same space does not mean that my students and I experienced the same meaning. As Polkinghorne notes, some challenges to narrative meaning research arise from the variety of experiences of the storyteller and listeners in the story's context (not everyone will derive the same meaning). That meaning is not physical or fixed and therefore is not simple to quantify (Polkinghorne 1988). The stories I tell in this dissertation and to the focus group will not necessarily have the same meaning for everyone. Thus, the need for connecting these experiences with evidence-based arts and health research to recognize the ridges between teaching experience and explanations of what that experience might mean.

Polkinghorne defines narrative meaning theory as "a cognitive process that organizes human experience into temporally meaningful episodes" (Polkinghorne 1988, 1). Investigating my personal teaching experience of theatre and health necessitated that the incidents had meaning for me as a teacher and that I perceived they had meaning for the students as well. To do this, first, I chose memories that were particularly meaningful to me. I noticed these stories frequently were centered around positive relationships, surprising revelations, working hard to create a safe space, moments of wonder and awe, and growth from challenge.

As I evaluated those meaningful memories, I connected them to health promotion as outlined in extant arts and health literature. As evidence of health promotion, I focused on memories where theatre-making worked in ways that displayed the health promotion components of the arts and health literature (i.e. aesthetic engagement, involvement of the imagination, sensory activation, evocation of emotion, cognitive stimulation, social

interaction, and physical activity (Fancourt and Finn 2019, 2). These components connect to physiological, psychological, social, and behavioral health outcomes. It is important to note that due to the multi-modality of the arts a single art activity can provide multiple health benefits. Using this lens on my meaningful memories, I identified four focus areas connecting health benefits to theatre-making in high school. They are:

1. Supportive teacher-student relationships that stem from a co-creative process

2. Drama class habits of mind that create an environment of play

3. Embodied storytelling that enables emotional identification and regulation

4. Building capacity to negotiate social relationships through creative collaboration

In the following sections, I analyze the memories of my experience in tandem with the literature connected to each area of focus. I reveal the "ridges" between educational theory and practice and health and well-being literature (Klein 2004, 516).

Supportive Teacher-Student Relationships that Stem from a Co-creative Process

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Every year my students and I created a production we lovingly nicknamed the "30 X 60." Thirty referred to the number of two-minute plays in the show, and sixty referred to the sixty minutes required to perform the show. The students would write, direct, act, and design tech themselves. Of course, I participated, but I played a producer/dramaturg role. The 30x60 began with a playwriting unit where students crafted multiple two-minute plays that investigated various theatrical writing genres and styles. Then, students would submit those plays for production in the 30X60. As the teacher, I read and graded all the plays. After weeding out the scripts that were incomplete, not clear, or poor-quality work, I returned the plays to the class in themed folders. Students would spend the next week

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reading through all the plays and deciding which 30 we would produce that year. After

choosing 30 plays, the next step was choosing directors for the plays, and finally,

directors chose actors for each play. The students did all the work, and I set up

guidelines and made certain everyone was both a director and an actor in multiple roles.

I supported choices, arbitrated battles, and pushed the students to succeed. I held

them to deadlines, talked them through directing their peers, and comforted them as they

cried in my office. A month before the 30x60 opened, the students would give it a name

based on the script topics and student experience working on the play. A few titles from

over the years are Chaos and Contraband, Spark of Insanity*, and* Warning: Contents

Under Pressure*. Finally, opening night would arrive, and performances would begin.*

The 30x60 was the student body's favorite play, with many students returning night after

night. The topics and themes in the plays came from the students, the emotions and

experiences were theirs, and that appealed to their peers. The 30x60 was a show by

teenagers for teenagers.

* * *

High school drama's unique context provides a potentially influential and

unexpected supportive relationship culture between teacher and student (see Figure 3).

Borrowing from group play scholar Neva Boyd, I will outline two specific teacher-

student relationships that are unique to drama. Neva Leona Boyd (1876-1973) dedicated

her career to combating social ills through group play and formalizing a training program

for others interested in doing the same. She began her work intricately connected to the

settlement houses, including Jane Addams Hull House. Boyd ran the play program at

Hull House, and much of her research comes from working with children on group play

Figure 3: Supportive Teacher-Student Relationships

Supportive Teacher-Student Relationships That Stem from a Co-creative Process

| (Sabol and Pianta 2012, 222) (Morrison and Allen 2007, 162-169) | Positive Teacher-Student relationships are a significant protective factor in student well-being, especially for "at-risk" students. |

Significance of co-creation

| (Neva Leone Boyd Papers) | Drama teachers relate to students in deeply connected ways because theatre-making requires co-creation with the students. |

Co-creation over extended time

| Autoethnographic narrative exploration | I co-created continuously with my students for up to four years on-stage, in class, afterchool, clubs, field trips, competitions, workshops, and touring performances. |

activities. In her papers, she categorizes two types of teachers differentiated by the relationship they have to students. The first group includes "those who teach citizenship, crafts, cooking, music and sports" (Neva Leona Boyd papers). The second group of teachers Boyd lists are the teachers who "direct dramatic plays, conduct parties, and direct group games or group dances" (Neva Leona Boyd papers) like Boyd did at Hull House. Boyd differentiates the content of these classes from the content of the other classes because they require teachers to display, "…taxing originality, adaptability, spontaneity, social resourcefulness… in leadership of… [a] program developed by the members and the leader cooperatively" (Neva Leona Boyd papers). Boyd identifies the relationship between teachers and students in these classes as the catalyst for drama

teachers to teach and relate to students in unique ways because their content requires co-creating with students.

Most classes do not require students to co-create with a teacher. For example, even in a similar arts class like orchestra lacks this high level of cooperation. Students participate by playing their instruments, reading music, and following the conductor/teacher. However, they do not co-create with the teacher as they do not write, design, or choose how the music is played. Students in drama class are enabled to make more choices about how they play their role in a production and are actively trained to share their ideas and insights. Quality drama teachers and directors need a level of spontaneity and flexibility in their leadership to include students in the creation process that orchestra does not require. Thus, even though music and drama are both art classes, they are different because the teacher-student relationships in drama are built around co-creation.

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One year as my drama class prepped the 30x60, we were in the middle of casting the plays. I sat on the side of the class with my class role book, making little checkmarks next to the student's name who has just been cast in a play. When a student has five checks next to their name, they can no longer be cast until everyone in the class has five marks. Sometimes directors trade actors around and discuss with the class the needs of the play they are directing. I seldom interfere except to say when someone is no longer available. The play Crazy Cupid *came up. The director talked about how the person playing Cupid needed to be willing to wear an adult diaper on stage and how certain people playing this role could accentuate the comedy involved. She then turned and*

looked at me and said, "Miss Olsen, I want you to play this part. It would be just so funny. Will you do it?" Usually, the 30x60 was a student-only show, and though I performed scenes and monologues with and for the students in class all the time, I never performed in productions for the public. Although the idea of me performing was new and surprising (I could tell it would be a significant embarrassment), I agreed. Putting on an adult diaper and parading around the stage for the whole school and even parents to watch came from close relationships with my students. And though my performance was not something I expected to do as a teacher, I must admit, I did get a lot of laughs and student respect.

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Positive teacher-student relationships are generally recognized as a significant protective factor promoting children's health and well-being (Morrison and Allen 2007; Poulou 2020). And for students who are termed "at-risk" of poor educational outcomes, positive teacher-student relationships have shown to provide the most substantial positive effects (Sabol and Pianta 2012). On the other hand, conflict in teacher-student relationships is linked to student behavior problems (Buyse et al. 2008). With these outcomes in mind, I am particularly interested outlining and identifying positive teacher-student relationships.

Neva Boyd outlines some helpful tips to create a supportive, cooperative relationship, noting that a teacher must create a classroom space "free from authoritarian discipline" (Neva Leona Boyd papers). Educational research identifies this style of teaching as relatedness-supportive. Teachers demonstrate a relatedness-supportive teaching style as they work closely with students, demonstrate authentic care, and promote cooperation (Leenknecht et al. 2017).

Drama teachers exemplify a relatedness-supportive style in the curriculum of drama through drama games and activities. Viola Spolin, a student of Neva Boyd, wrote several books about drama games. These books are found in the libraries of most high school drama teachers. She encourages drama teachers to create a space "...where teachers and students meet as fellow players, involved with one another, ready to connect, to communicate, to experience, to respond, and to experiment and discover" (Spolin 1999, 9). But this space does not occur organically and must be designed, "True personal freedom and self-expression can flower only in an atmosphere where attitudes permit equality between student and teacher and the dependencies of teacher to student and student for teacher are done away with" (Spolin 1999, 9). Drama teachers create a collaborative, open space of participation where the needs of the theatre performance, game, or activity bring teacher and students together. Being a drama teacher leading acting games or activities requires keeping one foot in reality and one foot in the imagination of the situation. A drama teacher must be present in and subject to the game's rules while simultaneously being present in the classroom with different relationships, regulations, and expectations.

Teachers must choose to be supportive, present, and connected to their students. The focus and purpose the teacher places on their content and their classroom culture makes a difference. As stated in the introduction quality drama teachers demonstrate "passion and enthusiasm for their work," and research supports a connection between teacher motivation and relatedness-supportive relationships with students (Abós et al. 2018). Teachers who design curriculum and culture to be supportive and connected can do so, and teachers who choose to be distant, didactic, absent, or harsh can build those

classroom cultures as well. Some drama teachers I have known are authoritarian and demand that students stand in just this spot and say a line in a certain way. The point here is that these teachers are choosing to remove health-promoting benefits of supportive teacher-student relationships from the drama curriculum. Although drama class is well situated to promote these relationships, teachers must choose to utilize them.

Beyond the teacher-student connections of the curriculum, the amount of time spent with students in the unique context of theatre instruction, can be incredibly supportive. Drama teachers spend more time than most teachers with students in their program since students can potentially take drama all four years, from freshman to senior year. In high school, this is unusual as most classes are for one year or less, and even though a student may have math all four years, they will have a different math teacher each of those four years. This stability is unusual in high school space. Drama teachers are often a one-women program, or even in arts magnet schools, part of a small group of people but focused on one element. For example, in an arts magnet school, the acting teacher is different from the tech teacher or the musical theatre teacher and tends to teach all the students in that area for all the years they attend the school. The sheer time together can build supportive relationships that last for years.

Due to the nature of drama participation, students can be involved in after school activities like drama club, after-school plays, Thespians, auditorium work, and field trips. This extra time, in a context outside the classroom, allows drama teachers to get to know their students in multiple contexts and situations. While comparable to sports coaches who spend time traveling and practicing with a team, this relationship is different because varsity and junior varsity coaches are often not the same for all four years of sports.

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Also, sports do not last all year; they have seasons that tend to last a semester or a little more. Drama students have much greater access to time with a drama teacher, as they can participate in multiple plays, attend theatre conferences and competitions, tour productions to elementary schools, be a member of the drama club and participate in school service, and work on the weekend as a job in the auditorium all in the same year, and for up to four years. Time is a significant, unique factor that can extend a positive teacher-student relationship through four years of high school and beyond. The ridge between supportive teacher student relationships in drama and how they promote student well-being is expressed in co-creation, motivation for connection, and ample time.

Drama Class Habits of Mind that Create an Environment of Play

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While earning a master's degree in Educational Leadership, I experienced the great gift of time to study current and past educational theories and theorists while still teaching and reflecting on my own teaching practice. I became the Fine Arts Department Instructional Leader taking on more leadership responsibilities and participating in many teacher observations. Observing and evaluating other teachers is a rare treat that only those in leadership experience. Over the years, I frequently reflected on my own teaching practice but never had the chance to expand my vision to what other teachers were doing. So, to be allowed to add theoretical study to teacher observations and connect that to my own teaching practice pushed my perception of my teaching practice farther than I had ever been able to before. During this time, I studied Social-Emotional Learning theory and wondered about the health-promoting aspect of high school theatre, as I learned about Costa and Kallick's Habits of Mind. Connecting embodied learning to

social and emotional health promotion was not a stretch in drama class. The two fit together so well in my mind. I realized that teaching students theatre-making skills was also teaching students life skills.

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Following a constructivist approach to education which foregrounds student experience with a teacher's role as facilitator, educational theorists have long recognized the benefits of embodied, relevant learning in the classroom (see Figure 4). John Dewey (1859-1952) is an education philosopher and thought leader who was instrumental in defining and promoting Progressive Education, which values the robust learning outcomes and health-promoting effects of embodied learning. His philosophy is often aligned with drama teaching practice. During the 1920s and '30s, Dewey's ideas

Figure 4: Habits of Mind

Drama Class Habits of Mind that Create an Environment of Play

| John Dewey (1859-1952) Arthur L. Costa and Bena Kallick | Embodied, Relevant Learning 16 Habits of Mind (increase emotional intelligence) |

Drama class habits of mind

| Imagination Flexibility | Persistence Reasonable Risks | Wonder and Awe Thinking About Thinking |

Safe and supportive environment to learn, create, and play

| Social supports | Emotional supports | Physical safety | Psychological supports |

influenced educational practice and continue to influence educational philosophy discussions today. Progressive education is focused on societal progress and the needs of the students as a guide for teachers' instructional practice. Teachers were encouraged to help students connect the lessons they learned in the classroom to real life. Dewey founded the University of Chicago Laboratory Schools to implement and test his pedagogical ideas. Dewey recognized the critical connection of art to life and published *Art as Experience* (1934) to encourage using arts in the school curriculum. Learning by doing incorporates both the physical and emotional realms of experience and application to life. Habits of Mind are related to constructivist and progressive education theories by connecting emotions to learning through the body.

An education framework of attributes defined by educators Arthur L. Costa and Bena Kallick, Habits of Mind are 16 "intelligent thinking behaviors characteristic of peak performers and are the indicators for academic, vocational and relational success" (Campbell 2006, 1). Habits of Mind include empathy, laughing at oneself and the world, managing fear, emotional awareness of oneself and others, appreciating the feeling of awe and managing impulsivity. Educational theorists have noted that exercising Habits of Mind indicates some level of emotional intelligence, which may lead to increased self-esteem, social skills, and life satisfaction (Campbell 2006, 10).

Though the term "habits of mind" was not conceived by Costa and Kallick until the early 2000s, many of the 16 habits of mind have been used by drama educators for years to encourage positive outcomes mitigating the challenges of drama curriculum. For students, drama class content can pose a wide array of unique risks, challenges, and

stress, and drama teachers respond by teaching habits of mind that have been curated and cultivated for their effectiveness in meeting these challenges.

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Each year on the first day of beginning drama class, I would find myself standing in front of 40 + students, looking into their anxiety-filled faces as I introduced myself and the drama curriculum. The first question they inevitably had for me that day was if they had to perform in front of the whole class. While a few students were eager to perform, for many, performing was a significant worry. I told them that the class started performing the next day, but in large groups and everyone did not have to talk right away. I explained to them that I had done this for many years and knew how to help them get through the stage fright and perform for their peers. I did my best to reassure them and instill hope. But no matter what I said or did, after class on the first day, I would always have one or two students ask if I could transfer them out of the course. Drama was just too scary and not something they could imagine themselves doing.

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Drama class requires group work, physical closeness, and emotional exploration, all of which take place in front of peers at a time of life when being accepted is especially meaningful. Physical and social challenges can include drama games that involve holding hands, picking each other up, standing close together, running, jumping, being blindfolded, laying on the ground, wearing uncomfortable costumes or makeup, or being high in the air on a platform. Emotional challenges include scene work where a student portrays a character experiencing vulnerable emotions like heartbreak, terror, loneliness, or despair, which are hard to manage and control. Or even more challenging when

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students are put into situations asking them to play a character experiencing a moment of trauma, cruelty, or behavior they find immoral. Theatre teaching texts address this issue and provide teachers with strategies for creating an environment where students feel enabled to take responsible risks. As noted in the introduction, *Structuring Drama Work*, a teacher handbook sanctioned by Cambridge International Examinations, affirms, "Because theatre uses the whole person for expression, there is a considerable risk for participants who cannot, without feeling threatened, let go of their concerns and pressures in the *real* dimension in order to move into the exposure of the *symbolic* dimension" (Neelands 2000, 147-148). The habits of mind that a student has about themselves, the curriculum, and drama class community allow them to meet those challenges and risks in supportive or negative ways.

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One week during the spring term, my drama room was relocated from our black box theatre space to a more typical classroom with desks to accommodate makeup testing for state exams. Instead of meeting on the edge of campus in the black box theatre, this new classroom was in the basement of the Main Building, sandwiched between two core subject area classes. Though we had desks and a whiteboard instead of chairs and open space, my Beginning Drama class and I kept the room business as usual and started our day with some short, improvised scenes to get everyone warmed up.

The students were divided into small groups called "acting companies" and were given a line, a prop, and an event to improvise their scene. The line for the day was, "Look out!" the event was an emergency room visit, and the prop was anything the students had in their possession, but they had to use the prop as something it was not.

(For example, a student might have a backpack, but they could not use it as a backpack in the scene. Instead, the backpack might become a parachute or be worn in the front as a bulletproof vest or dragged on the ground to become a puppy.) After preparing, each group performed their short scene for the class.

One group set the scene in the emergency room with a young woman screaming in noisy labor. After sitting her on the floor, the doctor yelled, "Look out!" before catching a shoe delivered as a newborn baby thrown across the room into his outstretched arms. The entire scene was noisy with labor pains, frantic friends, and a commanding doctor. The delivery took up the whole length of the classroom for comic effect. The rest of the class, as the audience, was in hysterics of laughter and exploded with applause as the doctor caught the baby (shoe). The audition activity was a creative, impressive, and energetic scene. It came to an abrupt halt as the teacher from next door burst into the classroom, panicking that we might be experiencing a literal emergency. Her concern drove laughter from the room, and I took a few minutes to explain to her that the students were only doing a scene about a girl having a baby and that nothing was wrong. The student playing the doctor cradled the shoe he had just delivered as evidence of a performance. When that poor panicked teacher finally recognized that everyone was safe and returned to her room, I realized two things—first, the importance of locating my drama classroom on the edge of campus with no neighboring classrooms. And second, the drama class environment demands that drama students implement unique perspectives about learning and experiencing content.

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Over the years of witnessing students' reactions to the challenges of drama work, I learned the importance of creating a supportive drama environment to enable students' learning and positive development. I would take particular care to design the first unit of the year to center around ensemble work to create a supportive environment for students to encounter drama class challenges. Part of that unit was introducing and enacting effective habits of mind that promote health and well-being in the face of challenges of the course. I would build lessons around topics that encourage and facilitate students' development of imagination, flexibility, persistence, taking responsible risks, an appreciation of wonder and awe, and thinking about thinking. Below, I will outline how these six habits broadly encapsulate the 16 habits as manifest in high school drama programs.

Imagination

Imagination is not only encouraged but essential in educational theatre. Students must be able to transform a pair of shoes into anything to collaborate on an audition activity. Creating and transforming objects, the classroom, and themselves connects to the imagination by allowing performers, technicians, directors, and playwrights to create art that transcends reality making new realities possible. Creativity in drama class draws on the work of creativity scholar R. Keith Sawyer and the use of divergent and convergent thinking. Participation in theatre-making requires divergent thinking that makes space for all ideas and convergent thinking that critically evaluates the divergent ideas and narrows them down for implementation in a work of art (Sawyer 2006). Posing problems and applying past knowledge to answer them connects to the imagination as students ask imaginative questions like: How else can I use this shoe? What else could

the shoe be? Everything in the world of theatre is imaginary, from the lines said to the

sets on stage, from the lights to the costumes. Even though these elements are not real,

they need to feel real so that they can be experienced. For students to create a scene

where a baby is a shoe and labor pains sound authentic but are not real, drama class

requires imagination. Imagination is effectively taught through non-competitive games

and activities that invite students to look at the world and themselves in new ways, like

the prompt to use a prop in a new way in the scene above. Creative, clever, silly, and

awe-inspiring ideas are applauded and encouraged in drama classrooms. The focus is not

on finding the "right" answer but on finding a solution that is delightful, profound,

unexpected, or full of wonder inviting students to engage in continuous learning. An

inclusive feeling of play evolves from a non-competitive focus on imagination, inviting

students to engage in drama projects with flexibility.

Flexibility

   Things constantly change, especially when working in a group. Initial ideas are

built upon, tweaked, or even removed. Thinking interdependently and flexibly grant

students space to change course as the ideas come and encourage the group to flow

together. Almost every activity in a drama class involves group work. Thus, flexibility is

a crucial skill to develop. Learning to listen promotes group cohesion through

understanding and empathy. Games like "Yes, and…" promote positive emotional

control. "Yes, and…" is an improvisational game where two people talk to each other,

starting each line with the phrase "Yes, and…". One scene partner might say, "I think

one of your teeth is purple." And the other will respond, "Yes, and it changes to blue

when I am really angry." Responding flexibly and positively to input from another person

promotes positive outcomes in group work and enables students to make space for the ideas and input of everyone in the group.

Persistence

Another necessary drama habit of mind is sticking with the work over a significant period. Learning to play a character and memorize lines is a trial-and-error iterative process that requires persistence. In class and on stage, while rehearsing with students, a common phrase I used was "One more time." Students often teased me by repeating that phrase and holding up their hand with all five fingers in the air, signifying that "One more time" would really be five more times. Finding humor stimulates persistence as we would run the section or scene at least five more times. This repetition was used to talk about what was working and what was not and changing small elements until we all felt we had a strong performance. Growing through the trial-and-error process, over time, is how the art is made, and theatre-making is hard work. Performances are rehearsed over and over. To build strong theatre-making skills in students, both the trial and the error must be reflected on, analyzed, and used to "fail better" or "fail differently" the next time. Internalizing the power of repetition is key drama classwork. But not any repetition: they must be repetitions that improve quality and skill and identify and change elements that do not work. Quality rehearsal is a process that is not always fun. It is hard work and requires persistence.

Taking Responsible Risks

Choosing to get up in front of the class and portray the physical agony of labor pains, and then birthing a shoe as a baby is a risk. What if no one laughs, or everyone thinks this idea is lame? What if everyone is bored? What if the whole scene falls apart?

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Making performance choices is risky and students often fail getting no laughs or needing to start a whole scene over. A responsible risk is designed so that no one gets hurt physically or emotionally, and that is an important element of risk in a drama class. Stage fighting and violence requires that performers take care of each other even as they engage in combat. Students in drama class must learn to take care of each other and push each other to take risks. Theatre educators must help students see the value in taking risks and what can be gained from a risk that succeeds and a risk that fails. Students also need to recognize the impact they have on other people in the scene and the audience. A risk my students and I did not know we were taking was that the performance might scare the neighboring teacher into thinking she needed to react to an emergency. That is a profoundly negative impact to have on another teacher and classroom. Following the performance, I talked to the class about the reactions to the scene. First, we talked about the delightfully comic performance that we, as a class, enjoyed tremendously. And we also talked about the terrified reaction of the neighboring teacher and how that impacted her and the class she was teaching. Learning that a performance can have both positive and negative impacts at the same time to different groups of people is a unique and valuable classroom experience about risk.

An Appreciation of Wonder and Awe

Throughout all the other habits of mind must be woven the ability to recognize and appreciate the beauty and wonder of the art by appreciating wonder and awe. For example, appreciating the delightful comedy created by throwing a shoe across the room to represent the delivery of a newborn baby. Or recognizing the wonder and awe found in a meaningful metaphor represented on stage. Or celebrating the creativity and beauty

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in the movement of the body, the sound of a voice, or the emotion in a breath. And appreciation of wonder and awe provides deep meaning and satisfaction in the hard and personal work of a drama class.

Thinking about Process

Thinking about how we think and create are powerful tools to promote positive outcomes in drama class. Simply encouraging a student to keep on trying without planning to improve based on reflection and evaluation will not encourage student growth and learning. Instead, repetition without improvement will encourage empty optimism about repeated failure. Meaningful evaluation of the process in past performance addresses failure and success and supplies a personal direction for artistic growth. As part of the assessment process in my drama class, I learned that students responded best to performance feedback directly relevant to them. Over time I developed a system to require students to rate themselves on the same rubric I used for final grades to help them set incremental goals to improve specific skills through the rehearsal process. I would collect these rubrics and use them in my feedback and comments to the students on their rehearsal work in class and the rubric for their final performance.

After the teacher left my classroom, confident that all was well and no emergencies were happening, I talked to the class about the performance. We reflected on the strengths of the delightful comedy and the impressive focus and intensity from all the actors. And we also talked about the impact that the scene had on the class next door, which was not positive, but rather slightly traumatic and scary for them. We discussed what we could do to improve the situation if we scared a neighboring teacher again. Students discussed letting our neighbors know we were doing scenes in advance so they

would not be afraid if they heard screaming. And one student mentioned inviting our neighbors into our class to enjoy the scenes with us, so they could value the art we were making. Reflection and discussion led several students to apologize to the teacher next door, building her respect for drama and drama students. Her class joined us frequently for scene performances after that leading to strong relationships between classes. Even when we moved back into the original black box theatre space after makeup testing was over, this memory demonstrates for me how drama habits of mind promote theatre skills and well-being through challenge.

Drama habits of mind are six interwoven life-skills that work together to enable students to build autonomy in theatre-making and extend to use in everyday life. The ridge between drama class habits of mind and theatre-making provides students with supports for positive outcomes in the face of challenge to improve well-being.

Building Capacity to Negotiate Social Relationships through Creative Collaboration

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I often had students in my drama classes who were afraid to perform in front of their peers. One memory is when I had a student in drama class who was terrified to speak out loud in performance since English was not her first language. She had been performing for most of the semester as inanimate objects. (a door that opens, or a red button to push to set off the bomb). But as her teacher, I wanted to move her toward more robust and rigorous performance skills. I invited her to say just one word in the next scene she devised with her group. She agreed that she would like to try and thought she could speak out loud, but when the time came to perform, she remained in her safe, silent role. My (teacher) support was not enough to help her out of her comfort zone, so

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in the next devised scene, I approached her entire scene group of 6 peers and invited

their collaborative support. I talked to the group about how it would be wonderful to

hear her say a line. I told the group that it wasn't required for a grade that she says a

line, but if they could create and rehearse something with her, that would give her the

courage to say one sentence out loud in English, that would be wonderful. Her peers,

doing what I could not, began to support her collaboratively by rehearsing a scene built

around her one line.

I knew she would say her first line, and her group knew she would speak out loud,

but the rest of the class had no idea. Performance day came, and her moment to say the

line came, she delivered not one, but two lines! Since no one in the class had ever heard

her say a line out loud, except her group, the class exploded into delighted pandemonium

when she spoke. Cheers, screams, everyone on their feet, clapping. Supported by not

only her scene group but the entire class, that student began to build her speaking

performance skills and even delivered a monologue before the year was over. She

remained good friends with her scene group members even outside of drama class. And

at the end of the year, she told me that drama was the class where she felt like she

belonged.

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Theatre is a social art, and students negotiate social relationships daily. Almost

every performance in drama class, except monologues, incorporate groups of people.

Students work together on scenes, games, musical pieces, and full productions. Due to

the social nature of theatre, many educational and psychological researchers analyze how

social negotiation connects to drama participation, investigating self-concept, social-

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Figure 5: Negotiating Social Relationships

Building Capacity to Negotiate Social Relationships Through Creative Collaboration	
(Yassa 1999), (Daykin et al. 2008), (Jaronen et al. 2008, 2011)	Drama impacts peer interaction and social skills Quantitative studies reveal minimal or no impact

Social impact of collaboration vs competition	
(Neva Leoni Boyd Papers)	Mental and emotional engagement with theatre that improves social relationships *self-determined discipline *legitimized unconventional behavior

emotional learning, and social skills for positive connections (see Figure 5). Yassa (1999), interviewing three high school drama teachers and six students, noted that the students perceived drama participation as positively influencing their self-esteem. Yassa concluded, "I believe that the most significant finding of the study is that there is a clear connection between learning that takes place in drama courses and students' personality development" (Yassa 1999, 47). Another study finding positive social impacts, Jaronen et al. (2011), conducted in Finland with 105 fourth and fifth-grade students about drama's impact on social and emotional learning. A drama intervention was designed for one day each week for a semester. Researchers collected data in the form of surveys and focus groups and found that "drama transformed prosocial behavior," the students reported, "enhanced social and emotional learning and increased understanding of diversity" (Joronen, Häkämies, and Åstedt-Kurki 2011, 671). These findings align with the

qualitative results from Yassa (1999), who connected the social impacts of drama specifically to empathy, tolerance, and adaptability. Extending to investigate health-promoting aspects of drama, two meta-analyses, Jaronen et al. (2008) (same author from above) and Daykin et al. (2008) found minimal positive health impact from drama. However, both analyses did identify social negotiation as an outcome of drama participation, concluding that the "strongest evidence is in relation to the impact of drama on peer interaction and social skills" (Daykin et al. 2008, 260). While many studies have identified a positive relationship between school drama participation and improved social negotiation, other studies have identified no connection. And it is worth noting that simply being provided with extensive social experience in a drama class, does not imply that the experience will be positive. As a drama teacher, I broke up fights, mitigated bullying episodes, and constantly focused student's attention on treating each other with care and promote belonging. While the opportunity to repeatedly practice social skills in a context that demands social negotiation to complete the course work can be fertile ground for potential development, study finding are not all positive.

There are mixed outcomes on studies investigating social negotiation and theatre participation. Studies collecting qualitative interviews and focus group data from students, teachers, and parents report mostly positive findings, while studies investigating quantitative evidence of a causal connection have primarily negative results. Some examples of quantitative studies with no positive outcomes reported include Freeman et al. (2003). They looked at how creative drama affects self-concept in a randomized control trial with 154 third and fourth-grade students. Students participated in creative drama for 40 minutes a week for 18 weeks. Using the Student Self Concept Scale, which

measures self-image, academic self-concept, and social self-concept. The authors concluded that the data they gathered from pre and post-test measures did not support that creative drama affects self-concept. And two meta-analyses, Conard and Asher (2000), focused on self-concept and self-esteem and creative drama in elementary school. The conclusion of the results of 8 studies states that creative drama has "no effect on the self-concept of elementary students" (Conard and Asher 2000, 83). The second meta-analysis on drama interventions for self-concept and social skills in youth 12-18, Jaronen et al. (2008), looked at eight studies on drama interventions lasting one semester or less and also concluded no statistically significant findings for self-concept. The quantitative measures do not register the same impacts perceived by the students, parents, and teachers in the interview data.

One reason for this discrepancy is addressed by scholars of the theatre who recommend using qualitative data with thick description rather than quantitative measures to investigate the complexity of art interactions (Omasta and Snyder-Young 2014). Many scholars believe that quantitative measures restrict and reduce the study of art effects (Thalia R Goldstein, Lerner, and Winner 2017, 2). Theatre, like other arts, is multi-modal, meaning that students do not engage in social negotiation one aspect at a time, even though quantitative studies measure one part at a time. As students work on a scene in drama class, they are socially negotiating their personal fears while also negotiating peer relationships and a teacher relationship. All these social negotiations might produce a positive or negative impact. Pre and post-test measures are not able to capture the nuance and richness of social negotiation in a drama classroom the way that focus groups and interviews do. The personal meaning-making and social negotiation

experienced by each student individually are seen more clearly when investigated separately.

Social focused on a non-competitive approach to working as a group encourages students to support others to make the show a success. There is an old theatre saying that makes students groan, "There are no small parts, only small actors," which alludes to this reality. While theatre certainly has roles and job titles that tend to garner much of the respect and attention, the reality is everyone is necessary. If all the performance had was a leading actor, then like a well-known theatre meme says, the audience would be watching a "naked person on an empty stage in the dark trying to emote." Lights, sound, set, costumes, props, actors, stage managers, chorus, everyone works together to make a production happen. As everyone focuses on a larger aesthetic, like the production, they have a unique opportunity to put aside differences and relate in socially supportive ways.

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The cast and crew of "Treasure Island" performed a selection from the play in a school assembly to a packed house of 600 high school students and teachers. As the director, I considered school assemblies preview performances of the play. But the drama students did not. To them, stakes were high, and the pressure was on as they performed for their peers.

We struggled with a moment in the play during rehearsal and tech week where a stage gun is supposed to fail to fire twice and then finally fire. A tense moment where young Jim Hawkins is fighting the pirate Hands for control of a gun and, by default, also his life. Jim had to shoot Hands at just the right moment. The stage pistol had one blank, but somehow the actors could not fire the gun at the right moment. On this assembly day,

the stage pistol did not go off at all. The stage pistol clicked and clicked as Jim frantically pulled the trigger, and Hands came closer. Soon it was clear to everyone that Hands would overpower Jim, contrary to the story. Suddenly a loud gunshot sounded, and Hands dropped dead. The gunshot did not come from the gun on stage, but I sighed with relief anyway since the moment was saved.

After the show, I asked the stage manager what happened. At first, she was a little reluctant to tell me. Since we had weapons in the show, we also had strict rules about who could handle the weapons and when they could handle them. We had a table set up on the side of the stage near an assistant stage manager, who loaded the caps into the stage pistols and checked them in and out to actors as they entered and left the stage. Only actors and the assistant stage manager could touch the guns and only when needed in the show. It turns out that a young sophomore assisting on the fly rail located right next to the gun table picked up a stage pistol and fired the shot. She saved the show and broke a very strict rule. The actors were so grateful to this young student, and the stage manager had congratulated her on her choice. Now, as I questioned the stage manager, everyone was nervous about my reaction. They had taken the problem into their own hands and, to solve it, had broken a rule. As a group, they were supporting this student's choice to save the show.

I approached the young fly rail operator with the cast and crew gathering around to see what would happen. First, I congratulated her on her quick thinking that saved the show that day. I also told her that firing a gun without permission was not acceptable, so we would need to add her to the gun list to fire the shot every night, solving our problem.

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Everyone on stage and off can support the production with their work, ideas, and ability to problem-solve. The non-competitive group aspect of drama work promotes social capacities. Boyd studied the power of group play to foster health and well-being in the whole person, particularly in social and emotional well-being. Group play, according to Boyd, did not include competitive sports. She felt that once competition was applied to group play, the health benefits were restricted to physical health. But she felt the primary benefits of group play existed in the mental and emotional engagement that improved social relationships. Boyd recognized that intent of competition limits the benefits of group play, saying, "The greed for power, the hatred and dishonesty which have become associated with competitive games are not an inherent part of them but have found their way in them through a false sense of values. Prizes separate people, pit them against each other, discourage the less able, and set the more able apart" (Boyd 1971, 9). As in the above stories, the point is not about who is most able, but about who is willing to be a part of the group and take responsibility for the group's success. Thus, everyone can influence the outcome, and everyone has an impact on the group.

Boyd identified two crucial aspects of group play that promote social capacities, self-determined discipline, and legitimized unconventional behavior.

1- "In a game, a child gains more by self-determined discipline to the rules of the game that they do my mere appeals to sportsmanship or conformity. By following the rules of the game, the child can then begin to extend and make changes to the rules with the group's approval as all create the game together.

2- Behavior that is unconventional or even offensive in real life is not viewed the same way in a game and allows a child to release and organize these behaviors in a space where they are legitimate." (Boyd 1971, 50).

Self-Determined Discipline

In the story about *Treasure Island*, everyone opted into the rules around the swords, knives, and pistols, about who could use them, where they had to be and at each moment, and who could fire them. But when breaking the rules was a choice that augmented a floundering scene in the play, my rules changed with the group's approval as we created the show together. Self-determined discipline allows students to opt into the rules of a production, a game, or an activity in drama class. They choose to follow those rules and abide by the punishments that accompany those rules. But even as they agree to play by the rules, as a member of the non-competitive group, they also have the autonomy to alter those rules with the group's approval. A combination of group collaboration and personal autonomy promotes the building of social capacities of learning to be an individual inside of a group.

In the first story, the group came together to create a new rule, a rule that asked one individual to do something they had never done before, to say a line out loud. In this case, the individual's autonomy was supported, augmented, and directed by the group. The group came together to support one individual. Since the game is not competitive and beating another group is not the objective, one individual's success can be the whole group's success, or in this case, the success of the entire class. Building capacities to work together in a non-competitive and creative environment allows autonomy within

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group structures allowing students to build skills in both capacities in ways that are not just about being the ablest.

Legitimate Unconventional Behavior

Drama class work utilizes unconventional behavior with imaginative silliness and dramatic extremes. In *Treasure Island,* the show is filled with unscrupulous pirates who rob, coerce, and attack anyone, including women and helpless children. They kill indiscriminately and often just because they are bothered by someone. Pirates cannot be trusted, especially when they are kind. And pirates fight with swords, knives, and guns. Students had the chance to legitimately portray these unconventional behaviors because they were part of the play. Students who were good friends as they entered the theatre would begin to battle and kill each other on the rehearsal stage a few moments later. The stage is not the only drama space where these unconventional behaviors routinely take place.

Drama games and activities are similar in their unconventional behaviors. For example, the goofy but dramatic game "Zombie" contains a player in the middle of the circle who infects anyone outside of the circle they touch. Other games are silly, like "People to People," which invites the player to touch their forehead to another person's knee or another person's ear to their foot. Or the game "What are you doing?" where one player acts like they are fishing and when asked by another player, "What are you doing?" they tell that person anything but the truth. The second player then must complete the action the first player said. Games like these are standard in drama classrooms and invite students to be silly or overly dramatic to release and organize these behaviors in a legitimate way that allows them to build social capacities.

Whether playing a game, rehearsing a scene, or developing a full production, this larger performance serves to unite the group even when they differ significantly from each other, by building social skills and competencies (empathy, forgiveness, patience, and valuing individuality) that enhance the experience of the entire group. Personal choices that impact the group lead students to consider the impact of their actions on others. Staying home to learn lines instead of going out with friends is a choice that a theatre student could and often does make. Individual sacrifice for a project that involves a group is often recognized and rewarded by the group. Everyone applauds actors who come to rehearsal with lines memorized early. Just as actors who are not memorized are held accountable not only by the director but by the entire cast and tech crew. Actors rely on other actors for lines to deliver their own, and tech cues align with actor lines. This means that one missed line can impact the show tremendously. A set change, light cue, or sound cue will not happen if the line they are connected to is missed. A ridge between social skills and high school drama is collaborating on a performance. Learning to work as an ensemble and support everyone in the cast and crew is part of students training in theatre-making, and the relevant, impending performance promotes supportive working together instead of working against each other. Positive social negotiation skills are enhanced by theatre-making.
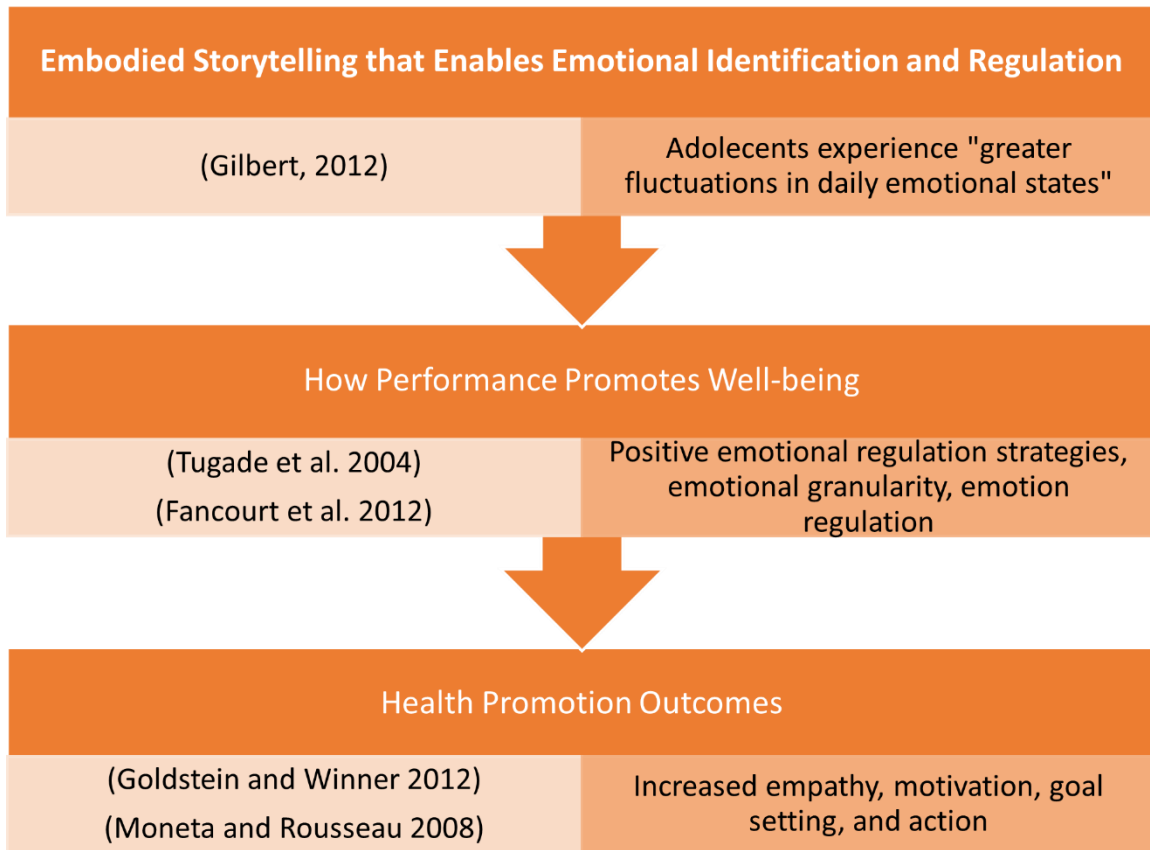
Embodied Storytelling that Enables Emotional Identification and Regulation

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Just a few weeks into the semester, I teach my students about subtext or what a character is thinking about what they are saying. To teach this idea, I do a drama exercise with the class. I introduce the line, "I love you." I invite the class to think of

different ways to say the line. Then, I invite each person in the front row to say the line

and make sure the line is different each time. The first person on the front row will grin,

and the last few people on the front row will groan because everyone thinks there are

only about three ways to say the line. The first person will say the line lovingly, the

second will display enthusiasm, the third will be louder or quieter until six people have

said "I love you," and the next person cannot think of a different way—silence for a

moment. And with six more people to go, suddenly someone will say the line in a vastly

different way. Like a young child forced to tell his brother he loves him after fighting.

And then, the fun begins as students come up with a variety of emotions they can share

with the phrase "I love you." When the last student in the front row says the line, I tell

them we will continue until every person in the class says the line, and students in the

back often cheer because they have a great idea to share.

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Learning to perform characters motivated by and reacting to internal and external

factors is often a new idea to students, who think acting is simply performing a single

emotion. They tend to suppose if the character sounds mad, they should yell while saying

the lines. Young performers tend to possess a narrow perception of the variety and

intensity of human emotion. Hence the need for a robust understanding and use of

emotional intelligence in drama class (see Figure 6). An angry character may be

frustrated, annoyed, livid, displeased, irritable, irked, or incensed. And that same

character can express that emotion in levels of intensity from under control to complete

loss of control. So, each combination of specificity and intensity would be played

slightly differently and equally as effective in the production. Emotional acting choices

<div align="center">72</div>

Figure 6: Embodied Storytelling

Embodied Storytelling that Enables Emotional Identification and Regulation

(Gilbert, 2012)	Adolecents experience "greater fluctuations in daily emotional states"

How Performance Promotes Well-being

(Tugade et al. 2004) (Fancourt et al. 2012)	Positive emotional regulation strategies, emotional granularity, emotion regulation

Health Promotion Outcomes

(Goldstein and Winner 2012) (Moneta and Rousseau 2008)	Increased empathy, motivation, goal setting, and action

are justified by how they connect to the character's external factors like situation, relationship, and personality. Drama teachers call this type of actor training character development. They create and teach whole units and lessons on character development and give specific feedback aligned with mentoring students.

Character development involves investigating physical appearance, including unique physical and vocal characteristics or habits. It is essential to understand the physical elements of a character before embodying them. But that is not all an actor needs to understand to play a character. We all are influenced by and make choices based on our attitudes, beliefs, goals, economic status, opinions, hates, loves, fears, and

reactions to stress. To portray a character that looks and feels authentic, these emotions and inner workings must be scrutinized. Drama teachers help students get accustomed to thinking deeply about emotions and how emotions connect to situations, relationships, personality, and choices. Character sheets and backstories are two strategies that help students think through both the inner and outer workings of a character.

Below (see Figure 7) is a two-page character exploration sheet that I hand out to students to guide this physical and emotional work. Teaching drama students how to perform a monologue for the first time requires activities and discussions examining a character's objectives, motivation, tactics, and subtext. Over time, in drama class, students become more adept at emotional identification. This profound emotional analysis led many students to tell me about connections they made between emotional identification and how it supported their well-being by helping them understand

Figure 7: Character Exploration Sheet from Beginning Drama Class

Name_____ Period_____

Character Exploration Sheet

Fill out the following form about the character you will be playing in your group scene. Give your best guess to every number. Detailed, specific answers are expected, as is clean clear handwriting.

1. Character Name

2. Character Age

3. Activity: Business. What does this character do to make money or as a hobby for fun?

4. Physical appearance: dress, physical form, color, style, hair, cloths

5. Quirks: Unique physical activity or verbal characteristics, habits

6. Attitude: What feelings does the individual project to other characters in the play?

7. What does the character want most of all in life?

8. Family: Character background, discipline, economic status, religion

9. What opinions, hates, loves, fears do they have?

10. How do they react to stress?

11. What is said about the character by others? What do they say about themselves?
*(List **FIVE** important **inferences** to know to play this character)*

Page   Quote   What is inferred_____

themselves and others in new ways. They openly shared with me how their emotional reactions and the perspectives of others taught them about themselves.

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A student once told me that she thought there was something wrong with her. She wondered if she was the only person who felt the emotions she felt. When people talked to her about anger, sorrow, happiness, and fear as discrete, separate emotions, she was confused because the emotions she felt were all mixed up and jumbled together. However, as our drama class worked through a unit on character development, we discussed how characters often react to layered emotions and feel more than one emotion and even conflicting emotions simultaneously. She identified deeply with feeling layered and conflicting emotions. She told me that was the day she realized that there was nothing wrong with her. She was not feeling things others did not feel but was simply feeling multiple emotions simultaneously.

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High school age is an emotion-filled time in life. Research on emotions records adolescents reporting "greater fluctuations in daily emotional states" and "more extreme emotional experiences (both positive and negative)" than younger children or adults (Gilbert 2012, 468). Studies examining a young person's ability to regulate emotion have found that less ability to regulate emotion is linked to mental health disorders, depressive symptoms, and less frequent use of regulation strategies like problem solving and distraction (Gilbert 2012, 469). On the other hand, positive emotional regulation strategies support stress management (Tugade, Fredrickson, and Feldman Barrett 2004, 1165). Researchers cite "the ability of positive emotions to buffer negative experiences"

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(Gilbert 2012, 471). Because young people routinely experience more oscillation and intensity in emotions, high school drama class can be an essential place to learn to identify and manage emotion, which in turn has been linked to increased coping skills and psychological well-being (Gilbert 2012; Tugade, Fredrickson, and Feldman Barrett 2004; Fancourt, Krekel, and Layard 2019; Thalia R. Goldstein and Winner 2012).

Part of learning to pinpoint and handle emotions is recognizing that emotions can be experienced with variety as well as intensity. Emotional granularity is a "tendency to represent experiences of positive [or negative] emotion with precision and specificity" (Tugade, Fredrickson, and Feldman Barrett 2004, 1162). Emotional granularity recognizes and identifies the subtle differences between feeling irked, annoyed, frustrated, angry, and enraged. In Tugade et al. (2004), the authors link positive emotional granularity to coping strategies and found that emotional granularity is "critical" to psychological well-being (2004). Identifying emotions, especially positive emotions, "produce patterns of thought that are notably unusual, flexible, creative, integrative, open to information, and efficient" (Tugade, Fredrickson, and Feldman Barrett 2004, 1166). Adolescents with a high level of emotional granularity are more active and engaged in coping strategies and are more likely to think through their decision and not simply react to emotions (Tugade, Fredrickson, and Feldman Barrett 2004). Building character development skill in drama class aids in developing emotional granularity.

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Another student, who was encountering harmful and distressing challenges in her home life, performed the role of Mary Delightful, an innocent heroine in a silly, campy

*melodrama titled "*Never Trust a City Slicker.*" Through rehearsal and performance, she*

realized that the character of Mary was also experiencing life challenges. Though Mary

Delightful's challenges were decidedly melodramatic, this student recognized that

melodrama uses humor as a counter-narrative to the constant stress and adversity in the

play. And though this is certainly not the only way to handle the negative experience, this

student felt empowered to laugh at some of the things that go wrong in life. She was able

to change her perspective and be a positive influence on those around her. She shared

her realization that a sense of humor and laughter can be a choice that promotes

happiness.

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The actress who played Mary Delightful use emotional identification to manage

stresses at home. Psychologists recognize empathy or empathetic involvement in the

emotions of others as an integral part of adolescent development (Moneta and Rousseau

2008). Emotional identification and regulation have known physical and psychological

health benefits when applied to challenges, risks, and stress. Regulating emotions is a key

factor in mental health management and coping strategies and supports autonomy,

competence, and relatedness (Thalia R Goldstein, Lerner, and Winner 2017, 2).

One often studied element of emotional identification and regulation that connects

to relatedness is empathy (matching emotional states of others) (Thalia R. Goldstein and

Winner 2012, 20). Thalia Goldstein (2012, 2017, 2018), an applied developmental

psychologist, researches with her students at the Social Skills, Imagination, and Theatre

Lab at George Mason University. She is particularly interested in the impact of

imagination and play on emotional development and learning for children and youth. In

a recent study, high school students (14 years old) and elementary students (9 years old) were tested on empathy and other emotional relatedness elements before and after participating in 10 months of after school drama acting class for 5-9 hours a week (Thalia R. Goldstein and Winner 2012, 20). The study results showed the most significant evidence in the area of increased empathy (Thalia R. Goldstein and Winner 2012, 23). Recent study trends in emotional regulation focus on the ways in which emotion connects to motivation, goal setting, and action. Natural childhood processes like imaginative play are based on both non-verbal and verbal expression. Since non-verbal expression is highlighted in drama work, this focus lends itself to a "natural way of making meaning and organizing emotional experience" (Moneta and Rousseau 2008, 330). Acting allows a performer to imagine and embody someone else's life and experience to empathize with them in a uniquely relational way like Mary Delightful did seeing the humor in the challenges of her life.

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One student played Captain Keller in The Miracle Worker. *There is a scene between Captain Keller and his wife, where the Captain belittles and trivializes his wife's experience as they argue about what to do for their daughter Helen. Captain Keller is under extreme stress and unable to control or improve the situation and takes this frustration out on his wife. While rehearsing this scene repeatedly, this student realized that this character behaved similarly to his father, who often spoke harshly to his mother. For the first time in his life, he realized that his father might be under a lot of stress and unable to control his anxiety and frustration. This student realized that though he disagrees with treating other people poorly for any reason, at least he can see how*

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someone with good intentions might treat someone they care about cruelly. He talked to

his mother about his experience and felt closer to her through playing Captain Keller.

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Acting focused activities and workshops have been called "an arena for educating emotional intelligence" (Day 2002, 31) due to the empathetic connections made between the actors and the characters they represent. And research studies reinforce using acting study in schools to support personal and social growth for adolescents (Day 2002; Wright 2006; Moneta and Rousseau 2008), noting that a drama program in a classroom has the potential to support all students and "not simply those who appear disruptive or isolated" (Wright 2006, 44). Drama classroom environments promote imagination and responsible risk-taking as mindsets necessary for the individual expression required in performance work. This environment becomes a space that opens the door to expressions of conflict and examinations of what is possible (Moneta and Rousseau 2008, 330). Students can perform a character different from themselves and from their moral values and probe those motivations and actions without real-life consequences. This exploration of another person is accentuated by time. Rehearsals last for several months, and scenes are repeated, analyzed, and turned inside out during that time, allowing for an in-depth, nuanced examination to take place. Education scholar Peter Wright in his study with 123 drama students exploring personal development, appreciated that "there may need to be a minimum number of exposures to such programs before there is a meaningful impact" (Wright 2006, 57). Time and space to play with a character's actions and motivations can enhance student actors' connections and insights.

Developing students' emotional identification and regulation skills to promote health is an important component for psychological well-being. In 2011, in response to the effects of trauma, and other crisis events, the World Health Organization (WHO) published *Psychological first aid: Guide for field workers.* This guide addresses social and emotional first aid specifically, to support teachers and others as they provide social and emotional first aid. The WHO lists four foundational strategies; two of which connect to drama classrooms and class curriculum. They are (1) strengthen individuals' capacity to regulate emotions and (2) promote supportive social environments and social networks. This guide on psychological first aid is designed for those "in a position to help others" (Organization 2011, ii) and mentions teachers explicitly. High school teachers work in the "field" every day, supporting students.

By connecting first aid strategies for social and emotional health to drama class, I do not intend to imply that drama class will cure every child's trauma. Instead, I hope to enable teachers to recognize and use the health-promoting elements of drama class to apply the psychological first aid in that space effectively. I also intend that teachers will teach students how to support themselves and others. One of the first steps in regulating emotion is recognizing emotion, as a person cannot control what they do not know is present. Drama class curriculum focuses on stories and storytelling, much like novel writing. However, the stories and characters in novels exist solely in the reader's imagination, and the stories of the theatre are represented in the bodies of the actors on stage. Learning to become someone else physically and emotionally is part of drama class curriculum. And doing both requires young actors to identify and regulate emotions.

This deep connection to emotions and emotional intelligence in the theatre curriculum

augments and extends health-promoting benefits.

Conclusion

By investigating my memories of 18 years teaching high school drama and

connecting those memories to arts and health research, I constructed a framework of four

ridges that connect high school theatre to student health and well-being. When

investigated individually, each framework element appears to operate independently, but

that is not an authentic representation of a high school drama class. Traditions in

research tend to reduce experience to one part at a time. This reductionism simplifies

drama class experience and makes it simpler to explore. However, in a high school

drama classroom, all four elements occur in multimodal ways (see Figure 8). All four

aspects of the framework operate simultaneously. Each piece connects to multiple health

components, all of which relate to positive health promotion, well-being, and flourishing

for students.

For example, I start the first day of beginning drama class by introducing myself

and performing, followed by peer discussion to build relationships. The teacher-student

connection connects to health-promoting components, as do the peer-to-peer

relationships. Cognitive and emotional stimulations play a big part the first day, as

students are usually uncomfortable and quite anxious about the possibility of performing.

I support them and set high expectations by confirming their fears and reminding them of

the peer and teacher support we are building and will continue to build relationally,

socially, and emotionally in drama class. And that is just the first day; a yearlong class

will have 179 days to go. Every day in drama class is a layered experience. Each drama

Figure 8: Multimodal Relationship of the Framework Elements

- The time, space and co-creative processes of high school drama create unique positive relationships between teachers and students.

- These perspectives allow drama teachers and students to build a classroom environment of imagination and collaboration, that promotes theatre-making and flourishing

Supportive Teacher-Student Relationships That Stem from a Co-creative Process

Drama Class Habits of Mind that Create an Environment of Play

Student Health

Building Capacity to Negotiate Social Relationships Through Creative Collaboration

Embodied Storytelling that Enables Emotional Identification and Regulation

- Building social capacity and belonging working as an ensemble through non-competitive communication and process.

- Using character development, imagination, and physical movement to represent another person, and increase emotional identification.

game is layered to build emotional skills and use habits of mind like imagination and

taking responsible risks. Social relationships are layered on to emotions and habits of

mind as I play with the students and they play with each other. The elements are layered,

and extending the complexity further, each student learns unique skills through

multimodal embodied learning. For example, a shy student will grow socially in ways

that an outgoing student might not. Each student will perform different characters

throughout the course and learn any number of social or emotional skills from walking in

another person's shoes that will be unique to the students' lived experience. While an in-

depth examination of each of the elements in this framework is valuable to understand

how each operates and can be enhanced or minimized in teaching practice, high school drama is not experienced as simplistically as this framework might suggest. Theatre-making is a multimodal art form that excels at differentiated, complex learning that promotes health and well-being in individual and collective ways.

When the four framework elements are aligned with the logic model linking arts to health (see Figure 2), the components, responses, and outcomes provide a detailed picture of the health-promoting aspects of drama class (see Figure 9). In the next chapter, I present focus group data from conversations with other drama teachers, a school counselor, and a school psychologist that further illuminates the complex nature of health promotion in high school drama classes.

Figure 9: Components, Responses, and Outcomes, of the Frameworks' Four Elements

Teacher-Student Relationships

Habits of Mind

Social Negotiation

Emotional Identification

Components

Teacher-Student Relationships

Aesthetic engagement
- Aesthetic mentorship, example, guidance, and feedback

Social interaction
- Supportive adult relationship of notable duration and intensity

Habits of Mind

Aesthetic engagement
- Aesthetic skill development

Involvement of the imagination
- Creating written, design and performance work

Cognitive stimulation
- Thinking about and critiquing performance work

Social interaction
- Supportive collaborative environment

Social Negotiation

Aesthetic engagement
- Creating collaboratively

Involvement of the imagination
- Group play

Sensory activation
- Building vulnerability and trust

Cognitive stimulation
- Troubleshooting and celebrating relationships

Social interaction
- Collaborative art

Emotional Identification

Aesthetic engagement
- Embodied performance

Involvement of the imagination
- Developing a character

Sensory activation
- Relating to different perspectives

Evocation of emotion
- Empathy building

Social interaction
- Performing with a group

Responses

Student Health Responses
- **Psychological** (Enhanced self-efficacy, coping, and emotional regulation and identification)
- **Social** (Reduced loneliness and isolation, strong positive relationships)
- **Behavioral** (Development of positive social negotiation skills with peers and adults, emotional granularity for positive emotional coping)

Outcomes

Student Health Management and Health Promotion
- Expanded coping and stress management skills
- Increased positive social, relational, and emotional skills
- Confidence from mentored experience dealing with social, emotional, and relational challenges

CHAPTER 4

FOCUS GROUP PARTICIPANTS AND FINDINGS

Four focus group sessions were conducted and recorded via Zoom during July and

August 2020. Each session lasted 90-minutes and focused on a different topic of my

framework.

1. Drama class habits of mind that create an environment of play

2. Building capacity to negotiate social relationships through creative collaboration

3. Embodied storytelling that enables emotional identification and regulation

4. Supportive teacher-student relationships that stem from a co-creative process

I designed a focus group protocol for each session with scripted guidelines, questions,

stories, and research (see Appendix C). Each focus group began with a story from my

teaching experience, followed by participants' stories. A PowerPoint slide presentation of

arts and health research and semi-structured focus group questions invited stories from

the participants interrogating the framework. Probing and follow-up questions were used

to encourage thick description (Tracy 2013, 50-51). I encouraged empathetic interaction

with and between the participants as well as rapport and trust. Using my own stories and

experience enabled mutual ethical disclosure within the group (Tracy 2013, 111).

Participant Introductions

Wanting to create an environment of autonomy and collaboration that would

maximize "group effect" (Carey 1994), I invited each participant to provide their own

pseudonym for the study. The group enjoyed my suggestion, even asking to share

pseudonym choices and explanations with each other during our time together. In an

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attempt to share the comfortable, gracious, and fun group effect feeling that was present in our focus group sessions, I include a summary of our discussion on pseudonym selection.

- Clara Bird (white, female) explained that her pseudonym for this study is her belly dancing pseudonym. She also shared some exciting and engaging belly dancing stories.

- Monroe Addams (white, male) shared that Monroe is a family name from many generations back, and Addams from his favorite musical *The Addams Family*.

- Paige Turner (white, female) also repurposed a pen name she used in high school to write controversial opinion pieces about school policies and procedures and remain anonymous.

- Willy Quixote (white, male) joined names from his favorite musical and book together for his pseudonym. His first name comes from *Roald Dahl's Willy Wonka* the musical, and his last name comes from the novel *Don Quixote* by Miguel de Cervantes.

- Kat (white, female) elected to go with a mononym with no last name. She explained that this nickname is one she has loved from her childhood.

- Nadine Piaget (white, female) asked that I choose a pseudonym for her, so I decided to combine a famous child psychologist and pediatrician's names. The last name comes from a renowned Swiss psychologist known for his work on child development, Jean Piaget, and the first name from Nadine Burke Harris, a nationally recognized expert on childhood trauma.

The freedom and excitement that encouraged the group to spend extra time to share

pseudonyms demonstrate the positive group effect that occurred and that group members

felt that their experiences were "validated, extended, and supported by similar others"

(Tracy 2013, 167). Moving forward, I provide demographic tables and a more detailed

introduction to each participant; teachers first (See Table 1) followed by the counselor

and psychologist (See Table 2).

Table 1: Drama Teacher Demographics Table, 2020

	Clara Bird	Monroe Addams	Paige Turner	Willy Quixote
Gender Identity	Female	Male	Female	Male
Years' Experience Teaching	6	5	7	18
Only Drama Teacher at the School	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
School Location (city)	Phoenix	Scottsdale	Tucson	Mesa
School Population	3000	1300	1720	3700
Approximate Drama Program Size	210	50-60	130-150	320
Majority Student Population	85% Latino	75% white	90% Latino	65% white
Active in Arizona Thespians	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Run a Drama Club	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

Source: Self-reported interview data from the participants, Summer 2020.

Clara Bird started as a dancer and dance educator and owned her own studio for ten years. She views dance and theatre as closely related, which allowed her to shift quickly from dance educator to drama educator in her career. Clara values the close relationship she has with her high school drama teacher, as she was one of the first students inducted into that Thespian troupe. And she takes pride in her high school's legacy as she now leads that same troupe as the drama teacher and prizes the relationships she maintains with students today. She is a self-defined arts educator and presents workshops guiding teachers to use drama in all subject areas. Clara believes that helping students become active citizens in the world is an educator's responsibility. She notes that drama class is particularly effective at teaching citizenship skills like conflict resolution, problem-solving, and persistence because citizenship skills are taught implicitly in drama class. Clara values the importance of drama in a well-rounded education and provides many opportunities for her students to participate in theatre-making. She directs three mainstage shows each year with a small fall flexible cast play, a spring Shakespeare or musical, and a senior play in the winter. She also produces a one-act play in each of her six classes each year. Clara believes that every student who auditions should get a role in the play. Everyone is included. They can choose to accept the role or not, but they will be offered one. She believes in working with students in a collaborative manner that allows them to "do their job" and make their own decisions and choices. She maintains a robust and positive attitude that every student can and should be involved.

Monroe Addams would appear on Zoom each week with a background of his school auditorium, missing the space and taking advantage of an opportunity to share his passion for theatre with others. Monroe teaches drama and film and TV courses as he builds the drama program at his current school, where he has taught for two years. He directs a fall play and spring musical and runs an improv troupe that does a few small productions each year. He is currently pursuing an advanced degree in education at Arizona State University. He seeks to promote fine arts programs in public schools, with his research focused on how drama builds social skills. Citing his introversion as restricting him from joining all the extroverted thespians in high school, Monroe began his theatre participation in college. He only sees benefits from participating in theatre. He believes that all drama teachers work hard to create an environment of safety and fun where students can learn to overcome the challenges inherent in the drama curriculum. He believes drama teachers do an excellent job of creating that environment. He notes that theatre can provide students with a break from life stressors and that some students would prefer to stay at a lengthy rehearsal than be anywhere else. He believes that drama promotes mental health through a safe environment and physical health promotion. Theatre helps students learn to take care of their body by caring for their voice, warming-up and stretching, and other physical prep work for musicals.

Paige Turner started the drama program at the high school in Tucson, where she teaches. The district had just built a brand-new theatre and stocked it with new equipment, so they hired a drama teacher. Paige has been doing theatre since the first grade. She enjoyed drama in elementary school, middle school, and through high school.

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She believes that, like her, most theatre kids are reserved and looking for an outlet for their creativity. She believes that every student should take theatre because her drama kids are leaders in the school and because drama teaches students "how to be human." She believes that since students are developing who they are and being social, they need drama to practice being human, so they are not "stuck in high school forever." She believes that the content of drama is essential but not as important as "the other" implicit lessons that students learn in drama. Paige starts every school year with a charity show connected to the school's hygiene drive, where she collects clothes and hygiene products instead of ticket money. She also directs an October show, a holiday show, and does a Shakespeare production with her students every other year. 2020 was supposed to be the first musical, but it was canceled due to COVID-19.

Willy Quixote has 18 years of drama teaching experience and is a board member of the Arizona Thespian Society. Willy routinely directs a fall play, a spring musical, and a touring show that travels to the local elementary schools. He values building the drama program and giving students real-world opportunities for growth. He appreciates the life lessons learned by tech students and actors as they troubleshoot the challenges of performing in various locations and multiple times a day. Each summer for the last five years, collaborating with his wife, Willy directs an adaptive musical for students on the autism spectrum. He uses drama students from his high school as volunteers for this project and values how this process "changes" everyone. Willy wants "everyone to come and do theatre." He often talks about being able to cast everyone in his show, and he takes the extra time to help students succeed with whatever modifications they might

need. His years of experience reflect the joys and the trials of teaching drama. Building

relationships of trust with students is vital to Willy, and so he teaches and relates with

students intentionally to build that trust. He remembers his days as a high school student

where he "did his best whenever there was a show going on." He feels like he learned to

manage his life in that safe space. And Willy intentionally creates that space for his

students today.

Table 2: Counselor and School Psychologist Demographics Table, 2020

	Nadine Piaget	Kat
Gender Identity	Female	Female
Years' Experience Counseling	1	27
Number of Counselors or Psychologists at the school Or District	3 psychologists 3 interns	7 counselors
School Location (city)	Yuma	Yuma
School Population	2500	2500
Majority Student Population	65% Latino	65% Latino
Number of Students Responsible For	120	200

Source: Self-reported interview data from the participants, Summer 2020.

Kat is the Director of Guidance, where she leads a team of seven high school

counselors. Her experience in counseling and therapy work stretches over 27 years. A

self-described "home-spun artist," Kat enjoys and participates in various arts offerings

with her family and on her own. There is lots of music in her home, with her husband

being a musician and most of the family learning to play an instrument. Dancing, jewelry

making, painting, and ceramics have been part of her family art experience and attending musicals, music concerts, and plays. Kat believes that the arts can be both "life saving for people who are going through tough times and "very detrimental" if they are used to facilitate maladaptive behavior. She believes that drama teachers must have a strong sense of their emotional boundaries and then have an even stronger sense of the student's boundaries knowing when to push and pull back. She strongly feels that as theatre encourages removing student inhibitions, drama teachers must responsibly provide a space where students can make safe decisions.

Nadine Piaget is just beginning her career as a high school psychologist. As a self-described "kid-magnet," Nadine taught elementary school followed by self-contained special education before choosing to be a school psychologist. She enjoys working with students who "require alternate ways of learning." She believes that students should be able to make mistakes and fix them to become better. Nadine views arts and sports as necessary to the learning process as they allow students to express themselves. She sees drama class teaching students to role-play and work through issues they may have while building self-confidence and expression. She believes that drama can help shy kids become less fearful. As a high school psychologist, Nadine is part of a team of 3 other psychologists and interns and is responsible for about 120 students.

Focus Group Findings

Because my framework came from my personal experience and perspective, I was particularly interested in how the six focus group members might interrogate or contradict my ideas. I was surprised to find that they did not do so even though I

included questions inviting them to disagree or even provide stories that countered the

assertions of the framework. Instead, they universally agreed that each element of my

framework did identify ways that high school drama participation positively impacts

health and well-being. What they did with their stories and conversation was restructure

my framework into a more complex layered explanation of how drama teachers promote

student health and well-being using the framework. The focus group members candidly

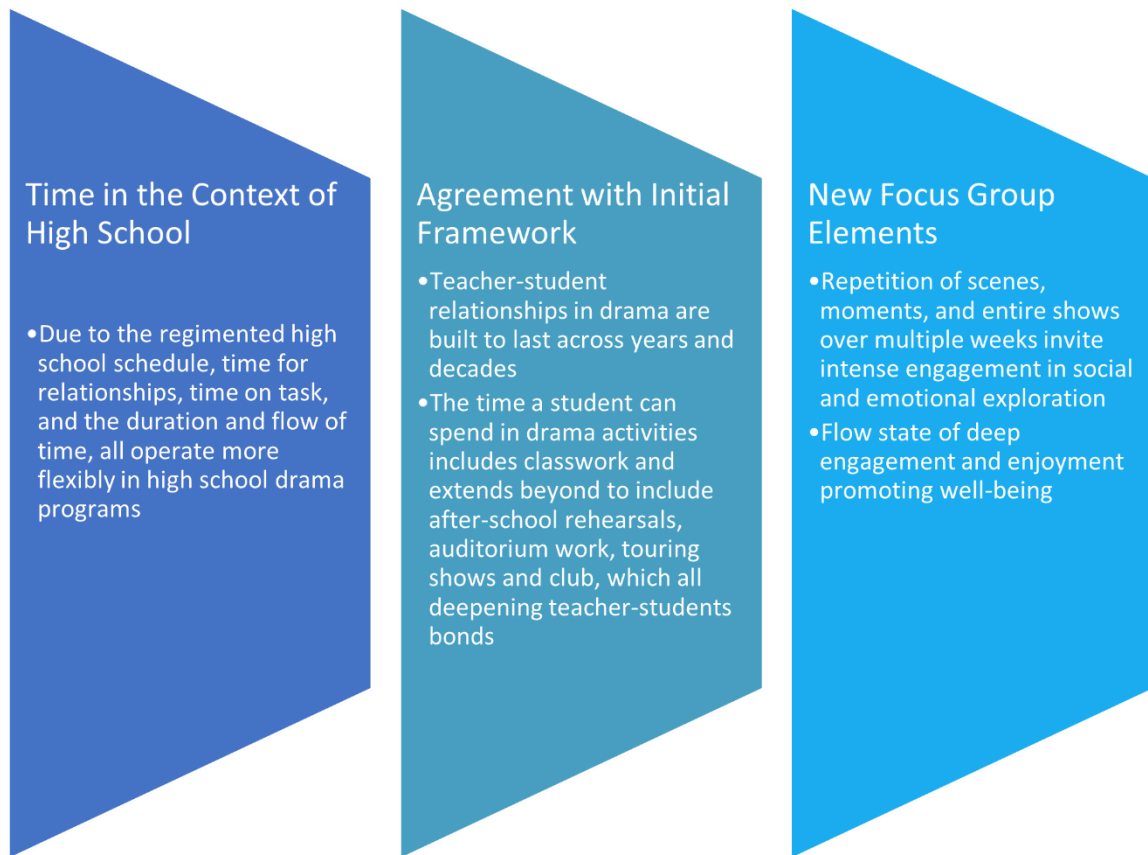*Figure 10: Focus Group Elements Promoting Student Health in Drama Class*
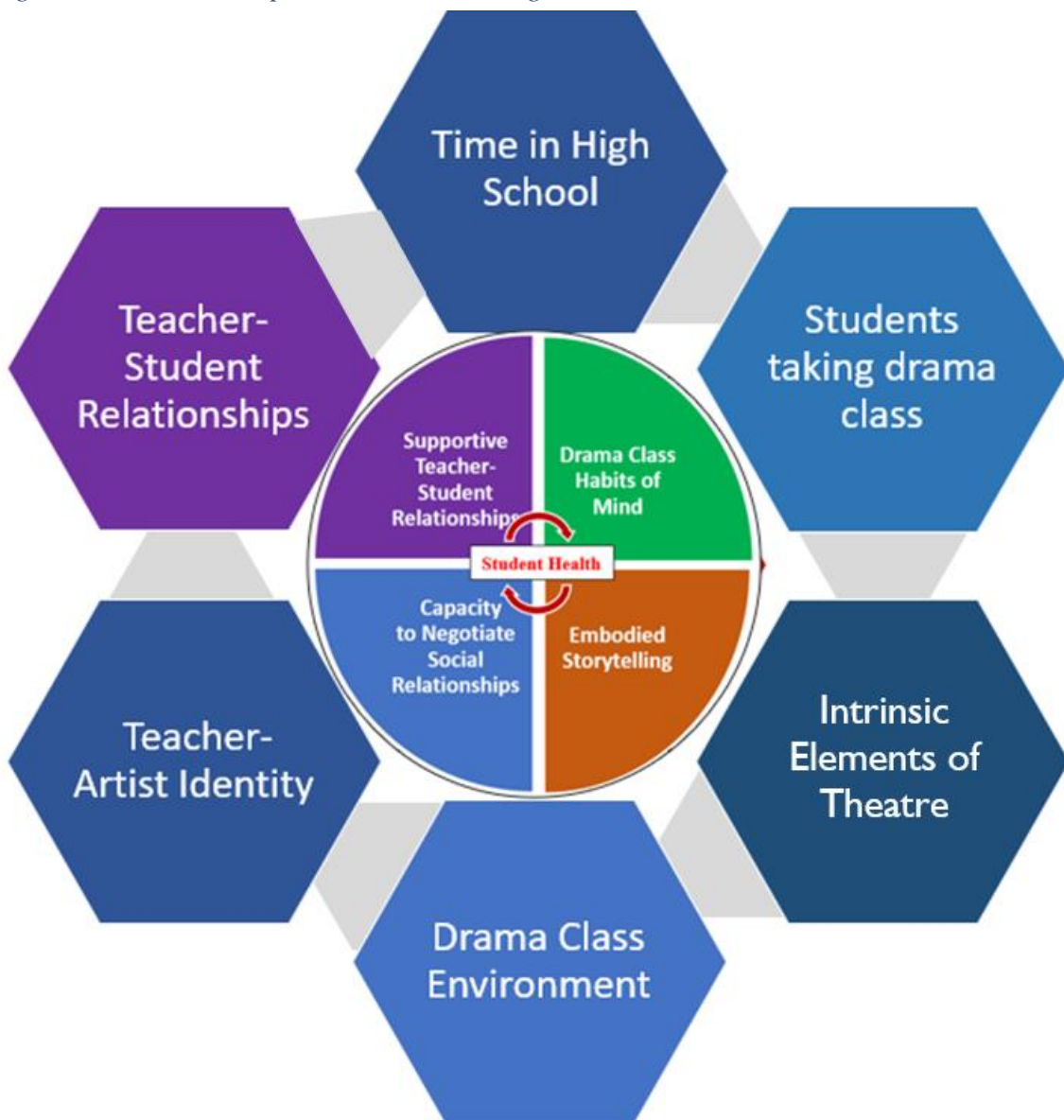
shared their perspective of the preconditions for well-being in the time and place of high school where theatre-making is central.   The focus group did not question that health promotion happens in high school drama programs. Instead, they explained how and why well-being occurs, and most significantly, how they facilitated student health as drama teachers. Through the four focus group sessions, they identified the time and context of high school, the students taking drama, the intrinsic elements of high school theatre, their drama teacher artist/educator identity, and the environment and student relationships they sought to create, as reasons why health promotion happens (see Figure 10). Each element of the framework I designed exists and is often extended in multimodal ways in the restructured and extended findings analyzed in this chapter.

Time in the Context of High School

As included in this dissertation's introduction, high school theatre's context includes unique elements of both time and space. Research on time in education delves into how time functions in learning environments, investigating allocated time, instructional time, time-on-task, transition time, waiting time, and even pace and duration in classwork (Berliner 1990, 4-6). The focus group members talked about time and how time functions in drama class as one precondition for theatre's health-promoting aspects (see Figure 11). Because high school is primarily a learning environment, time is regimented into semesters or trimesters and daily schedules complete with bells to mark transitions between class, lunches, and mark the start and end of the day. The schools where I worked, a typical day is broken up into six 55-minute classes with 5-minute passing periods and a 30-minute lunch. Due to the regimented high school schedule, the

Time in the Context of High School

- Due to the regimented high school schedule, time for relationships, time on task, and the duration and flow of time, all operate more flexibly in high school drama programs

Agreement with Initial Framework

- Teacher-student relationships in drama are built to last across years and decades
- The time a student can spend in drama activities includes classwork and extends beyond to include after-school rehearsals, auditorium work, touring shows and club, which all deepening teacher-students bonds

New Focus Group Elements

- Repetition of scenes, moments, and entire shows over multiple weeks invite intense engagement in social and emotional exploration
- Flow state of deep engagement and enjoyment promoting well-being

focus group identified how time operates more flexibly in high school drama programs and how that benefits the students socially and emotionally.

I Spend the First Month of School Playing Games. -Clara

The focus group discussed how they routinely take extra time to build social and relational drama class skills. Clara shared how her colleagues in English and history come to her and ask her advice on how to get the students to talk in front of each other in class. Many high school classes require presentations, public speaking, and discussion skills, which are also key in drama work. Drama teachers make the time to ensure that students in their classes can present, speak, and share critical feedback. In response to her colleagues' question, she tells them, "I spend the first month of school playing

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games." The teachers in the focus group believe that student relationships take significant time to build. Intentionally taking the time to play drama games as a relationship-building strategy works, according to Clara, because,

> *The games go from low risk to high risk. So, all I'm doing is creating a safe space for them to be able to look foolish in front of each other, for them to take risks. And for them to try things and realize that they're not going to be judged. That they're on the same level as everybody else in the class, and everybody else in the class has the same fears. – Clara*

The group agreed that for students to learn to speak up and perform takes time. On hearing Clara's advice, her colleagues in English and history responded that they do not have the time to play games for a month to promote students' ability to speak in front of their peers. The English and history teachers did not have the instructional time available to take weeks to promote social public speaking skills, though they thought it was valuable. Because drama class has a more flexible schedule without state-mandated benchmark testing, teachers can take the time to build social skills and strong peer and teacher-student relationships.

Drama teachers value and intentionally use drama games to build theatre-making skills and forge strong supportive relationships that often last for years. At one point in the focus group, Clara asked everyone else, "How many of us still talk to our drama teachers?" Everyone but Monroe raised their hand. And Monroe said, "I didn't have one. I didn't do drama in high school." Then Clara reminded everyone, "Those relationships are like 20 years old." And we spent the next few minutes talking about our relationships with our high school drama teachers. This moment from the focus group displays that

teacher-student relationships can last for years and drama teachers intentionally develop relationships that last with students.

The intention is not merely to survive the school year or the semester but to create relationships that span decades. Willy talked about students he is "still in contact with 15-20 years later." He lives in Arizona, but each year when he returns to Illinois, he meets with a group of about 15 of his former students. I can relate as I, also, am in contact with former students regularly. Willy expressed the idea that these lasting relationships develop through intense theatre-making situations that build trust. He said, "The students I meet with are those kids that I did shows with, or I've had for three or four years and built the relationship and built the trust." Drama teachers intentionally make the time to build supportive relationships that they intend to last.

While time spent with students in the classroom building community is central, time spent out of class in more informal settings like impromptu lunchtime chats improves relationships. The group laughed about students wanting to be in their class all the time. Paige said, "The entire day that I'm at work, I am not alone. There's not a second that I am alone. And I think that's common for a lot of arts teachers, but especially theatre teachers." While members of the group laughed about never being alone, Monroe emphasized the value of being available to students in this way, "outside the classroom, it's important to keep those personal relationships strong with students." Drama teachers spend extensive time with students outside of class after school in rehearsal or club or traveling with them to competitions. The teachers talked about time spent with students after school, like Paige, staffing the auditorium for school events, like Monroe, taking

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them to LA to see *Hamilton*, and like Willy, touring productions to elementary schools. All this time adds up over the one to four years a student can take drama class in high school, and all of this time builds relationships and community. Returning to the same auditorium and drama class day after day over the years provides students with a familiar feel and a place of belonging that they do not often experience in an ever-shifting high school setting.

Time in drama work is also expressed in duration, intensity, and flow during rehearsal and performance in unique ways that promote well-being. Drama students spend 6-8 weeks rehearsing and performing a play script allowing for extended duration and intensity. Typical units of study in high school will last a few weeks at most. The luxury of studying and deeply diving into one work for several months allows for in-depth, meaningful exploration. In rehearsal, repeating scenes, moments, and even the whole play many times allows for repetition that enhances cognition and emotional experience. And "flow," a valuable component of flourishing, figures into theatrical performance work. Defined as "a state of deep engagement and enjoyment," flow perceptively slows time down, allowing a person to engage for long periods of time without experiencing boredom or fatigue (Tse, Nakamura and Csikszentmihalyi 2020). Time in the context of high school operates in unique ways in a drama class that enhances student well-being. Drama teachers view and use time differently because the art form they work with and teach in a public-school environment allows them greater flexibility and quantity.

Students Who Take Drama

High school students find themselves navigating the formative years of their lives, deciding and discovering who they will become. Adolescence is a time of life that tends to be emotionally fraught. Research on emotions records adolescents reporting "greater fluctuations in daily emotional states" and "more extreme emotional experiences (both positive and negative)" than younger children or adults (Gilbert 2012, 468). Taking a drama class often adds to the challenge for students because of the pressures of performance. Drama students perform for their peers in the classroom and then for fellow students, teachers, friends, and family on the stage. In short, they perform for people they know and will see again regularly. The pressures of high school performance add to the challenge of the teenage experience.

Educational research Laura McCammon worked with other researchers to study the lifelong impacts of high school speech and theatre participation. Of particular interest to the team was the self-reported challenges encountered by the 234 participants stemming from teenage life and extended by performance pressure. Using qualitative interview data, a secondary finding of the study outlines the self-reported emotions of the students outside of high school,
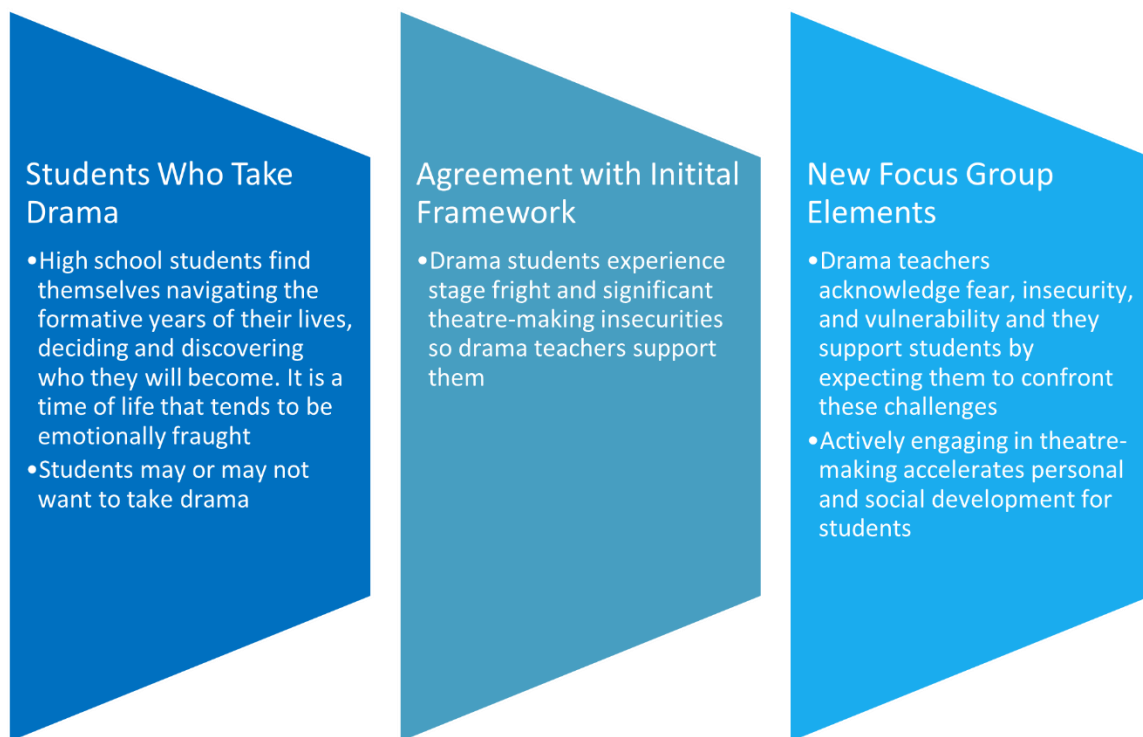
> [Students] characterize themselves as shy, introverted, and socially withdrawn individuals with a lack of self-confidence. Some perceive themselves as lonely individuals who 'do not belong' and have few or no friends or little peer acceptance. A handful of them are living in difficult home situations such as parental dysfunction or sexual abuse (McCammon et al. 2012, 13).

Then McCammon notes the pressure the participants experience because of drama class performance. McCammon reports the transformation the students experience in their personal values and identity through theatre-making in high school drama.

> But there are new challenges students will face as the art form and their teachers make particular discipline-specific demands on them. These students will also undergo a search for and a transformation of their evolving value systems and personal identities" (McCammon et al. 2012, 13).

These findings gathered from student experience reflect similar vulnerabilities and risks as the focus group outlined in discussions from the student perspective. Not only do the students encounter performance pressure in drama class, but many of them did not take the course because they wanted to be in the spotlight. Many drama students take

Figure 12: Findings about Students who take Drama

Students Who Take Drama
- High school students find themselves navigating the formative years of their lives, deciding and discovering who they will become. It is a time of life that tends to be emotionally fraught
- Students may or may not want to take drama

Agreement with Initital Framework
- Drama students experience stage fright and significant theatre-making insecurities so drama teachers support them

New Focus Group Elements
- Drama teachers acknowledge fear, insecurity, and vulnerability and they support students by expecting them to confront these challenges
- Actively engaging in theatre-making accelerates personal and social development for students

the course because they need a fine art credit and do not feel confident with an instrument

or paintbrush. Others take the class because a family member urged them to be more

outgoing. Still others seem unaware of why or how they got in the class at all. The focus

group cited all these pressures for drama students as catalysts for health promotion due to

the teacher's response to supporting students experiencing these challenges (see Figure

12).

You're Right. You Do Have Stage Fright. You Are Shy. -Clara

Because performance pressures are real, teachers mentor students to deal with the

powerful emotion of stage fright. Speaking in public is a common and natural fear for

many people. And for teenagers performing in front of their peers it evokes similar and

possibly more pronounced terror. Theatre teachers expect and prepare for this reaction in

their classroom and production practices promoting health and well-being by responding

to student needs and guiding them instead of avoiding challenges. Clara shared with the

group how her annual stage fright lesson translated well to the current online learning

environment of COVID-19 and how addressing the challenge of stage fright invites her

students to flourish in her class and beyond.

> *Today, I started teaching my intro students about stage fright. I showed them this video about the science of stage fright, which is a lesson that I do every year. It translates well online. At the end of the video, I said, "A lot of you at the beginning of this class said, 'I have stage fright. I don't want to do this. I'm shy.' I said, "You know what, that is absolutely true. You're right. You do have stage fright. You are shy." And I give them some examples where I have stage fright. And I said, "We're all here to support each other. We all have empathy for you. And nobody is sitting in this audience, hoping that you fail." And I said, "I'm hoping that is the point that we can get to in this class, where you can get comfortable speaking in front of other people because that skill of speaking in front of other people is going to serve you in your life path. Even if you don't want to be an actor for the rest of your life. And then having empathy for other people*

is also going to serve you in life because it's gonna make you a much more understanding person." -Clara

When asked if stressful experience can serve to promote growth Nadine offered the following, "Psychologically, people that work together during stressful times, such as performances, grow closer because they bond over the learning and growing process of completing a small or large stressful activity. I would say that it goes back to the Trust vs. Mistrust stage of development. You must place a lot of trust in others with a high level of expectations to make the production a success." The Trust vs. Mistrust stage she speaks of comes from Erik Erikson's *Stages of Psychosocial Development*. Erikson supported the idea that personality develops in eight sequential stages from infancy through adulthood. As a school psychologist, Nadine believes there is a connection between stressful and adverse situations that promote student health in positive ways.

I Know That's my Motivation to Get Them Involved. -Willy

Another strategy the teachers talked about using to support students through their insecurities is to involve them in the class's embodied learning as soon as possible. Each teacher told stories about students, reluctant to being in class, who, through encouraging involvement, shifted their perspective from not wanting to be there to not wanting to leave. Willy shared how he enjoyed the change he sees in students as they get involved, "Every one of us, we've had those kids in the class that are just there to be there. And I know that's my motivation to get them involved, and nine times out of ten, those are ones that have gone on to do more things in theatre. Those are the kids that I love." Monroe shared a story about a particular student in his class who shifted over a semester.

I once had a student who, on her interview sheet on the first day of class-- one of the questions at the bottom is, Is there anything else I need to know about you? She wrote, 'I will not be volunteering for any drama activities or exercises in this class.' So, I took note of that, and by the end of the first semester. (It was a yearlong class.) By the end of the first semester, she was raising her hand first for everything. – Monroe

As the students get involved in theatre-making, their perspective changes, and they

thrive. Kat also talked about seeing this shift in students in her role as a school counselor,

I've actually had some people, you know, criticize when I've made that decision to put some people in who haven't chosen drama because they're afraid the student is going to be too uncomfortable. And I'm not afraid to put them in there. Because I've had kids come back to me and say, "I never chose this class. This isn't right. This isn't fair." You know, and then I am busy. And maybe a week later, I bring them in and say, "Okay, let's talk about changing that class." And they go. "No, no, no, no, I like it. I want to stay there." So, I've learned not to jump too quickly. When someone says this is uncomfortable, I want to get out. - Kat

Willy explained that once a student gets involved, they do more than feel comfortable;

they belong and are successful, saying, "I've had many kids who were dropped in

accidentally, who ended up being stars in my program over the year." Everyone agreed

with Willy about how the students develop and grow through involvement in drama class.

Clara brought up Senior Circle as evidence of the change drama students can experience

over time. Talking about Senior Circle, a moment when all the seniors share hopes,

dreams, sorrows, and loss with their peers on opening night of a play, she noted,

"Watching those students talk through their experiences. It's like a catharsis that they

experience." The students lead a discussion to decompress the joys of opening night with

senior year's sorrows and final performance before graduating. The student growth

identified by the focus group aligns with a significant finding in McCammon et al. that

"adolescents encounter exponential identity-forming, empathic-generating, and

friendship-building opportunities daily" in drama class. Theatre-making experience "*accelerates* one's personal development of and attunement to self, humanity, and culture" (McCammon et al. 2012, 19). The focus group identified the acceleration of personal development mainly due to where the students are when they enter drama class and how they, as teachers, respond to them in supportive, active ways.

The Intrinsic Elements of High School Theatre

The focus group drama teachers, as theatre artists, intimately know the art of theatre-making. As mentioned briefly in the preceding section, performing for peers and others presents an added layer of social and emotional challenge for teenagers in an already challenging time of life. Performance and the accompanying emotional responses like stage fright are part of theatre's intrinsic elements that drama teachers understand as experienced artists. Because drama teachers realize the demanding and inspiring nature of theatre, they prepare and support students to engage in theatre-making as artists (see Figure 13). Although there are many intrinsic elements in high school drama, the focus group stories keyed in on five specific factors that connect theatre work to student well-being. They are:

- Character Development,
- Casting,
- Tech Week
- Performance Magic
- Closing Night

Each of these elements is analyzed individually and discussed in more detail below.

Figure 13: Findings on Intrinsic Elements of High School Theatre

Intrinsic Elements of High School Theatre
- Performance and its accompanying emotional responses are some of theatre's intrinsic elements. Because drama teachers realize the demands of theatre-making, they prepare and support students to engage as artists.

Agreement with Initial Framework
- Character Development
- Intense rehearsal work and learning from failure
- Flexibly building an ensemble
- Developing imagination
- Wonder and awe in theatre-making

New Focus Group Elements
- The elation and disapointment of casting
- Working under intense stress during Tech week and apologizing when control of emotions is lost
- Grief of closing night and ending a production run

Character Development

In the focus group discussion, the group agreed that character development and acting promote emotional development and social skills. Illustrating the group's consensus, I use this story from Clara, "The experience of trying to embody someone else is changing," she said. And then she elaborated with the story of a student in *The Crucible* moved and impacted by the lived experience of performing a woman older than herself. Even though the character's age and family experience were far removed from this young high school performer, the simple act of trying to embody another person impacted her emotionally and built her capacity to empathize with others.

But character development is also about preparing students to play roles that embody tough, gritty, maladapted, or victimized characters as well. Embodying another person requires a deep connection both intellectually and emotionally. This story from Clara outlines how social cohesion, and group discussion mitigate performing roles that push boundaries. And also illustrates the challenge drama teachers face inviting students into hard emotional spaces.

> *We did a play called* A Child Shall Lead*. So,* A Child Shall Lead *is about the children in Terezin (a concentration camp). And I had to direct this play. It was an incredibly emotional script. Everybody dies. There's one character that survives the play. And the actors know this from the beginning. I remember the rehearsal room, where I told my cast, "You have to believe that you're going to survive. Because if you don't believe that you're going to survive, you're not going to be able to bring the audience along on the story."*
> *And one of my students, his name is Logan. And he's an incredibly sensitive and creative young man. He used to be a football player. He quit the football program to take drama. And he just said, "Miss, are you kidding me?"*
> *I was like, "You have to absolutely believe that you're going to survive this." And the tears from the cast were instant. They suddenly understood what their job was because the characters in the play were real people. And I said, "Your job is to tell their story. And these children believed that they were going to survive this. So, you've got to. Because otherwise, we won't have the desired impact on our audience." And it felt-- it's the first play like that, that I've done with high school students, and it felt a little irresponsible to be that direct and to put them through that kind of emotional stress. But when we came out of it, the students that performed it had such a profound bonding experience -Clara*

Clara's concern about feeling irresponsible for putting the students through that kind of emotional stress is common among drama teachers who direct. Willy extended the topic noting that "invoking those emotions and allowing kids to feel that and allowing kids to work with that" as being some of the "difficult parts" about being a drama teacher. And the balance and care required to invite intense emotional storytelling and support the students in that work.

Paige and Monroe shifted the conversation to a positive track noting the value of

inviting students into deep examinations of a character. They each shared character

development assignments they gave their students to help them emotionally connect to a

character. Paige shares a homework assignment she gives her students and how that

relates to building empathy and emotional identification.

> *And sometimes their homework is they have to play their character all day. And
> then they tell me, 'I was treated differently, but I'm the same person.' And I think
> like, that's just kind of them understanding that things just aren't black and white.
> Like you can, you really can have like this mesh of how you're feeling or this mesh
> of how people treat you day to day. And at least in my class, they experience it
> through other people. So, then they're able to make the conclusions or draw
> conclusions with their own life, just by being someone else. And I think it's really
> cool that theatre allows them to do that, especially as a developing human
> because you're not gonna get it anywhere else. So, I think that theatre and that
> learning empathy are hand in hand. You have to have both in order to have a
> successful class -Paige*

Monroe shares a similar example of a dialect homework assignment he gave a student

playing Gomez Addams in *Addams Family.*

> *I make them be the character outside of the script. Because I said if you're the
> character outside of a script, the inside of the script and the lines are going to feel
> and sound more organic. My Gomez Addams, a couple of years ago, I said,
> "The next time you go to Taco Bell-- you're going after rehearsal?"
> "Yep."
> "Order in Gomez Addams dialect. That's your homework!"
> And he goes, "But I go to that Taco Bell all the time, I'm a regular."
> And I said, "Try it, or have a conversation at home in the dialect."
> I mean, that's the key. The more they connect with the character they're playing,
> the more successful they're going to be, the more convincing they're going to be
> onstage. And, emotions, the more they're really going to understand what
> someone else is going through. -Monroe*

Examining empathy-building through character development and where she felt that

might come from, Clara continued, "It's a storytelling thing that allows you to give space

to others." Clara's comments, affirmed by the group, recognize and connect the theatrical

skill of character development to promoting empathy, inclusion, and understanding for students.

Casting

Another theatre element the group identified as promoting student health is casting and the opportunity to encounter disappointment regularly and repeatedly. While this idea may appear counter-intuitive, most of the intrinsic elements of theatre identified to promote health have a negative side. Stage fright is another example, with other intrinsic aspects like tech week stress and closing night grief to follow. Because theatre-making requires artists to confront the art form's demands to be successful, drama teachers lean into these demands and teach students how to deal with them in positive ways.

Auditions require effort, time, and hope. And, when posted, provide many students with a feeling of rejection because they did not get the part they wanted. Rejection and disappointment in casting are familiar as high school drama programs often perform 3-6 productions a year. That is 3-6 cast lists each year where students may or may not get the part they want even though they worked hard and auditioned. And sometimes students receive a role because of how they look, not how skilled they are. For example, when casting the role of a 6-year-old, a high school student under five feet tall with a higher-pitched voice will have the upper hand regardless of performance ability. When effort and skill are not the only determinants of casting choices, even those who work hard might not get what they want. Most students hope for the lead in the play or a specific tech role, but most do not receive the coveted parts leading to

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disappointment. Most of the focus group teachers mentioned that they try to cast

everyone who comes to auditions. But even if every student is cast, every student will not

get the part they wanted and will be upset. Because posting a cast list elicits fraught

emotions, drama teachers learn quickly that their students might be angry with them. This

story that Willy shared is a prime example of how emotional casting can get,

> *I just started taking over this program. And this kid auditioned, and I'll never forget him. So, he auditioned. And he didn't get the lead. I posted the cast list outside my classroom, and he legitimately cornered me in the corner of the hallway and berated me in front of everybody. "How dare you! You're a young teacher. You don't know what you're doing" blah, blah, blah, went to town on me. I just stood there. I didn't say anything. I walked away. But from that point on, what I did is I started posting the cast list on Fridays at 6 pm on my website. So, then it gave them the entire weekend to process. -Willy*

As artists, drama teachers recognize that posting a cast list inevitably evokes strong

negative feelings for their students, so they lean in and support students in mitigating

those feelings by focusing on not quitting. Willy summed up the idea of leaning into the

frustration of casting with a positive spin speaking of the students "And they'll be hurt.

They'll be mad at me. But in the end, it's the best for everybody." Learning to accept

rejection and not give up or disengage in the art form is how drama teachers promote

student well-being.

In this story, Clara describes a moment where she used those strong student

feelings to drive a conversation validating the emotions while also rejecting the impetus

to quit.

> *When I cast* The Tempest *last year, that was a big mistake. There's only one girl in that whole play. And while I did cast a lot of girls, they knew that there was one girl. And this girl came to my office, and she was like,*
> *"Miss, I don't understand why I didn't get Miranda."*
> *And I said, "Well, you're upset?"*

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And she said, "Yes."
And I was like, "It's okay to be upset. It's alright. You can be mad at me for as
long as you want to be. But are you going to be at rehearsal on Monday?"
And she just kind of stood there. She was like, "Yeah, I'm going to be mad at you
for a while, but I'll be at rehearsal on Monday."
It was a funny story about them dealing with their emotions in a healthy way.
Because we're teaching them to accept rejection and express their frustration.
And we're giving them that safe space to express it. – Clara

Clara intentionally mentored a student through a highly charged emotional moment by focusing on the art form's demands of attending rehearsal even when disappointed. As an artist herself, she has experienced this challenge and recognizes that disappointment is part of the process in theatre. And drama teachers recognize how these raw emotional moments that are part of theatre-making are moments that can serve to support the emotional health and well-being of their students.

Tech Week

Putting on a production requires collaboration and co-creation, which sounds generous, kind, and open. However, within that collaborative theatre-making structure are deadlines and final decisions with stressful impacts and heightened emotions. One incredibly intense time that occurs in the work of theatre is tech week. Tech week is the week before a production opens to the public. Everyone is operating on deadlines and making every detail of the production work. The relationships forged through weeks of rehearsal are strained in this stressful time. Monroe described the intensity of tech week like this, "We're all one big family and families fight." Again, drama teachers react to theatre's intrinsic elements as necessary and lean into what they bring to student well-being. Willy told how he prepares his students to see him react differently during tech week as he negotiates the stress of that time. People we are close to, we disagree with,

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annoy, and even hurt at times, but we also forgive. The teachers work to help students

understand that fighting and forgiving are part of healthy relationships. Willy illustrated

an example of how he took the time to explain to his technical theatre students how his

behavior would change due to the stress of tech week,

> *When we get into [tech week], I will take my tech class, and I'll tell them,*
> *"Hey, it's been it's been hunky-dory, but you're gonna see a different side of me.*
> *And on the other side, I'll return back, but do not get offended if I snap at you."*
> *We have these talks, and at first, they are like,*
> *"What the hell is he talking about?"*
> *And then when the show's over, "Oh, we get it." – Willy*

I appreciated Willy's foresight in preparing his students for his emotional shift to a higher

stress level from tech week intensity. During the focus group, I shared memories of

apologizing to students during tech week because I overreacted and yelled at them. Willy

added a more detailed specific example,

> *You have reminded me of something. I had a class one time. It was an intro class.*
> *It was a tech week, and they were all new. I think we were doing* Mary Poppins.
> *And everything that could go wrong went wrong. And so, I just lost it on them. It*
> *just happens. And the next morning, I walked in with like 6000 doughnuts. And I*
> *just set them in the room. And I left. And I didn't say anything. And they all knew*
> *they're like, "Okay, he's not mad at us." I'm tearing up--thinking about that.*
> *Because I remember that moment, it was just a rough time because of* Mary
> Poppins. *But you know what, all of those kids, we connected after that. We sat*
> *down and talked. I explained to them how I got to that point, and what happened*
> *with the show and all that. So, it was a really cool learning moment. -Willy*

All the teachers agreed with Willy, sharing how they apologize and prepare students for

tech week stress's negative emotional impact. They felt that the social and emotional

learning that happens as students navigate group work in highly stressful times allows

them to practice maintaining and losing emotional control and forgiving others for doing

the same. As artists who intimately know the demands of tech week, teachers prepare

and then support students in those moments, sometimes by apologizing.

Performance Magic

Most of the intrinsic elements the teachers discussed focused on challenges like

overcoming fear, rejection, and intense stress. However, "performance magic" lives in a

world of wonder, awe, and positive flourishing. Theatre enables students to experience

beauty, quality art, and personal significance as actors or technicians. Educational

scholar Laura McCammon calls it "performance magic." She summarized students'

description of performance magic as, "during significant play production performances,

participants may experience an elusive 'magic feeling' through individual and collective

high-quality work…" that enables students to "achieve personal significance"

(McCammon et al. 2012, 15). Willy shared this story about a student in his classroom

who gave an unforgettable performance, like McCammon described above.

> *We did a really silly show last year. One of the boys had to play a 90-year-old lady. And I'm telling you, in his four years, that's the best character he's ever done. He owned that character. And to this day, like he is still seen as that. It was supposed to be so comedic and over the top, and he made it so believable. We forgot it was a boy playing a 90-year-old girl. So, I think that's really key in this whole thing is like pushing them to do these things and they trust us. -Willy*

Drama teachers like Willy work to gain student trust in the rewards of the art form.

Theatre-making is worth the effort, so teachers celebrate with students when the

performance magic happens. Each member of the focus group shared a story about

appreciating wonder and awe. Clara talked about the spectacle of theatre and the very

first production she directed. On closing night, she told her student, "This just goes to

show, you guys can do anything. Just go for it. And if you fail, fail spectacularly." Paige

shared a memory of a light design she and her students created for *Alice in Wonderland* that made the audience gasp. Monroe talked about closing night of a production and seeing the cast and crew with their families and friends celebrating. Each of these examples is a moment of performance magic for everyone involved. Willy wrapped up the discussion, sharing how he facilitates one performance magic moment for his technical theatre students.

> *A majority of my tech kids who come in [the class] have no idea what they're getting into. They have no idea what theatre is. And I tell them, I say, "When we finish and put this set up, you're gonna sit back and go, look what I just did." So, before every production, we sit in the front row, we turn all the lights on, and we just stare in front of us and look at what they just created. And that is the wonder at awe for me. I get goosebumps right now just thinking about it. I've done it every time with my kids. And a lot of them are like, 'I did that.' Or 'I painted that. Or I created that. Or that was my idea to fly this and do that.' And so we talk about those things. -Willy*

Kat added a personal story about her own daughter struggling to fit in and feeling unhappy when the family was living in Guam and how performance magic influenced her.

> *My daughter, when she was in Guam, was selected for a part in* West Side Story. *And she was going through a super rough time. So, she gets selected. And oh my goodness, it was magical. I was so glad because it is so weird to me. How, you know, I had this daughter who was very depressed, having a hard time coping with school, and yet, her drama class and being involved in drama took her to this high. And oh my gosh, as a parent, Oh, I am so grateful. I'm so grateful that that got her through. It's such a mind-bender. Here she was, at this really all-time low. But still, she had this all-time high. She's 36 years old and has two kids of her own. And she still reflects on* West Side Story. *-Kat*

Encouraging students to celebrate the wonder and awe of performance allows students to flourish wherever they find themselves in life. Though there is a dearth of studies on wonder and awe and theatre, studies of awe and nature connected to personal well-being

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are plentiful (Goldy and Piff 2020; Chen and Myriam 2020). Many of these studies note

the critical role that awe plays in promoting well-being, saying, "awe mediates the effect

of nature experience on well-being" (Anderson, Monroy, and Keltner 2018, 1201). The

focus group members believe that the awe encountered in high school drama also

promotes well-being for everyone involved in a production.

Closing Night

The final intrinsic example the group focused on is how participating in a theatre

production in a class or after school provides opportunities for students to learn to deal

with grief. Paige introduced the idea by saying, "Theatre classes teach you how to deal

with grief." At first, this statement may appear to be extreme. What grief does theatre

bring to drama students? Much of what they do is imaginary, and drama teachers do not

generally attempt to traumatize students. So, where is the grief in theatre-making?

Theatre is live. Live actors perform a live play in front of a live audience. No two

productions of the same work will be the same because every night the performance is

live. And this same liveness teaches grief because when the show ends on closing night,

everything goes away. Sets are torn down, props and costumes move to storage, and the

cast and crew no longer meet daily for rehearsal and performance. Everything physically

goes away, and all that remains are photos and memories as students and teachers return

to life between shows. Paige articulates the grief of closing night and why she values

embracing that grief with the following,

> *When a show is over, it's over. You don't go back to it. Yes, you'll see people*
> *again, but all you have is the memories. You're never going to do that again. At*
> *least not in the same capacity as you just did. So, it's like taking those memories*

and being okay with moving on. And knowing that, "No, it's never going to be the
same again." And it's just something that theatre teaches you. – Paige

And though this type of loss is nothing like the grieving process of losing a loved one,

theatre students and teachers do grieve when a show closes. This type of grief is known

as a "nonfinite loss like a relational betrayal, personal injury, and relinquishment of life-

defining goals" (Neimeyer and Thompson 2014, 4). Nadine affirmed, "Students do

struggle with grief on a regular basis whether, from a friendship on the rocks, the family

is moving away from the only home they have known, or maybe they move constantly,

parents or other adults neglecting their needs and wants, or the loss of employment for a

parent can cause grief no matter how much the parents try to protect the child."

Nonfinite loss extends into the theatre world as well. In other words, loss of purpose and

place when a production closes can incite a grieving process for those involved in the

production. And just like the cast list, which goes up 3-6 times in a school year,

productions close as many times in a year, providing repeated loss. In my 18 years of

experience teaching drama, I witnessed many tears shed on closing night and not just by

the cast and crew.

In psychology, grieving is known as "a process of reaffirming or reconstructing a

world of meaning that has been challenged by loss" (Neimeyer and Thompson 2014, 4).

As the focus group talked, they did not have a clear idea, like Paige said, of how to teach

positive grieving. Still, they did talk about the end of show rituals like cast parties, taking

down the set together as a group, reflecting on the process after a show is over, signing

programs for each other, and talking about or planning the next production, which all

support a reaffirmation of meaning for drama students after a show closes. Nadine also

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offered some psychological wisdom, "Children want to know that you do care about them, and in my opinion, you become a real person instead of just the teacher. It helps in the long run showing them that life happens to everyone, and they are not alone." Cast parties and post-show reflections demonstrate the care Nadine spoke about and affirms the group's shared emotions. Speaking of the variety of positive and especially challenging intrinsic elements of high school theatre, Willy noted, "those moments--they're raw, and they're real. That's what makes us as theatre teachers more connected to these kids." Strong relationships invite opportunities for positive social and emotional development for teachers and students as they experience the real-world stress of putting on a production.

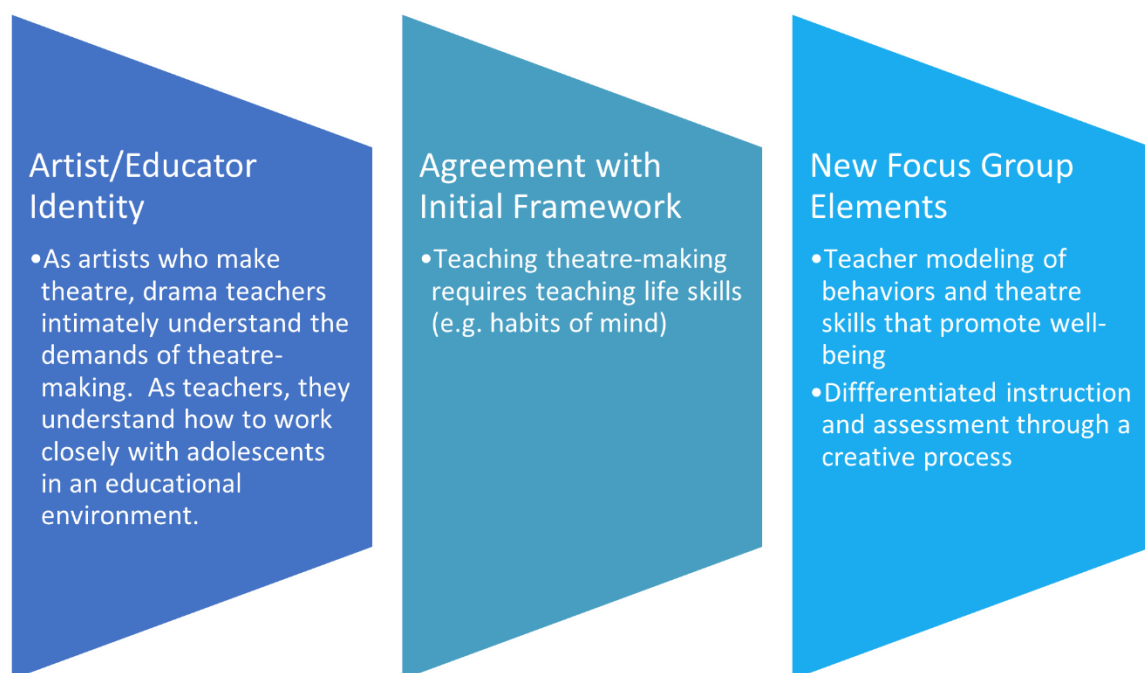**Drama Teacher Artist/Educator Identity**

The next explanation the focus group gave for how drama class promotes health and well-being overlaps the intrinsic elements of theatre to include the dual identity of drama teachers. They are both theatre artists and theatre educators in their work with students. The previous section expressed connections drama teachers have to the art of theatre because they are artists. This section continues to investigate drama teachers' role as artists and extends to their educator role in promoting health for students (see Figure 14). Because drama teachers are educators, they teach a wide range theatre-making skills and experience to students. They direct various theatrical genres, design lighting that emotionally enhances the production, and design lesson plans that develop acting skills for students. As artists who make theatre, drama teachers intimately understand the demands and expectations of theatre-making. As teachers, they also enjoy working

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closely with adolescents in an educational environment expecting cognitive development and preparation for higher education or career work. As a high school counselor listening to the focus group tell stories about their drama classroom experience, Kat summed up this dual identity by expressing how drama teachers do more than just teach.

"You Have More Than a Teaching Job Here." -Kat

During the second focus group session, she exclaimed, "I'm just speechless listening to all of you guys. You have more than a teaching job here." She compared drama teachers to "can openers," saying, "You guys are can openers, right? You open [students] up, and then you get whatever comes out." Through supporting performance work and student involvement, drama teachers invite students to grow cognitively, socially, and emotionally. Pushing students out of their comfort zones within a theatre-making process can be emotionally fraught. She continued, "I've been a therapist, right?

Figure 14: Findings on Artist/Educator Identity

Artist/Educator Identity
- As artists who make theatre, drama teachers intimately understand the demands of theatre-making. As teachers, they understand how to work closely with adolescents in an educational environment.

Agreement with Initial Framework
- Teaching theatre-making requires teaching life skills (e.g. habits of mind)

New Focus Group Elements
- Teacher modeling of behaviors and theatre skills that promote well-being
- Diffferentiated instruction and assessment through a creative process

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And you guys are really kind of-- whether you like it or not, you are therapists, right? And you can relate to moving these people along emotionally." Opening students up emotionally, inviting vulnerability and connection through shared stories and storytelling is something drama teachers do to support student success with theatre-making. Managing frustration, stress, and grief during a production also fall within the realm of drama teacher influence as both artists and teachers. Kat reminded the group of the necessary responsibility for opening a student up and for what they share because we encouraged that opening. As educators, the group affirmed her statements.

However, sometimes the most responsible way to support students through a challenging performance is to include school counselors and social worker in the process. The focus group spoke briefly about role-plays that drama students are often invited to participate in for school-based safety event. Monroe's students performed in an active shooter drill for teachers on campus, and both Clara and I had experience with a role-play depicting a drunk driving crash. Often presented around Homecoming or Prom, this role-play involves a crashed car, a firetruck, a police car, and an ambulance and take place on the football field with all those professionals. The scene is set as drunk driver accident having occurred and begins with a 911 call and the first responders driving onto the scene. Drama students are asked by school leadership to role-play the drunk driver, a passenger trapped in the car who must be removed with "the jaws of life," and another passenger who is killed and taken away in the ambulance in a body bag. While performances like this are not organized by the drama program, drama students are commonly asked to participate and must be supported through these intense roles. As a

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group, we felt that school counselors and social workers should be included to support

students in ways no drama teacher can for these moments. Clara tells about her

experience and the necessary intervention,

> *And so, I'm standing on the football field and one of our social workers comes up*
> *to me. And she said, […] "We will take care of your students."*
> *And I was like, "No, I've got this."*
> *And she's like, "No, no, you don't."*
> *And I was really lucky because, [the students] came back to the drama room at*
> *certain points, and they're just crying and they're weeping. And this whole thing*
> *was really intense. Then after the whole thing finished, they brought a counselor*
> *and a social worker to the drama room so that the students who participated*
> *could debrief. -Clara*

Considering Kat's statement, it is essential to note that drama teachers' and

therapists' work is not the same, though there may be similarities. While drama teachers

invite students to employ emotional identification and regulation to embody a character

authentically, therapists invite individuals to engage in drama therapy to work through a

life trauma. Though both roles' training is vastly different, the outcomes of engagement

with embodied emotional identification and regulation have some striking similarities and

responsibilities. Impacts like grief, rejection, and stress by their very nature can be

traumatizing just as quickly as they can be an opportunity for teachers to mentor students,

and drama teachers see themselves reacting to these elements as teachers and artists

combined.

"I Think it's Modeling."- Willy

Over and over again, the idea of modeling or teaching necessary theatre skills by

demonstration came up as a way to negotiate and balance both roles in various contexts

like social negotiation, emotional identification and regulation, and the development of

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specific theatre-making skills. Willy identified, "I think it's modeling." The others in the

group agreed with him. Monroe clarified, "That is absolutely key. Not that that's the only

factor. But it starts there." They identified teacher modeling of collaborative behavior as

a critical factor in students' ability to negotiate collaborative social relationships in drama

class, teacher modeling of emotions and emotional capacity, and teacher modeling of

theatre games, solo performances, and technical elements of production.

General educational research demonstrates "modeling as a powerful way to

influence students' reasoning skills, behaviors, and actions inside and outside of the

classroom" (Harbour et al. 2015, 7). While drama education research lacks specific

studies on teacher modeling, music education boasts a robust and extended analysis of

teacher modeling in music education practice and its impact on student learning and

behavior (Haston 2007; Dickey 1992). Although music and drama differ in many ways,

teacher modeling is a joint educational and artistic strategy in both art forms. Thus, a

brief examination of music education's research enhances this discussion. Dr. Shinichi

Suzuki founded a music education movement known as the Suzuki Method, which uses

listening, imitation, and repetition to teach instrumental music. Teacher modeling is the

core of the Suzuki Method as students learn both individually and in groups modeling a

teacher. Modeling invites implicit learning that extends beyond learning one skill in

isolation, thereby promoting creativity and flexibility.

> Teaching concepts with appropriate modeling and imitation allows students to
> learn naturally and intuitively. This pedagogical process teaches the concept
> before the theory, another sound educational approach. It also leads quite
> naturally into improvisation and composition, as the constant development of
> students' listening and evaluative skills affords opportunities for them to make
> creative decisions (Haston 2007, 29).

Suzuki taught using the concept "first character, then ability" (Suzuki and Suzuki 1983, 65) using modeling to teach "about the structure of a fairly complex stimulus environment without necessarily intending to do so, and in such a way that the resulting knowledge is difficult to express" (Haston 2007, 26). The focus group teachers also talked about modeling to implicitly teach social, emotional skills in their classrooms.

An example of modeling robust theatre engagement as an artist to promote student social and emotional skills came from Clara as she talked about the first production she directed. Though she explained that she "set the bar a little high," she also noted how those high expectations pushed her and the cast and crew to do incredible things. When the production ended, she said, "[The students] were all talking about how much doubt they felt when we embarked on this, and how much awe they felt when we actually completed it, and it was good." As an educator, Clara coached the students through this journey with her.

> *So, I was my first spring production, and the spring production is always the biggest one. I decided to do* Arabian Nights. *And I planned this amazingly huge set. And I had a friend print it out on CAD for me with a rake stage, archways, chiffon, and rented LED lights. It was incredibly optimistic for my first spring production as a drama teacher ever. And I remember one of the sophomores at the time, saying,*
> *"Well, this sounds like a lot of work. If it's going to fail, I guess it at least it'll fail spectacularly."*
> *I had choreographed dances. I had original music, like all of this stuff. But when we finished it, and we had the senior circle, they were all talking about how much doubt they felt when we embarked on this, and how much awe they felt when we actually completed it, and it was good. In the end, I said, "This just goes to show like you guys can do anything. You can do anything. Just go for it. And if you fail, fail spectacularly." -Clara*

The multimodal learning that goes on as a group of students work with an artist/teacher to grow through the context of a challenging production relates cognitively, emotionally, and socially to life skills and habits of mind.

While content knowledge is essential, students also benefit from competencies like problem-solving, working with others, and empathy. Habits of Mind is an education framework defined by educators Arthur L. Costa and Bena Kallick as "intelligent thinking behaviors characteristic of peak performers and are the indicators for academic, vocational and relational success" (Campbell 2006, 1). Habits of Mind include empathy, laughing at oneself and the world, managing fear, emotional awareness of oneself and others, appreciating wonder and awe, taking responsible risks, and managing impulsivity. Habits of Mind emphasize learning that includes and moves beyond the drama classroom. Educational theorists have noted that exercising Habits of Mind indicates some level of emotional intelligence, leading to increased self-esteem, social skills, and life satisfaction (Campbell 2006, 10). Listening to the focus group conversation, the drama teachers tended to talk about their class as building life-skills as the more in-depth focus of what they teach. Paige summed up her view of teaching life skills like this, "Theatre class teaches you how to be a human. Like, we teach you those skills." Clearly, there is no such class as a human class, and the students are already human.

However, the idea that drama class is an extension and a magnification of what it is to think, feel, and relate as a human, reveals fascinating insights into the role the drama teachers see themselves playing in the lives of the students they teach. Listening to the group talk about teaching drama classes and working on performances with students, it

became clear that this dual identity inspired them to see their work as encouraging young

artists to make theatre and then extending those skills beyond the classroom into life.

Paige continued her explanation, "We're just being humans, and you're just teaching

humans how to be more human. And that's different from doing a science lab. And

making mistakes as a human is a lot more-- is a lot deeper than mixing the wrong

chemicals together. The subject is that vulnerable. You're playing people." With drama

teachers teaching students to embody other people, they rely on relationships.

As educators, drama teachers utilize differentiated instruction as a naturally

embedded educational strategy in their classrooms. Differentiated instruction refers to

meeting a student where they are at and teaching them from there. Though Paige refers to

differentiation as equity because a major tenant of this instructional practice is how

equity and inclusion, she identifies the theoretical model of differentiated instruction in a

larger sense. As a flexible and individualized model, differentiation can be challenging

to implement; however, Paige noted how "easy" it is to do in theatre.

> *The equity of teaching is so easy in theatre because-- if there's one student that just won't get up and perform-- the second they do, that's such a battle they had. And some students who, from day one, they're good--we can constantly push them to be even better than that. And it's really easy to find the student at whatever level they are and to make them better. And I think that the subject of theatre allows us to do that because it's so flexible. -Paige*
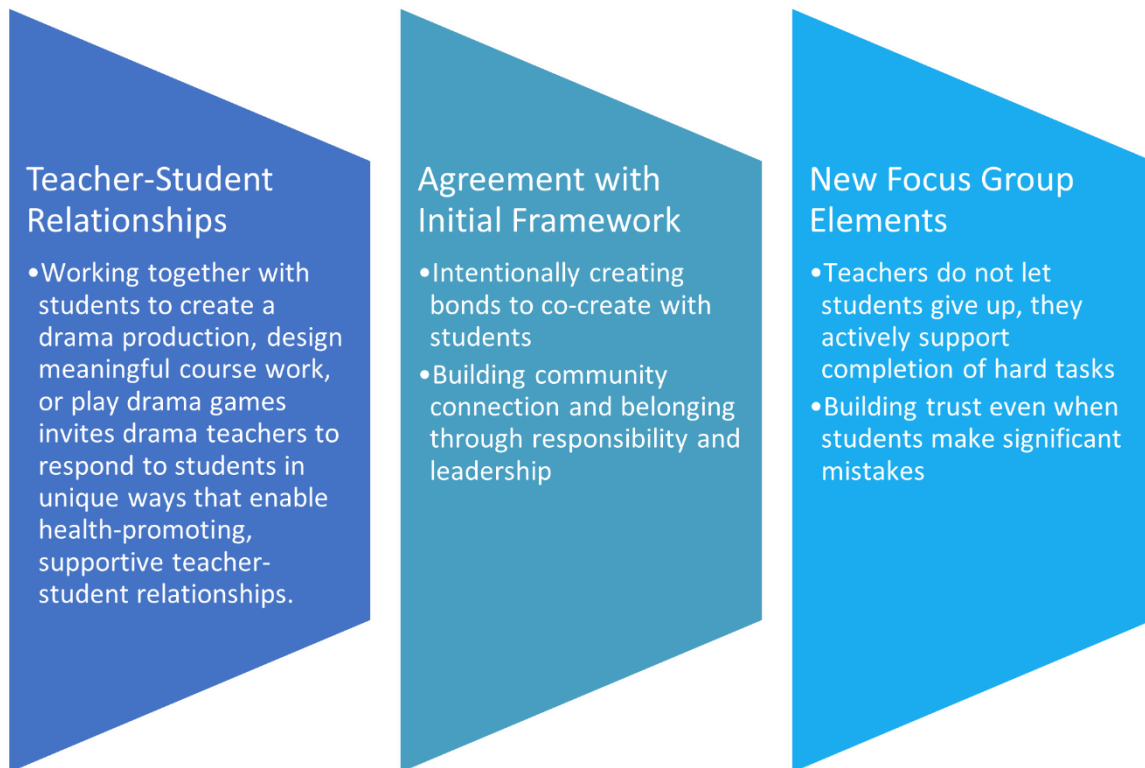
Drama teachers see themselves as artists and educators, and they see the work they do

extending beyond the classroom. Drama teachers in the focus group recognize how they

encourage students' vulnerability and take active steps to support them. The following

two sections, teacher-student relationships and the environment of high school drama,

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explain in more detail the processes the drama teachers use to promote student health in their drama programs.

Teacher-Students Relationships in High School Drama

In the theatre and health framework of my personal experience, I pointed out that the teacher's intentions make a considerable difference in creating supportive relationships with students. Any public-school teacher can take active steps to support and connect in their relationships with students or choose a more distant didactic approach. Though the group only told eight stories about teacher-student relationships, they talked at length about what they believe to be supportive teacher-student relationships and what they value about the process of building those relationships in drama (see Figure 15). They noted the importance of intentions, and they focused on

Figure 15: Finding on Teacher-Student Relationships

Teacher-Student Relationships
- Working together with students to create a drama production, design meaningful course work, or play drama games invites drama teachers to respond to students in unique ways that enable health-promoting, supportive teacher-student relationships.

Agreement with Initial Framework
- Intentionally creating bonds to co-create with students
- Building community connection and belonging through responsibility and leadership

New Focus Group Elements
- Teachers do not let students give up, they actively support completion of hard tasks
- Building trust even when students make significant mistakes

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intentions that reflect the unique co-creative process outlined by Neva Boyd as a catalyst

for supportive relationships. Working together with students to create a drama

production, design meaningful course work, or play drama games invites teachers to

respond to students in unique ways that enable health-promoting, supportive teacher-

student relationships.

I'm Not Just Gonna Tell You How to do it and Then Sit Back and Watch You. I'm Going

to Participate in it Too. – Monroe

The group values being accessible to their students and making time for

relationship building activities in class. Willy shared a relationship-building activity he

uses to start the year by "putting myself out there" for all his classes by allowing his

students time in class to ask him anything. There are not many questions he will not

answer, but his middle name is one. He identified openness with his students coupled

with healthy boundaries as a way to connect. He noted the "awesome conversations" that

he has that often get "really serious." He specifically makes himself available to students

on a personal, relatable, and defined level to strengthen relationships. Monroe agreed that

intentional accessibility to the teacher starts the very first day of class, saying, "you really

have to create that bond, that sense of ensemble from day one."

As an example of supportive teacher-student relationships, Paige shared this story

where she uses a combination of empathy, teacher presence, and high expectations to

support her students as they performed monologues for the first time.

> *I don't let them give up. If they're too scared to perform, they are not allowed to*
> *perform for me before school, after school at lunch, with just a few people.*
> *They're not allowed to. I do monologues first. And inevitably, every class, there's*
> *someone who gets up there, they're crying, and I don't let them sit down. I walk up*

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there with them. And sometimes I hold their hand if they let me. Like I ask first. Otherwise, I just stand there. And we get through the thing together. And I tell them, "You don't have to be alone. We're all doing this together." And that idea that I'm not alone, at my most vulnerable, is something that helps them out a lot. And telling them that it's okay that you're crying, and it's okay that you're scared-- all of that's good. But you still have something to do. So, be scared and also do it. I don't give up on them. So, they will stand there, and they will cry. And they will shake through the whole thing. And then afterward, they get applause, and people tell them how brave they are. And I feel like that builds relationships. And others can observe it too. So, they see that I care. And I feel like that helps them a whole lot. -Paige

Paige chose to join her students on stage when they struggled with stage fright and insecurity. She did not let them give up and quit even though they struggle. Instead, she performs with them. Others in the focus group talked about how co-creating is a potent relationship activator. After hearing Paige's story, Nadine shared, "Once you build that with them, they'll do anything you want. They'll try as hard as they can." And Clara agreed, "Yes, even with struggles and adversity, we're still able to create this kind of community, where students feel safe enough to bust out a guitar and start singing in front of their peers just randomly." Taking the time to build strong relationships intentionally enhances students' ability to be brave, take responsible risks, and be vulnerable in drama work.

In drama, you put [students] in vulnerable situations, so you got to push them a little bit there, you know, along the way, but yet, you have to be there for them to be their cheerleader, to be almost willing to hold their hand or stand beside them, but to help them get through it and to make them you know, come out the other side. And then the beauty is, and this to me is where the resilience comes in, they get connected with themselves, and then they're able to get connected with other people. And that's where we get our strength -Kat

Intentionally stretching students with drama curriculum and then responsibly supporting them in that process to build a student's sense of connectedness and personal strength is

another intention of supportive teacher-student relationships in drama. Extending the

conversation, Clara observed that drama teachers fill a more accessible role for their

students because,

> *They don't see us as lecturers right from the very beginning. We're not teaching that kind of topic where students are an empty vessel that needs to be filled, and I'm going to fill you with the information. The whole thing is coming from the students. And so that kind of opens the ability to have that sort of relationship with them, where they think we see them as equals. We do see them as equal in value creatively to us. Because when we work with our students, we work as a team. So, it makes that relationship building between teacher and student a little bit easier, because I think maybe we're a little bit less condescending. -Clara*

An example of a less condescending approach to a student relationship shared by Paige

focuses on classroom management and discipline. Often discipline is punitive, as the

student in this story talks about receiving in other classes. Still, because Paige sees the

student as a valuable member of her team, she responds to him in a much less

condescending way. She gets an unexpected response from the student resulting in a

more supportive and positive teacher-student relationship.

> *I have bathrooms and water in my theatre, so they never have to leave. But this student, he was acting up, he was getting up wandering around, and I said, "Can you sit down? We need to do this thing." And he-- we get a little heated. He gets a little raised voice, and he goes to grab his backpack, and I said, "Where are you going? What are you doing?" He's like, "This is it. You're kicking me out, right?" And I said, "No, let's go talk." And I pulled him aside to talk to him. And he said, "Well, that's it. That's what happens. You get mad at me, we yell at each other, and then you kick me out." And I said, "Something's going on. Can you please tell me what's happening with you?" And I said, "I don't want you to leave. I want you to stay here and be with us. And I'm sorry that I made you feel that way. I didn't mean to." And he finally breaks down and tells me that he witnessed a car accident that he watched the person die, like from the car accident. And he's been having nightmares. So, he can't sleep at night. And he hasn't been able to talk to anyone-- he doesn't want to because he didn't know who to talk to about it. And I just recognized that he was acting different, which I think is-- in acting, you're more perceptive to when someone's off. It's not just that they're acting up. There's something going on with them. So, ever since-- after*

that, whenever he had a problem, he stayed after, and he told me about his issues,
just to vent, just so he could have someone to talk to. And it was really nice. I just
asked him, and he was able to tell me. -Paige

Drama class teacher-student relationships focus around working with the students and

maintaining supportive relationships where the students are necessary and valued in the

work of the class or the production instead of vessels that need to be filled with

information.

"It's Not Just Your Show. It's Our Show." -Paige

Co-creation in drama class is common, and when I asked why the focus group

thought co-creating with students was so valuable, Willy shared the following:

> *I think it stems from responsibility. We're in the theatre. You can't do a show with*
> *one person. I don't bring in a lot of adults to help. We do it ourselves. We build,*
> *we create--design; I don't use a lot of parents. I just don't believe in that. That's*
> *my philosophy. And so, I build relationships with that. Whereas, like Monroe was*
> *saying, with football coaches, they're not out there playing the game with them.*
> *I'm playing the game with them literally, where we're working, we're painting,*
> *we're building, we're creating. We are there till two in the morning, things like*
> *that. We're putting sweat and time in to get this stuff done. We're putting*
> *ourselves out there, and these relationships we have 20-30 years later with our*
> *teachers, and with kids that I've had, and all this stuff. I mean, that's where it's*
> *coming from. -Willy*

Monroe highlighted the moment in rehearsal when he shifts leadership from himself as

director to the students and stage manager as a moment of social responsibility and trust

in the relationship he has with them, saying,

> *I remind them in the first dress rehearsal, in the notes that I'm giving them,*
> *"Hey, remember this is your show. At this point, this is not my show. I've helped*
> *lead us here. But now it's the stage manager's show over there. It is you guys up*
> *on that stage. I am not up there with you to do anything further. And you should*
> *be able to handle anything that happens on that stage." – Monroe*

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Drama teachers and drama students need to trust each other to make this social

negotiation happen. In live theatre performance, trusting the students invites them to

navigate socially positively, but when they do not, that is a decisive social negotiation

learning moment. Monroe brought up the fact that sometimes the students save the show,

as in the case of the story I told them about the student who shot the stage pistol in the

wing and saved *Treasure Island*, but what about the times when they use their power to

prank and do something no one has rehearsed for the sake of a laugh. This insightful

comment elicited stories focused on moments when student self-determined discipline

went awry and how the teachers responded.

> *We do a variety show at the beginning of the year. And it's the only time that they*
> *can do something from film or TV. So, I had students who wanted to do a scene*
> *from Blazing Saddles. And the scene from Blazing Saddles was when they're*
> *playing chess. And they do so well with it. They decided to enhance it a little bit*
> *more that night. And they decided to make it very homoerotic, which was not very*
> *fun for me, because they were doing very suggestive things on stage and to each*
> *other. And afterward, I had to do like a little questionnaire with my*
> *administration as to why I decided to do that. And I had to pull the boys aside and*
> *say, "It is not **your** show. It's **our** show. You thought it was gonna be so funny, but*
> *you have no idea. You had no idea everything that I had to do-- the parents, I had*
> *to apologize to the administration, that I had to write something up in paper to*
> *justify myself. Every choice that you make will affect someone else." I teach it as*
> *a life lesson that any choice that you make affects another person. -Paige*

Paige used this experience as a teaching moment and continues to use it as a teaching

moment for students today to model unsupportive choices in a production and how they

impact the entire production. Other stories were told of "nightmare" moments when

students elected to change a performance that ended in disaster. The discussion also

centered on how these stories become model moments used for instruction in later years.

Teacher modeling of social navigation through the day-to-day interactions with students

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and stories of experience facilitate supportive teacher-student relationships for the teachers in the focus group.   These teachers invite all students to be a part of their drama program and then trust them to navigate social situations positively for the whole group. And when they do not, the teachers take the time to discuss and reflect on improvements with students enabled by the strong relationships and trust that has been built. Drama teachers demand much from their students because they co-create theatre together. They do not let students quit; they expect them to be responsible for the show and treat them like creative equals. Drama teachers guide students to make more supportive choices when they make mistakes. The process of intentionally building and maintaining supportive teacher-student relationships enhances student well-being.

The Environment of High School Drama

During the four focus group sessions, the topic of "safe space" came up repeatedly in the stories shared and the comments made. Teachers described the environment they created with their students as needing to be a "safe space." The process of creating a "safe" physical, social, emotional, and relational environment with students relates to the health-promoting capacities of high school drama (see Figure 16).

"Safe space" refers to a place that feels physically safe, where bodily harm is not imminent, and can also represent a metaphorical definition of a space where every person can express themselves individually. But in both cases, the term "safe space" alludes to an area devoid of harm or injury. Though frequently cited by researchers and educators investigating teaching and classroom learning environments, "safe space" is not a term

found in reference books on education. Critical inquiries into the word "safe space" argue that safe space is a metaphor that represents "not a way of doing teaching; it is a way of talking about teaching" (Boostrom 1998, 397). By nature, classroom spaces inspire critical reflection and learning from failure, neither of which is metaphorically "safe." Robert Boostrom, in his article, *'Safe spaces': Reflections on an educational metaphor*, addresses the idea that "safe spaces" are how teachers talk about teaching, not the way they teach. "It's one thing to say that students should not be laughed at for posing a question or for offering a wrong answer. It's another to say that students must never be conscious of their ignorance," and continues, "It's one thing to say that students should be capable of self-revelation. It's another to say that they must always like what they see revealed" (Boostrom p 405). Critical reflection, taking responsible risks, individuality, managing fear and impulsivity, and imagination help define the environment that occupies this drama class space of safety and risk combined.

Figure 16: Findings on the Environment of High School Drama

Environment of High School Drama
- The process of creating a "safe" physical, social, emotional, and relational environment with students that relates to the health-promoting capacities of high school drama.

Agreement with Initial Framework
- An environment that is supportive and "safe" and also invites responsible risk taking

New Focus Group Elements
- Inclusive environment with a place for everyone
- Setting and maintaining high expectations

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Part of the Success of Taking Those Risks is to Create a Very Safe Environment. -Monroe

Willy told a humorous memory to demonstrate how his class environment is a safe space. Risk and challenge are combined in the discussion of safe space.

> *One of my groups two years ago-- we had a 10-minute play. And we had some really wacky kids in that group, just really like, out there. One group wrote about a cactus having an affair with people. And the whole premise was these plays were going to get produced and performed in front of their parents at the end of the year. Well, this show was never gonna get performed. But I didn't tell them that. They had such an amazing time creating it and doing it. One of the girls in the group wrote a really nice letter for an award for me. And she mentioned this story where this room was safe enough for her to write a play about a cactus having a relationship with people. And that stuck with me -Willy*

As I listened to multiple stories like this and the group began to dig deeper into the process of creating safe space, we found the idea of "safe space" is two different and opposite environments necessary to make theatre art. The first "safe space" environment aligns with a supportive, creative environment where structure and relational agreements build trust between participants and create places and networks of resort, comfort, and confidence to return to when needed. The group talked about this in terms of training up the new students at the beginning of the year through ensemble-building games, activities, and rules. Willy noted, "When I get those green freshmen, sophomore, juniors, and seniors in there. It's teaching them that, you know what, this is a safe environment. And it takes a semester or two semesters to show that it's a safe environment." Building a foundation of trust around what is expected from students and how the teacher will support them is part of classroom management and ensemble building and many drama games.

Paige extended the view of what drama games accomplish to include elements of belonging despite frustration by saying, "When you play drama games, you do not win or lose, you're not out of it. And I think that leads to doing a show as well. Like, if you audition for the part that you want, you don't get it, you fail, but there's still a place for you. That you didn't get what you want, but you still have a place in this class." This foundation of support and trust takes time to build. Drama teachers make the time to tell students that they will be respected and accepted and to show them over weeks and months of experience. This foundation is about student perceptions of physical and emotional safety. For example, if a student knows that their teacher will listen to and honor their concerns, they will seek help from that teacher. Or if there are rules in place in the classroom about keeping fire exits clear, the student can be proactive about maintaining clear exits for everyone. This trust requires more than just a list of rules on the wall but also an active demonstration of this support in the classroom daily.

The second and opposite "safe space" environment reflected in the teacher's comments refers to a space of creativity and pushing boundaries to create what is possible. A creative space reflects a fundamental disregard for safety, as in comfort, and instead enlivens acts that take risks, are vulnerable, and full of imagination. This is a space where teachers expect students to attempt performances that frighten them and push them to do something new. This is a space where teachers invite students to fail and ask them to get up and try again. This "safe space" does not reflect the typical notions of safety but instead reflects safety in the metaphor of students feeling safe enough to push boundaries and not give up. Though both of these ideas seem to be opposing ways of

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thinking of "safe space," they are actually drama class Habits of Mind and Social-Emotional Learning that drama teachers use simultaneously and overtime to create an environment that supports students in their journey of vulnerability and artmaking.

But You'll See Them Taking Those Responsible Risks. You'll See Their Imagination Get

Bigger and Bigger. -Monroe

As the group spoke of the value they place on designing a safe classroom space, they spoke of pushing the students to be vulnerable, and demonstrating the duality of safe space while supporting student efforts. Willy said, "In the classroom, we talk about creativity, and it's letting [students] pick their path, but knowing that I'm always the safe person, or my room is the safe [place]. It's not like an English class, where that may be frowned on. They may be pulled into a guidance counselor's office and say, 'Hey, you know, we need to have a chat here.'" Monroe extended these ideas noting the challenge of helping students use imagination to transform not only themselves as they perform but the space itself. "One of the hardest things to teach [students], especially the new ones, is to visualize the space like a magic school bus idea in the sense that it can transform into anything in the entire world. There are no wrong answers. I say they must be school-appropriate answers. But it can go into anything. It can turn into any room. It can be outside. It can be inside. And that takes a long time for them to wrap their minds around." As we talked, the teachers offered a few assignments designed to create a space where students felt they could responsibly take risks. Paige offered the following playwriting exercise:

> *One of the more successful exercises for me is the playwriting unit that we do. I call it musical scripts where they have to write a 10-minute play, but they have to*

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write it for another group to perform. So, the scripts all rotate, and then they get somebody else's script that they read for the first time. And they're like, Whoa, what?! It's really funny to see what comes out of their minds onto paper and then translates into a live storytelling activity. -Paige

Another assignment idea included having the students choose a cartoon character they have enjoyed since childhood and expanding that story off into another direction, time, or place. This assignment invites students' cognitive flexibility and imagination as they take a character they know in an unknown direction. Often students surprise and delight themselves and others with what they create, building an environment of trust and support.

"I Have a Place for You." -Paige

They discussed designing their drama classroom environment to be a welcoming community, and about the wide variety of students who expressed feelings of belonging in drama. From foreign exchange students performing in another language, to students on the autism spectrum performing adaptive theatre, to students confronting the challenges of gender transitioning, stories were shared about how the teachers modeled social support and positive social interaction. Paige examined teaching improv and ensemble skills and how the themes present in those activities contribute to positive social attitudes of acceptance and community in her classroom.

Improv is always the first thing I do to get them up and more comfortable. I go through all the rules of improv, and I think if you set that precedent. It's the "Yes…and," it's the "you never deny another person's reality." I mean, you know, all these "first thought best thought," you know, like, all these rules, then they keep it the whole year. -Paige

"Yes…and" is an improvisational game where acting partners build a moment from anything offered by the other person responding "Yes! And…" and moving the moment

forward with their own idea. Accepting anything and everything an acting partner offers

is a foundational element in improvisation. In high school theatre, students are taught

idioms like "never deny another person's reality" and "first thought, best thought" to

encourage them to trust their impulses and to support the acting impulses of scene

partners. These strength-based foundational improvisational approaches support

uniqueness, creativity, and autonomy in group work. They extend to all theatre forms and

are often used in rehearsal. According to the focus group, these social attitudes implicitly

encourage positive social interaction, and their teacher modeling supports building a safe

environment.

"I Don't Set Limitations; I Set Expectations."-Willy

Five years ago, Willy started an adaptive theatre program at his school for

neurodiverse students on the autism spectrum. He began this program for his son, and

with its overwhelming success, he continues today. Producing a summer musical each

year with about 45 students, he talked about how his attitude toward the students helped

him model positive methods for working with and supporting special needs students with

this same improvisational strength-based approach.

> *"I don't set limitations; I set expectations." And that's the phrase, that's what we use throughout our entire time. Because when I first started this musical program, we did* Winnie the Pooh*. And I told all the parents I go, "Your kids are going to memorize all the dialogue and songs." And they all looked at me, they go, "The hell they are." I go, "No, they will." And so, I said, "I'm not setting limitations; I'm setting expectations." I said, "This is where I want to get them to. And if they only get 95% awesome, that's great. But if you don't set the expectation, then they're gonna be 50%." -Willy*

Setting an environment of high expectations and then modeling behavior that

supports those expectations all serve to create a supportive environment where students

can succeed. Modeling research identifies, "teacher modeling also positively affects the perceived importance of a task" (Harbour et al. 2015, 7). Lifting an example of prosocial behavior to an expectation of prosocial behavior through modeling has guided Willy's practice with his students. Willy talked about using modeling to teach the neurotypical student helpers from his drama program to socially support their fellow actors. Like Paige, he uses a strength-based improvisational approach focused on "never deny another person's reality." Here Willy uses a story to model supportive reactions to uncomfortable situations for his students.

> *One of the stories I tell every kid that works with me. I said things can happen. Anything is possible, and you just go with it. And when I say that I tell them that one of the boys one year, he pooped his pants, and it fell onto the stage. And you can't make a big deal about it. You move on. Because then, if you do that, you're going to make a scene for them. And that's not what they want. You just move on with it. And that's what I've trained a lot of my kids is that when things happen, an outburst or something that may not go their way, go on with it and keep moving. - Willy*

The focus group talked about the value of setting boundaries and making space at the same time. Kat spoke about the reality of an outburst happening in class or on stage and not ignoring or pretending the outburst did not occur, but also not going on and on about it. Simple acceptance of a behavioral reality and then moving on makes space for various behaviors instead of punishing them.

"I'm Gonna Respect and Accept Anybody into my Room." -Willy

Creating a safe environment with and for students means doing so for all students. The focus group told stories about inclusive teaching practice and learning to improve that practice. Here Monroe shares a story from his classroom.

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And so, I had one parent, one dad, at the end of my first year at the school, come up and just privately say,
"Hey, I really appreciate how accepting you were of Andy this year. It was a tough transition. We feel good about, and he does too, about who he is. And I'm glad that you just didn't blink an eye. It was just, "Oh, okay. That's your name. That's your pronoun. Awesome." -Monroe

They talked frankly about learning to navigate social relationships with students and offered moments of failure as key to their development and growth in social navigation. Willy offered this heart-breaking story of a misstep in a 504 meeting. (A 504 meeting is for students who do not qualify for Special Education but still require some accommodation to their learning environment, and a meeting would include parents, guardians, teachers, and counselors.)

I was at a 504 meeting. And I sat down, and the young lady wanted me to call-- to call him Jasper. And that's how I referred to him in the meeting. Mom had no idea. And I totally outed this whole situation and didn't know it. Yeah, it was the first time that happened to me. And I felt horrible. Like I went home, I was in tears. For a lot of these kids, you may be the only one that knows--that they're comfortable with. And this happened last year, and I still feel awful. -Willy

Kat expressed the challenges felt by students who feel safe to express gender identity and preference at school but not at home. She cited the "different stages and phases" of acceptance in both students and parents, noting, "It's really a tricky walk to respect the stage and phase where everybody's at, but still address the realities." Everyone in the focus group mentioned knowing a student in this situation and expressed how they value creating a space where students "never deny another person's reality" as a means of social negotiation modeled by the teachers. Paige extended the social negotiation into the realm of ability and changed her classroom practice in this story.

I have one student that was Andrew when I met him, but she goes by Jessica now. But she was also in a motorized chair. And I realized that my "teacher speak"

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*had a lot of like, "Can we **walk** down over here? Can everyone **walk** to the side of the stage?" And I just kind of took that for granted. So, then I had to change the way that I did instruction. -Paige*

While much of the conversation in the focus group centered around the work teachers do to create a safe environment, students also create and maintain this environment due to the co-creative theatre-making process.

"I've Seen the Collective Come Together." Monroe Addams

The idea that the "show must go on" is widely used in theatre at every level, reminding everyone involved to work together for the optimal outcome. Every role matters in a production, and everyone must work together to make that production happen. In high school theatre, a great deal of responsibility and trust is placed on the students in production work and building and maintaining the drama program for the entire campus. Willy added his insight about how his drama student collective works together to maintain a positive community stating, "There are things that happen in my room that I don't know happened, that they [the students] self-policed, and they have done it themselves, and they're not jerks about it." The students regulating behavior in a drama program or class for each other hearkens back to Neva Boyd's self-determined discipline. Though Boyd speaks about gameplay, the focus group extended this idea to the rules of a classroom and program where students take ownership. Boyd stated, "a child gains more by self-determined discipline to the rules of the game than they do by mere appeals to sportsmanship or conformity" (Boyd 1971, 50). Peers leading and regulating peers in a production, in a classroom, and in a drama program at a public

school extend the notion of building capacity for social negotiation well beyond the confines of a single creative collaboration, as I highlighted in my framework.

Paige brought up performance feedback and critique, a drama curriculum staple, as another strategy linked to self-determined discipline. She teaches her students to give peer feedback using what she calls "refining and reinforcing comments." First, the students provide refining feedback to improve the performance, and then they offer reinforcing comments to celebrate and bear witness to success. She highlighted the power of these comments by students for students saying, "and hearing that from me doesn't mean as much as hearing it from your peers." When students engage in self-determined discipline and witness their peers' success and mistakes, they learn to support each other in meaningful ways. Boyd notes, "By following the rules of the game, the child can then begin to extend and make changes to the rules with the group's approval as all create the game together." Again, Boyd speaks of a game, and the teachers in the focus group talked about drama class behaviors. Still, the fundamental ability to alter the system remains the same in this instance.

While my framework focused on how student collaboration builds social capacity, the focus group discussion is a more expansive teacher's eye view of the whole classroom's impact on the social environment centering on the teacher. As I listened to the communal talk, I recognized the broad topic of classroom "community." As in, "community that fosters a sense of belonging, trust, and safety" that invites "inclusion, collaboration, and empowerment in education" (Mreiwed, Carter, and Shabtay 2017, 44). The process of co-creating a safe, supportive environment for students making theatre

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was intentional for these teachers. As noted in educational research, "A classroom community is also intentional and dependent on the ongoing active contribution of its students and teachers. How they co-construct learning as a cohesive, respectful, safe, open, and interactive place is what may lead to the fostering of a warm, yet challenging experience for all involved" (Smith-Gilman 2020, 25). The teachers in the focus group recognize the importance of co-creating a supportive, "safe" environment that supports student health and well-being.

Conclusion

As we talked, Kat observed the similarities among drama teacher strategies and modeling techniques, saying, "It's like, wow, you guys are all speaking the same language. How did you do that?" And everyone started talking about community and classroom environment as necessary to theatre education practice. This kind of talk reminded me how similar drama teacher practice could be because we are all responding to and navigating the time and context of high school, the students taking our classes, the intrinsic elements of high school theatre, our drama teacher artist/educator identity, and the environment and relationships we seek to create to support high-quality theatre-making and health promotion for our students. The focus group did not question that health promotion happens in high school drama programs. Instead, they used lived experience to explain how and why well-being occurred, notably how they thought they designed student flourishing. All the original elements of my framework based on my experience and arts are health research are present in these findings but in a more layered, multimodal way that represents more clearly the world of high school drama.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

My research question centers on teacher experience to point out how high school drama class promotes student flourishing. Using qualitative data gathered through narrative inquiry methods, I scrutinize how drama teachers (including myself) identify positive student psychological, social, and emotional health promotion in teaching practice and high school curriculum. Inviting classroom teachers to share lived experience is an ethical way to center the expert's voice as both educator and theatre artist in revealing the complex, layered contextual world of high school drama. I analyze the intersection of health and well-being and high school theatre-making based on teacher practices to determine mechanisms of quality theatre teaching practice that enable health promotion for students.

Summary of Findings

This study answers the research question in two ways; first, I autobiographically investigate my years of teaching practice and layer that with theatre and health research to recognize ridges between the two disciplines that build a framework of drama teaching practice that is health-promoting. And then, I interrogate the framework in focus group sessions with other high school drama teachers, a high school counselor, and a psychologist. According to academic literature, theatre and well-being research appears to fall into three main categories cognitive (e.g., memory, language), social (e.g., community, belonging), and emotional (e.g., self-oriented, emotions, self-esteem). As I applied this lens to my memories of health promotion moments shared with me by

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students, the cognitive research category did not connect to flourishing as robustly as the social and emotional research. However, I identified four connections that form a framework for how I experienced health promotion in high school drama that aligned with current research. They are:

1. Supportive teacher-student relationships that stem from a co-creative process
2. Drama class habits of mind that create an environment of play
3. Embodied storytelling that enables emotional identification and regulation
4. Building capacity to negotiate social relationships through creative collaboration

Because my framework materialized with a focus arts and health literature, it tends toward a reductionistic view instead of the complex, layered experience high school drama is in life. Of the four elements I identified, building social capacity fits into the social research and embodied storytelling connects to research on emotions. Teacher-student relationships are both social and emotional, especially in an educational context. And drama class habits of mind relate to the art form components in a high school context that promotes well-being. The arts and health research supports in evidence-based ways the effectiveness of each element in the framework. While robust and grounded in lived experience and research, this framework replaced theatre education's complexity with a separate, more simplified set of phenomena. Therefore, the focus group conversations interrogating and extending this framework reinvigorated theatre education's layered complexity as it promotes health and well-being.
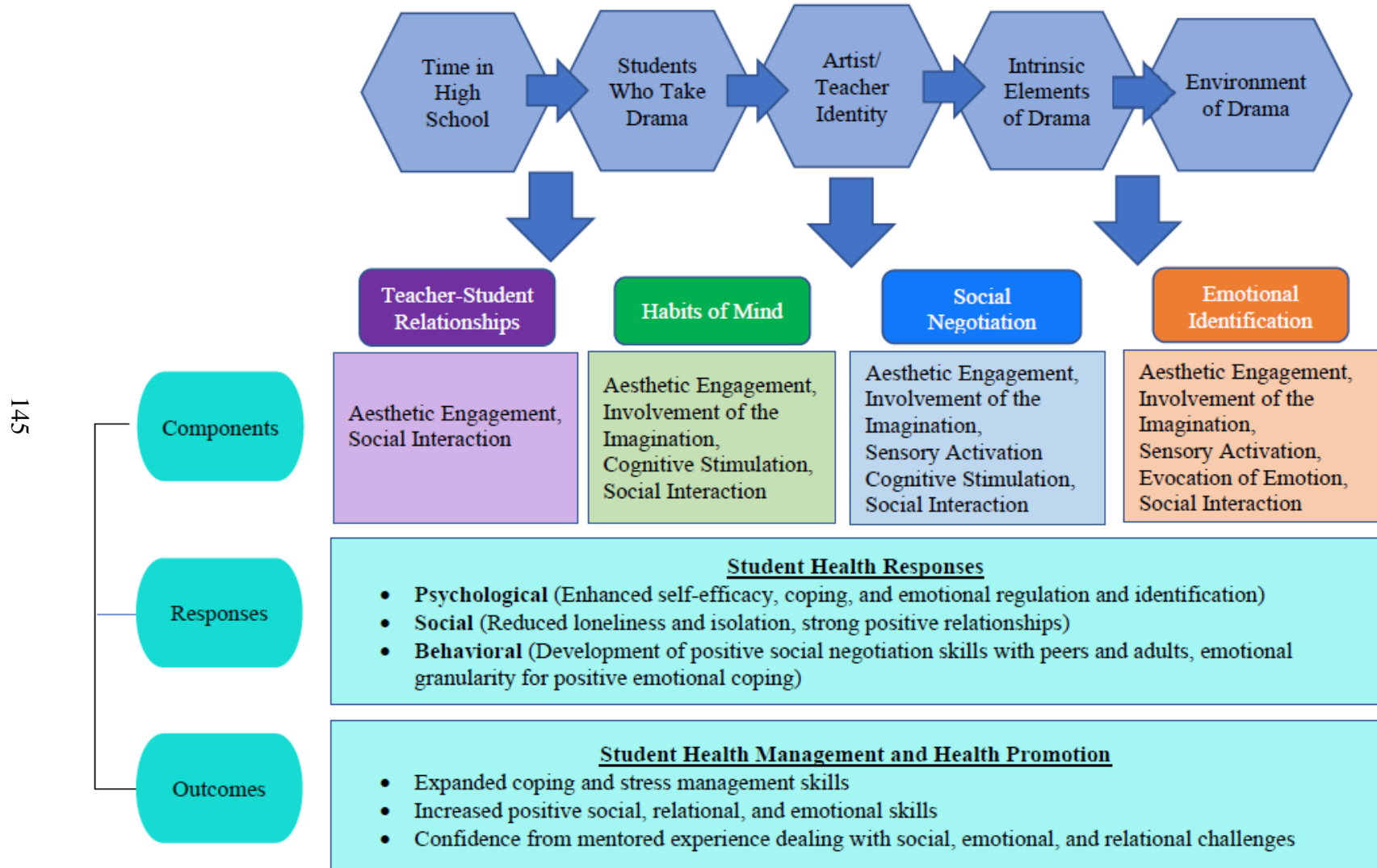
Though I was particularly interested in how the six members of the focus group might interrogate or contradict the framework, I was surprised to find that they did not do

so, even when invited. Instead, they universally agreed that each element of my framework did identify ways that high school drama participation positively impacts health and well-being. They agreed with theatre education researcher Laura McCammon who asserted that high school speech and drama participation "not only influence but even accelerate adolescent development and provide residual, positive, lifelong impacts" (McCammon et al. 2012, 5). The focus group did not question that psychological, social, and emotional health promotion happens in high school drama or that the art form and the teacher actively promote well-being. Instead, they explained how health promotion happened in their drama programs. The focus group stories and conversation served to restructure my framework into the complex, layered theatre education experience. The discussion explained how drama teachers promote student health and well-being and the teacher's perspective of the preconditions for promoting well-being in their programs (see Figure 17). The group specifically identified,

- the time and context of high school,

- the students taking drama classes,

- the intrinsic elements of high school theatre,

- their drama teacher artist/educator identity,

- and the drama environment and relationships they designed and led.

Each element listed is an explanation for how and why health promotion happens in drama class. Each aspect of the framework I developed is enhanced in multimodal ways by the components of the restructured and extended findings of the focus group discussions covered in detail below.

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Figure 17: Components, Responses, and Outcomes Including Focus Group Findings

Time in High School → **Students Who Take Drama** → **Artist/ Teacher Identity** → **Intrinsic Elements of Drama** → **Environment of Drama**

Components

Teacher-Student Relationships

Aesthetic Engagement, Social Interaction

Habits of Mind

Aesthetic Engagement, Involvement of the Imagination, Cognitive Stimulation, Social Interaction

Social Negotiation

Aesthetic Engagement, Involvement of the Imagination, Sensory Activation Cognitive Stimulation, Social Interaction

Emotional Identification

Aesthetic Engagement, Involvement of the Imagination, Sensory Activation, Evocation of Emotion, Social Interaction

Responses

Student Health Responses
- **Psychological** (Enhanced self-efficacy, coping, and emotional regulation and identification)
- **Social** (Reduced loneliness and isolation, strong positive relationships)
- **Behavioral** (Development of positive social negotiation skills with peers and adults, emotional granularity for positive emotional coping)

Outcomes

Student Health Management and Health Promotion
- Expanded coping and stress management skills
- Increased positive social, relational, and emotional skills
- Confidence from mentored experience dealing with social, emotional, and relational challenges

Time in the Context of High School

High school theatre is a learning environment, not a professional theatre. Teachers

work with groups of 30-200 students in classrooms and on stages making theatre

together.   High school drama is participatory, expecting students to be actively engaged

in creating art with others. Drama students may spend up to four years in drama class in

the same place with the same teacher and many of the same peers. Drama students also

spend time after school in rehearsal, on a club trip, touring shows, and working in the

auditorium. Time in drama operates more flexibly than the rest of high school. It

promotes student well-being by providing a stable community of belonging and intense

repeated engagement with art and people. Added to that are intentional relationships

expected to last for years, not semesters, and experiences of enjoyment and concentrated

engagement through "flow." All of these contribute to social and emotional development

and flourishing.

Students Who Take Drama

Students navigate the formative years of their lives during high school. As such, they

deal with social insecurities, shyness, low self-esteem, feeling like they do not belong,

and challenges at home (e.g., abuse and neglect). Drama class adds performance

pressures, particularly when a student may not want to take the course. To support

students in this precarious position, drama teachers encourage them to embrace

uncomfortable and challenging theatre-making moments and support and empathize with

them as they do. Drama teachers invite students to be involved and give them the

responsibility to co-create together. They make and take the time needed inside and

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outside of class to connect to students in personal ways through drama games and informal chats. Proactively and supportively responding to their students as they navigate adolescence and theatre-making was identified by the focus group as positively impacting student well-being by accelerating the student's personal development (e.g., increasing self-confidence, friendship building, and empathy).

The Intrinsic Elements of High School Theatre

The focus group identified how participating in the components of theatre promotes well-being for drama students. In arts and health research, there is a shift taking place that recognizes the inherent health-promoting qualities of the various art forms themselves. Traditionally, the goal of therapy in Western culture utilized different arts to resolve patient problems, however, "This view has evolved, and now there is greater appreciation for art-making as healing in and of itself, with outcomes measured in terms of the client's experience of meaning and satisfaction with the process" (Neimeyer and Thompson 2014, xviii). This view includes participatory encounters with the art form as promoting health and well-being. While there are many components included in high school theatre, the focus group stories keyed in on five specific elements, character development, casting, tech week, performance magic, and closing night.

Although most of these five components also evoke negative emotions or social challenges (e.g., stage fright, stress-filled deadlines, the experience of grief on closing night), the group identified each of them as providing social and emotional growth for students. Willy noted, "those moments--they're raw, and they're real. That's what makes us as theatre teachers more connected to these kids." Repeated supported encounters with

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the intrinsic elements of theatre promote healthy relationships and extended practice with emotions, which invite opportunities for positive social and emotional development for students as they experience the real-world stress of putting on a production.

Drama Teacher Artist/Educator Identity

High school drama teachers see themselves as both artists and educators, and this dual identity expands the scope of their teaching process and their teaching intention. Drama educators work with students teaching them how to make theatre while also mentoring them on life approaches whether they are offered positive or negative outcomes. Drama teachers that promote student well-being see their role as more extensive than solely a teacher or artist. Instead, they view their role as something greater that combines both. Navigating theatre-making does seem to align with Paige's observation that drama class teaches students how to be humans by simultaneously expanding their theatre and life skills. As artists who intimately understand what theatre-making demands of students, drama teachers actively model life skills like regulating emotions, self-efficacy, empathy, respect for others, problem-solving, working with others, and negotiating conflict. All of which are skills that fall into the realm of Social Emotional Learning (SEL) models. SEL is integrated into schools with increasing regularity as a "process through which children and adults understand and manage emotions, set and achieve positive goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain positive relationships, and make responsible decisions" ("CASEL" 2020). Teachers model self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making to

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support student well-being. And in drama class, they put on a play with their students as well.

Teacher-Student Relationships in High School Drama

The focus group talked at length about what they believe to be supportive teacher-student relationships and what they value about the process of building those relationships. Positive teacher-student relationships are generally recognized as a significant protective factor promoting children's health and well-being (Morrison and Allen 2007; Poulou 2020; Sabol and Pianta 2012). Drama gameplay researcher Neva Boyd outlines how drama teachers create that supportive, cooperative relationship, noting that a teacher must create a classroom space "free from authoritarian discipline" (Neva Leona Boyd papers) to which the focus group connected.   Unfortunately, not all drama teachers create positive relationships with their students. They can be authoritarian and demanding about the art. The point is that these teachers are choosing to remove the social and emotional health-promoting benefits of supportive teacher-student relationships from the drama curriculum. Although drama class is well situated to promote these relationships, teachers must choose to utilize the health-promoting components. The focus group noted the importance of intentions and talked about how they focused on intentions that reflect the unique co-creative process outlined by Neva Boyd as a catalyst for supportive relationships. They spoke about demanding much from their students because they co-create theatre with them. They do not let students quit; they expect them to be responsible for the show and treat them like creative equals. Working together with students to create a drama production, design meaningful course

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work, or play drama games invites teachers to respond to students in unique ways that enable health-promoting and supportive teacher-student relationships. The process of intentionally building and maintaining supportive teacher-student relationships enhances student well-being.

The Environment of High School Drama

During the four focus group sessions, the topic of "safe space" came up repeatedly in the stories shared and the comments made. The process of creating a "safe" physical, social, emotional, and relational environment with students relates to the health-promoting capacities of high school drama. "Safe space" refers to a place that feels physically safe, where bodily harm is not imminent. Also, it represents a metaphorical definition of a space where every person can express themselves individually. In the focus group, these two ideas of "safe space" were clearly articulated as two opposite and simultaneously environments necessary to make theatre. The first "safe space" environment aligns with a supportive, creative environment where structure and relational agreements build trust between participants and create places and structures of resort, comfort, and confidence to return to when needed. The second "safe space" environment reflected in the teacher's comments refers to a space of creativity and pushing boundaries. It reflects a fundamental disregard for safety, as in comfort, and instead enlivens acts that take risks, are vulnerable, and full of imagination. This is a space where teachers expect students to attempt performances that frighten them. This is a space where teachers invite students to fail and ask them to get up and try again. This "safe space" does not reflect the typical notions of safety but instead reflects security in

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the metaphor of students feeling safe enough to push boundaries and not give up. To create these two environments simultaneously, the teachers talked about setting high expectations and then modeling behavior that supports those expectations to create a supportive environment where students can succeed. They discussed designing their drama classroom environment to be a welcoming community for everyone who enters, as in, "community that fosters a sense of belonging, trust, and safety" that invites "inclusion, collaboration, and empowerment in education" (Mreiwed, Carter, and Shabtay 2017, 44). This more expansive teacher's eye view of the whole classroom's impact on the social and emotional environment centers on the teacher. The process of co-creating a safe, supportive environment for students making theatre was intentional for these teachers.

This study reveals that drama teachers perceive their drama programs to be psychologically, socially, and emotionally health-promoting for students involved. However, drama teachers do not perceive drama programs to free from challenge, adversity, obstacle, and risk. In fact, the focus group often cited the challenges as the catalyst for student well-being as the teacher supports the student through the barriers. This study identifies the complex processes, relationships, and elements of the art form that the teachers pinpoint as preconditions and components that enhance and enable flourishing. The focus group teachers describe themselves as key to health promotion by modeling the artistry of theatre and the art form's social and emotional skills. They determined that time, their students, and the relationships they build with them to be preconditions that maximize health promotion. And they identified the safe, supportive environment they create with students necessary to connect all the elements.

Recommendations for Further Research

This qualitative research, with only a handful of teachers, a counselor, and psychologist does not prove that high school theatre promotes health, but it does provide a rich theoretical foundation to use for future more specific studies. Research, including student voices and perceptions on health promotion in high school drama, would add depth and breadth to the teacher identified findings in this study. In the theatre and health framework of my personal experience, I pointed out that though much research exists around the intersection of negotiating social relationships and theatre participation, the individual studies diverged as they reported outcomes along a qualitative and quantitative methodological divide. Interview and focus group methods identify a connection between drama participation and social skills and empathy. At the same time, quantitative measures focused on social skills and concepts did not specify a significant relationship between the two. Future student-centered research that uses mixed methods approaches could be more attuned to recognizing the nuances between participant perception of growth and statistically generalizable impact.

Mixed methods studies could provide more clarity in documenting and measuring differences in teacher quality, theatre program quality, and the intensity of the theatre involvement for the student (Thalia R Goldstein, Lerner, and Winner 2017, 2). A limitation often cited in qualitative studies questions the idea that theatre participation is monolithic and asks if "the drama programs might have been more effective and the findings stronger if there had been more sessions" (Walsh-Bowers and Basso 1999, 30). Using existing drama teachers to provide theatre interventions and to analyze the effects

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on students provides an expert voice to the research. Lived experience may give the researchers a more robust view of what is happening artistically as well as socially and emotionally.

Another recommendation for further research from this study centers around teacher-student relationships. As I participated in the discussion and was inspired by how intentional drama teachers are in building student relationships, I am interested in knowing how much impact these teacher intentions have on students. Research on parent-child relationships reveals that individual parenting styles promote greater attachment. This study invites interrogations asking if students get more substantial health benefits from specific strategies used by drama teachers or even individual teachers. My high school drama teacher did not build strong relationships with us, choosing to use intimidation and manipulation to motivate. I am still in contact with her, and I feel like my drama promoted my social and emotional health and well-being. Still, I wonder if it could have been more potent if my teacher had implemented health-promoting strategies instead. Many of the theatre and health studies listed in this dissertation do not discuss who teaches the drama interventions used or if classroom teachers tend to get more positive social and emotional outcomes. But from the focus group findings, research into teacher intentions toward student's relationship could provide meaningful insights into the realm of health and well-being.

The final recommendation for further use of this research incorporates preservice teacher training and the insights and recommendations the focus group made about preparing new teachers and maintaining their well-being. Focus group discussions

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repeatedly extended my memory of the social and emotional experiences of high school

drama theatre-making. The responsibility of drama teachers is to support their students'

emotional well-being since they invite that vulnerability. While noting the many

challenges inherent in theatre-making, the focus group made several recommendations

for how drama teachers optimize student support. Nadine mentioned the possibility for

pre-service drama teachers to take a course in trauma-informed teaching to enhance

positive impacts for students. Including trauma-informed coursework in preservice

teacher training would be a valuable research site of health promotion for students since

theatre-making invites many student risks. The group also shared the recommendation

that drama teachers need to be self-aware and actively practicing self-care. Willy

summed up the conversations with this memory,

> *I ended up in a really scary situation where I was diagnosed with PTSD because I wasn't taking care of myself. I was taking care of the kids. Two months later, I find myself in the choir room having a massive mental breakdown, and all resulted from me putting my kids first and not myself first. And then I finally was able to deal with it. So, it's creating that safe space but also creating a safe space for yourself as well. But I mean-- it's setting those parameters to allow those things to happen. -Willy*

And Kat acknowledging the need for self-awareness and self-care, shared, "Here's what

I've always felt, as the therapist, you're only as good of a therapist as you are in your own

self-awareness in your own self-journey." While drama teachers are not therapists, the

metaphor applies because drama teachers invite students to take intense emotional and

social journeys in theatre work. They also need to be responsible for supporting the

students as they make that journey. Research into drama teacher best practices for self-

care could benefit teachers and students in drama class and beyond.

This study contributes to arts and health research by seeking to answer the call for increased understanding of participatory theatre's impact on student well-being. In a recent article from Health Psychology titled *Adolescent flourishing: A systematic review,* the request is explicit "It is crucial to understand the manner in which adolescent flourishing can be enhanced" (Witten, Shazly, and Adams 2019, 3). This study identifies how high school drama promotes psychological, social, and emotional health. An ongoing search for the mechanisms or components of art forms that encourage health remains a crucial focus of arts and health research (Fancourt and Finn 2019). This study contributes to an increased understanding of drama teachers' lived experience promoting student health and well-being in their programs. The teachers' voices doing the work are amplified in this study to pin-point theatre-specific mechanisms and components of health promotion for students (e.g., dealing with stage fright, performance magic, closing night grief). Identifying the mechanisms of theatre that promote health also contributes to theatre education research.

According to theatre educator Matt Omasta, "Theatre education occupies a liminal space in the academy, "caught between" two seemingly disparate fields: *theatre* (the study of performing arts) and *education* (the study of teaching and learning)" (Omasta and Chappell 2015, 186). Theatre education in the academy occupies a "liminal" space" and is not studied as regularly as other topics in theatre or education. Theatre education itself is a ridge between the disciplines of theatre and education. Thus, this work is an essential addition to a small but valuable area of research. Because I was a drama teacher for 18 years, I care deeply about contributing to the field of theatre

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education and adding to the work of secondary educators who later became researchers like Laura McCammon, Debra McLauchlan, and Richard Sallis. This work also extends existing theatre education research that seeks to enhance the praxis of drama educators and drama students' experience in high schools across the country.

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APPENDIX A

FOCUS GROUP CONSENT FORM

<u>**High School Drama and Health Study**</u>
<u>**Consent Form**</u>

       I am a graduate student under the direction of Stephani Etheridge-Woodson in the Theatre for Youth Department at Arizona State University. I am conducting a research study to examine how participation in theatre promotes health for students.

       Because you are a high school drama teacher or high school counselor/psychologist with expertise and experience, I am inviting your participation. Involvement requires signing a consent form, a short 30-minute introductory interview, and attending four 90-minute story circle/focus groups via Zoom.

       Following the short interview, you will participate in four 90-minute story focus groups via Zoom taking place over July and August 2020. In the focus group, we will share experiences and perceptions of how drama class promotes students' psychological, social, and emotional health. Our discussions will focus on the following four main topics:

1. Drama class habits of mind that create an environment of play.
2. Building capacity to negotiate social relationships from non-competitive creative collaboration on a larger completed art product.
3. Embodied storytelling that enables emotional identification and regulation
4. Supportive teacher-student relationships that stem from a co-creative process

       I will present my experience and research on the topic and ask a few follow-up questions. You have the right not to share your experience or answer any question and to stop participation at any time. Your participation in this study is voluntary. If you choose not to participate or to withdraw from the study at any time, there will be no penalty.

       A small $80 honorarium will be provided to those completing all sessions of this study. And beyond that, I hope it will be pleasing to reminisce about the relationships and the spaces you work in during your years in high school. There are no foreseeable risks or discomforts to your participation.

       Your responses will be confidential. The results of this study may be used in reports, presentations, or publications, but your name will not be used.

       I am also asking your permission to video record the interview and all four focus group sessions via Zoom. Only I will have access to the recordings. The recordings will be deleted immediately after being transcribed, and any published quotes will be anonymous. To protect your identity, please refrain from using names or other identifying information during the interview. Let me know if, at any time, you do not want to be recorded, and I will stop.

       If you have any questions concerning the research study, please contact Stephani Etheridge Woodson at 480-727-3488. If you have any questions about your rights as a subject/participant in this research, or if you feel you have been placed at risk, you can contact the Chair of the Human Subjects Institutional Review Board, through the ASU Office of Research Integrity and Assurance, at (480) 965-6788.

Please initial below if you are willing to be video recorded via Zoom.

_____ I consent to you videotaping the group sessions.

By signing below, you agree to be part of the study.

Print Your Name:

Signature: **Date:**

APPENDIX B

PARTICIPANTS INTRODUCTORY INTERVIEW

Introductory Interview

<u>Drama Teacher:</u>
Please tell me a little bit about yourself, your school, and your drama program.
1. Choose a pseudonym for yourself to be used for publications or presentations.
2. Gender identity
3. How many years have you taught high school drama?
4. How many years have you taught high school drama at your current school?
5. What is the name of your school?
6. Where is it located (city)?
7. How many students attend your school?
8. What are the approximate demographics of your school? And your drama program?
9. How many students are in your drama program?
10. Are you the only drama teacher at your school? If not, how many others?
11. Do you have a Thespian program at your school?
12. Do you have a Drama Club at your school?
13. How many public productions (on average) do you produce each year?
14. What are your general thoughts about the idea of theatre participation in high school promoting student wellbeing?

Then I will introduce the four elements of the framework
- Drama class habits of mind that create an environment of play.
- Building capacity to negotiate social relationships from non-competitive creative collaboration on a larger completed art product.
- Embodied storytelling that enables emotional identification and regulation
- Supportive teacher-student relationships that stem from a co-creative process
15. Do you have any questions about the four areas of the framework?
16. Do you have any thoughts about the four areas you would like to share?

<u>School Counselor:</u>

1. Choose a pseudonym for yourself to be used for publications or presentations.
2. Gender identity
3. How many years have you been a high school counselor?
4. How many years have you been a counselor at your current school?
5. What is the name of your school?
6. Where is it located (city)?
7. How many students attend your school?
8. What are the approximate racial demographics of your school?
9. What are the socio-economic demographics at your school?
10. How many students are you responsible for?
11. How many counselors are at your school?
12. Approximately how many students would you say you talk to with mental or emotional health issues in a week?
13. Do you attend or participant in arts events or projects in your personal life?

14. What are your initial thoughts on theatre or arts participation promoting student wellbeing?

Then I will introduce the four elements of the framework

- Drama class habits of mind that create an environment of play.
- Building capacity to negotiate social relationships from non-competitive creative collaboration on a larger completed art product.
- Embodied storytelling that enables emotional identification and regulation
- Supportive teacher-student relationships that stem from a co-creative process

15. Do you have any questions about the four areas of the framework?
16. Do you have any thoughts about the four areas you would like to share?

APPENDIX C

FOCUS GROUP PROTOCOLS

Focus Group 1:
Supportive teacher-student relationships that stem from a co-creative process

<u>Welcome & Introduction of the Project:</u>

Me: *Thank you for agreeing to take part in this focus group. I appreciate your willingness to participate today. The research I am conducting is focused on the question: How is positive psychological, social and emotional health promoted through theatre participation in high school? Together with you today I investigate the complexity of this question based on practices that occur in classrooms and auditoriums in high schools. I want to connect theatre education practice that is health-promoting for students, and I am seeking your expertise and experience to do this. Our purpose here today is to tell stories about our experience of health promotion and discuss research that connects theatre to health.*

Me: *I am excited to learn from you, and hope that you each feel comfortable sharing your honest and open thoughts. In order to help ensure that is the case, I have a few guidelines to use to facilitate our discussion:*

1. ***No right or wrong answers.*** *There are no right or wrong answers. I expect and want to hear a wide range of opinions and we do not anticipate consensus, just sharing.*
2. ***All input is valued.*** *Please don't disparage another participant's remarks and let's have just one speaker at a time. You should be comfortable sharing anything if sensitive issues come up.*
3. ***One at a time.*** *Please give everyone the chance to express their opinion during the conversation.*
4. ***Please share!*** *I may call on you if I haven't heard from you in a while because we would like to hear from everyone. You can address each other if you like.*
5. ***Be comfortable if you have to leave.*** *If at any time you don't feel comfortable continuing, you're always able to leave the focus group session.*
6. ***90 minutes without distraction.*** *The discussion will last for about 90 minutes. Please silence your mobile phones.*
7. ***Recorded but confidential.*** *I will be recording this session to capture everything you have to say. I won't identify anyone by name in my dissertation; you will remain anonymous. Ask verbal permission and begin recording Zoom session now.*

Are there any questions before we begin?

<u>Introductions/Ice Breaker:</u>

So, to get this started today, let's go around and just do some quick introductions. Please tell everyone your name and a little bit about your background working with high school students.

I'll start out. ....

Experience Share
Thank you. Glad you are all here. I am going to start with my own experience and then present some research and questions.

My Experience
One day not long after an academic school assembly, a frustrated group of students entered my classroom during lunch time looking for me. Normally students were not allowed inside the buildings at lunch, so I knew they had snuck past the security guards to get to my room. They burst in calling my name and pacing around the room in frustration. I left my office to talk to them as they were clearly upset. They were a group of 4 of high achieving seniors, all in the top 10% of their class, who also had chosen to be in drama class with me for the last four years. While it was clear that one young woman was too upset to talk, the others began the story on her behalf.

Turns out they had stopped the principal as he had passed near their lunch table to talk to him. A few days earlier he had talked to the entire student body at an academic assembly on campus, asking them to prepare for state testing and help the school raise its current grade ranking by getting higher test scores. He told the students that they all represented the school with their scores, and he wanted to see everyone do better, so the school would be viewed more positively. Many students since that assembly had brought up feeling like they were not valued as individuals, just as test scores.

Since the members of the group talking to me were seniors and had done exceptionally well on all their state tests in earlier years, they wanted to talk to the principal on behalf of their fellow students. They wanted to let the principal know how the student body felt so he could do something to change the negative culture. So, they stopped him to ask him to acknowledge the student body as individuals not test scores. The young woman who was too upset to talk turned to me at this point in the story and said, "You know what he said to me?!" as tears started in her eyes, and she paced the room to keep her emotions in check "He told me that if I wanted him to see me as a person, then I better get a test score high enough for him to notice."

Academic culture today places tremendous value on high test scores as students, teachers, principals, and schools are evaluated by them. However, as this story illustrates sometimes a culture of high stakes testing becomes a culture that undermines positive relationships between adults and students at the school. But I also think that if adults actively intend to support students, they can do so even in the challenging cultures that often exist in high school.

I will ask the following questions for discussion.

- Have you seen your student's relationship with you influencing their psychological, social or emotional health? What are your relationships like with at-risk students?
- How, if at all, is a drama class teacher-student relationship different from other classes and coaches?
- What do you do in your class to develop relationship where you can co-create with students? How do you push students to perform and take risks and at the same time help them feel safe?
- What are some examples of co-creating with students?
- How can drama teachers-student relationships be harmful?

Focus Group 2:
Drama class habits of mind that create an environment of play.

<u>Welcome & Introduction of the Project:</u>

Me: *Welcome back. Thank you for agreeing to take part in this focus group. I appreciate your willingness to participate today. As a reminder from our last meeting, the research I am conducting is focused on the question: How is positive psychological, social and emotional health promoted through theatre participation in high school? Together with you today I investigate the complexity of this question based on practices that occur in classrooms and auditoriums in high schools. I want to connect theatre education practice that is health-promoting for students, and I am seeking your expertise and experience to do this. Our purpose here today is to tell stories about our perception of health promotion and discuss research that connects theatre to health.*

Me: *I am excited to learn from you, and hope that you each feel comfortable sharing your honest and open thoughts. In order to help ensure that is the case, I have a few guidelines to use to facilitate our discussion:*

8. ***No right or wrong answers.*** *There are no right or wrong answers. I expect and want to hear a wide range of opinions and we do not anticipate consensus, just sharing.*
9. ***All input is valued.*** *Please don't disparage another participant's remarks and let's have just one speaker at a time. You should be comfortable sharing anything if sensitive issues come up.*
10. ***One at a time.*** *Please give everyone the chance to express their opinion during the conversation.*
11. ***Please share!*** *I may call on you if I haven't heard from you in a while because we would like to hear from everyone. You can address each other if you like.*
12. ***Be comfortable if you have to leave.*** *If at any time you don't feel comfortable continuing, you're always able to leave the focus group session.*
13. ***90 minutes without distraction.*** *The discussion will last for about 90 minutes. Please silence your mobile phones.*
14. ***Recorded but confidential.*** *I will be recording this session to capture everything you have to say. I won't identify anyone by name in my dissertation; you will remain anonymous. Ask verbal permission and begin recording Zoom session now.*

Are there any questions before we begin?

<u>Introductions/Ice Breaker:</u>

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So, to get this started today, let's go around and remind everyone of our name and talk about why you chose to work with young people?

I'll start out. ….

<u>*Experience Share*</u>
Thank you. Glad you are all here. I am going to start with my own experience and then present some research and questions.

<u>*My Experience*</u>
At Yuma High School, I was asked to move to a new classroom for a few days to allow my larger black box theatre space to be used for make-up testing for students who had missed the state exams. My new classroom space was in the basement of Main Building, sandwiched between two core subject area classes. Though we had desks and a white board instead of chairs and open space, my beginning level Drama I class, and I kept it business as usual and started our day with some short student improvised scenes to get everyone up and moving.

The students were divided into small groups called "acting companies" and were given a line, a prop, and an event to use to improvise their scene. The line for the day was, "Look out!" the event was an emergency room visit, and the prop was anything the students had in their possession, but they had to use it as something it was not. (For example, a student might have a backpack, they wanted to use, but it could not be backpack in the scene. Instead it might become a parachute or be worn in the front to be a bullet proof vest or dragged on the ground to become a puppy out on a walk with its owner.) After a short time allotted to prepare, each group performed their short scene for the class.

One group, in a clever dramatic adventure, had a young woman arrive with her friends at the emergency room in noisy labor where a doctor yelled "Look out!" before catching a shoe delivered as a newborn baby thrown across the room into his outstretched arms. In this particular scene the labor pains were portrayed loudly with impressive dramatic flair as the doctor assessed the situation and organized the delivery to be the entire length of the room for comic effect. The rest of the class as audience was in hysterics of laughter and exploded with applause as the baby (shoe) was caught by the doctor. It was a creative, impressive, energetic scene and it came to an abrupt halt as the teacher from next door burst into the classroom panicked that we were experiencing a literal emergency. Her concern drove laughter from the room, and it took me a few minutes to explain to her that the students were only doing a scene about a girl having a baby and that nothing was wrong. The student playing the doctor cradled the shoe he had just delivered as evidence that none of it was real.

When that poor panicked teacher finally understood that everyone was safe and left the room, I realized two things. One: why my usual classroom space, a black box theatre, was not located near any other classrooms. And two: that the way drama students are taught to think about creating work (often called habits of mind) is very distinct from other disciplines.

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So, to get this started today, let's go around and just do some quick introductions again. Please tell us one way you help increase student ability to take risks?

I'll start out. ….

I will ask the following questions for discussion.

Questions
- ◦ What habits of mind do students need to be successful in drama class?
- ◦ What habits of mind do you teach your students in drama class?
- ◦ Have you seen the habits of mind you teach influencing students psychological, social or emotional health?
- ◦ Which habit of mind is least effective promoting health? Which is most?

Focus Group 3:
Embodied storytelling that enables emotional identification and regulation

Welcome & Introduction of the Project:

Me: *Welcome back. Thank you for agreeing to take part in this focus group. I appreciate your willingness to participate today. As a reminder from our last meeting, the research I am conducting is focused on the question: How is positive psychological, social and emotional health promoted through theatre participation in high school? Together with you today I investigate the complexity of this question based on practices that occur in classrooms and auditoriums in high schools. I want to connect theatre education practice that is health-promoting for students, and I am seeking your expertise and experience to do this. Our purpose here today is to tell stories about our perception of health promotion and discuss research that connects theatre to health.*

Me: *I am excited to learn from you, and hope that you each feel comfortable sharing your honest and open thoughts. In order to help ensure that is the case, I have a few guidelines to use to facilitate our discussion:*

15. ***No right or wrong answers.*** *There are no right or wrong answers. I expect and want to hear a wide range of opinions and we do not anticipate consensus, just sharing.*
16. ***All input is valued.*** *Please don't disparage another participant's remarks and let's have just one speaker at a time. You should be comfortable sharing anything if sensitive issues come up.*
17. ***One at a time.*** *Please give everyone the chance to express their opinion during the conversation.*
18. ***Please share!*** *I may call on you if I haven't heard from you in a while because we would like to hear from everyone. You can address each other if you like.*
19. ***Be comfortable if you have to leave.*** *If at any time you don't feel comfortable continuing, you're always able to leave the focus group session.*
20. ***90 minutes without distraction.*** *The discussion will last for about 90 minutes. Please silence your mobile phones.*
21. ***Recorded but confidential.*** *I will be recording this session to capture everything you have to say. I won't identify anyone by name in my dissertation; you will remain anonymous. Ask verbal permission and begin recording Zoom session now.*

Are there any questions before we begin?

<u>Introductions/Ice Breaker:</u>

So, to get this started today, you all asked to talk about your pseudonyms and why you chose them.
<u>Experience Share</u>
Thank you. Glad you are all here. I am going to start with my own experience and then present some research and questions.

<u>My Experience</u>
This deep exploration of emotion has led many of my students to tell me about connections they made between theatre and their health with no help from me. They talked about how they have learned about their own emotion and the perspectives of others in health promoting ways. A student once told me that she sometimes wondered if she was the only person who felt the emotions she felt, because the emotions she felt did not fit into neat little categories of mad, sad, happy or scared. However, one day in drama class as she was developing her character in a scene, she was shocked to discover that people can feel more than one emotion at a time leading to interesting acting choices. She told me that was the day she realized that she was not feeling things other did not feel but was feel many emotions at the same time.

Students have told me stories about how embodied storytelling has helped them understand the perspectives of others. One student who performed a tense scene from The Miracle Worker between Captain Keller and his wife as they argued what to do for their daughter Helen realized that this character had a similar perspective to his father who often spoke harshly to his mother. For the first time in his life he realized that his father might be under a lot of stress and unable to control his anxiety and frustration. This student realized that though he does not agree with treating other people poorly for any reason, at least he can see how someone with good intentions might do that.

And another student who was encountering negative and distressing challengers in her home life, and at the same time was playing the role of Mary Delightful the innocent heroine in a silly, campy melodrama Never Trust a City Slicker, realized that the character of Mary was also experiencing a lot of life challenge as the evil villains were trying to steal a trunkful of her father's famous plays. She noticed how melodrama uses humor to battle the constant stress of challenge and risk. And though this is certainly not the only way to handle negative experience, this student felt empowered by the choice to laugh at some of the things that can go wrong in life. She was able to change her perspective and be a positive influence on those around her. A sense of humor and laughter can be healing.

I will ask the following questions for discussion.

Questions:
- ◦ How does learning to act also teach emotional identification and regulation?

- What do you teach students to help them learn to play a character?
- Have you seen character development and portrayal influencing students psychological, social or emotional health?
- How can performing another person be harmful?

Focus Group 4:
Building capacity to negotiate social relationships from non-competitive creative collaboration on a larger completed art product.

<u>Welcome & Introduction of the Project:</u>

Me: *Welcome back. Thank you for agreeing to take part in this focus group. I appreciate your willingness to participate today. As a reminder from our last meeting, the research I am conducting is focused on the question: How is positive psychological, social and emotional health promoted through theatre participation in high school? Together with you today I investigate the complexity of this question based on practices that occur in classrooms and auditoriums in high schools. I want to connect theatre education practice that is health-promoting for students, and I am seeking your expertise and experience to do this. Our purpose here today is to tell stories about our perception of health promotion and discuss research that connects theatre to health.*

Me: *I am excited to learn from you, and hope that you each feel comfortable sharing your honest and open thoughts. In order to help ensure that is the case, I have a few guidelines to use to facilitate our discussion:*

22. ***No right or wrong answers.*** *There are no right or wrong answers. I expect and want to hear a wide range of opinions and we do not anticipate consensus, just sharing.*
23. ***All input is valued.*** *Please don't disparage another participant's remarks and let's have just one speaker at a time. You should be comfortable sharing anything if sensitive issues come up.*
24. ***One at a time.*** *Please give everyone the chance to express their opinion during the conversation.*
25. ***Please share!*** *I may call on you if I haven't heard from you in a while because we would like to hear from everyone. You can address each other if you like.*
26. ***Be comfortable if you have to leave.*** *If at any time you don't feel comfortable continuing, you're always able to leave the focus group session.*
27. ***90 minutes without distraction.*** *The discussion will last for about 90 minutes. Please silence your mobile phones.*
28. ***Recorded but confidential.*** *I will be recording this session to capture everything you have to say. I won't identify anyone by name in my dissertation; you will remain anonymous. Ask verbal permission and begin recording Zoom session now.*

Are there any questions before we begin?

Experience Share
Thank you. Glad you are all here. I am going to start with my own experience and then present some research and questions.

My Experience
The cast and crew of "Treasure Island" was performing a selection from the play in a school assembly. The house was packed with 600 high school students and teachers in what I considered to be a preview performance of the play. But the drama students who were performing for their peers, did not view assemblies the same way I did. They were performing for 600 of their peers. Stakes were high for them; the pressure was on.

Over the course of rehearsal and tech week, we had been struggling with a moment in the play where a gun is supposed to fail to fire twice and then finally to fire. It is a taught moment where young Jim Hawkins is fighting the pirate Hands for control of a gun and by default also his life. Jim had to shoot Hands at just the right moment. The stage pistol had one blank in it, but somehow the actors could get it fire correct only about half the time. The stage pistol would fire when it shouldn't or not fire when it should often enough to be a problem. On this assembly day, it did not go off at all. The stage pistol clicked and clicked as the trigger was pulled long enough that it began to be obvious that Hands was going to get to Jim before he could be stopped. Suddenly a loud gunshot sounded, and Hands, gratefully, was able to drop dead. I could tell that sound had not come from the gun on stage, but it had saved the moment.

After the show I asked the stage manager what happened. At first, she was a little reluctant to tell me. Since we had weapons in the show, we also had strict rules about who could handle the weapons and when they could handle them. We had a table set up on the side of the stage near an assistant stage manager, who loaded the caps into the stage pistols and checked them in and out to actors as the entered and left the stage. Only actors and the assistant stage manager could touch the guns and only when needed in the show. Turns out that a young sophomore assisting on the fly rail, which was located right next to the gun table, picked up a stage pistol and fired the shot. Rules had been broken. But at the same time the show had been saved. The actors were so grateful to this young student and the stage manger had congratulated her on her choice, now everyone was nervous about my reaction. They had taken the problem into their own hands and broken a rule to solve it. As a group they were supporting this student's choice to save the show.

I took the stage manager with me up to the young fly rail operator with the cast and crew gathering around to see what would happen. First, I congratulated her for her quick thinking that saved the show that day. I also told her that firing a gun without permission was not acceptable, so we need to add her to the gun list and she would fire the shot that kills hands every show and the pistol on stage would not have any blanks in it.

SECOND EXPERIENCE

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A student in drama class terrified to speak out loud in any performance, since English was not her first language. She had been performing for most of the semester as inanimate objects. (a door that opens, or a red button to push to set off the bomb). But as her teacher, I wanted to push her toward a more robust and rigorous performance skills. I invited her to say just one word in the next scene she devised with her group. She agreed that she would like to try and thought she could do it, but when the time came to perform, she remained in her safe silent role. It was clear that my (teacher) support was not enough to help her out of her comfort zone, so the next devised scene I approached her entire scene group of 6 peers and invited their collaborative support. I talked to the group about how it would be wonderful to hear her say a line. I told the group that it wasn't required for a grade that she say a line, but if they could create and rehearse something with her that would give her the courage to just say one sentence out loud in English that would be wonderful. Her peers, doing what I could not, began to support her collaboratively by rehearsing with her a scene built around her one line.

I knew it was happening and her group knew it was happening, but the rest of the class had no idea. Performance day came and her moment to say the line came, she delivered not one, but two lines! No one in class had ever heard her say a line out loud, except her group, and it was delighted pandemonium in my class. Cheers, screams, everyone on their feet, clapping. Supported by not only her scene group, but the entire class, that student began to build her speaking performance skills and even delivered a monologue before the year was over. She remained good friends with her scene group members even outside of drama class. And at the end of the year, she told me that drama was the class where she felt like she belonged.

Questions
Do students work together differently in drama class than other classes?
What do you teach students to help them learn to work together?
Have you seen collaboration influencing student's psychological, social or emotional health?
What gets in the way of collaboration between students?

APPENDIX D

IRB EXEMPTION

EXEMPTION GRANTED

Stephani Etheridge Woodson
HIDA: Design and the Arts, Herberger Institute for
-
swoodson@asu.edu

Dear Stephani Etheridge Woodson:

On 5/29/2020 the ASU IRB reviewed the following protocol:

Type of Review:	Initial Study
Title:	Narrative Inquiry investigation of a framework exploring the ways in which participation in high school drama promotes student health and well-being
Investigator:	Stephani Etheridge Woodson
IRB ID:	STUDY00012010
Funding:	None
Grant Title:	None
Grant ID:	None
Documents Reviewed:	• Consent Form.pdf, Category: Consent Form; • IRB Social Behavioral 2019-Narrative Inquiry.docx, Category: IRB Protocol; • recruitment_materials_28-05-20.pdf, Category: Recruitment Materials; • supporting_documents-28-05-20.pdf, Category: Measures (Survey questions/Interview questions /interview guides/focus group questions);

The IRB determined that the protocol is considered exempt pursuant to Federal Regulations 45CFR46 on 5/29/2020.

In conducting this protocol you are required to follow the requirements listed in the INVESTIGATOR MANUAL (HRP-103).

If any changes are made to the study, the IRB must be notified at research.integrity@asu.edu to determine if additional reviews/approvals are required.

Changes may include but not limited to revisions to data collection, survey and/or interview questions, and vulnerable populations, etc.

Sincerely,

IRB Administrator

cc: Nicola Olsen
        Nicola Olsen